



URGENT CALL FOR GOVERNMENTS TO PROVIDE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT TO MIDWIVES

Governments around the world are responsible for the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for their health care professionals but are neglecting to account for midwives in their orders, sending a signal that midwives are not valued despite the essential care they provide to mothers and newborns. This issue is compounded by gender inequities in some countries where only doctors receive PPE and the largely female workforces of midwives and nurses appear to be invisible and disrespected. Deaths of midwives and nurses are often not reported by the media, yet midwives in countries most severely impacted by Covid-19 are dying because they contracted the virus while going about their regular work. In many cases, these midwives are young and otherwise healthy with their own children and families at home to care for. Their deaths are the direct results of governments neglecting to provide PPE to midwives.

The International Confederation of Midwives, in solidarity with its 143 members associations across 124 countries, calls for an immediate end to this unacceptable behaviour.

Midwives are frontline health workers. The coronavirus is sweeping the world, but women are still pregnant, and babies are still being born. Midwives are working in women's homes, in community clinics, in primary birthing units, and in hospitals. Midwives are the primary caregivers for pregnant women everywhere. But if midwives are ill and dying in a health system overstretched by Covid-19 they will not be available to care for pregnant women and their families. Childbirth is a normal part of life and it does not stop because of a pandemic.

PPE, in conjunction with proper hygiene practices, is the best way for midwives to protect themselves while interacting with mothers and families who may be infected by the virus. Midwives, like all other frontline health workers deserve safe working conditions and respect for the work they do in providing essential care for mothers and babies despite the personal risk this presents. Lack of access to PPE endangers not only midwives but also the mothers and babies they care for. Governments must step up and meet their obligations to midwives on an equal playing field to all other frontline health workers.

Please share this message and tag your respective government (on all social media channels) if you believe midwives should be afforded the same protective measures as their doctor counterparts.