



April 8, 2020

Press Release – for immediate release:

A digital response to help ensure safer childbirths during COVID-19

A new initiative launched today by Maternity Foundation, University of Copenhagen and Laerdal Global Health in collaboration with International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and UNFPA, the UN sexual and reproductive health agency, uses a digital tool to equip midwives in low-resource settings to protect themselves, mothers and newborns from the Coronavirus and to ensure that women continue to receive respectful quality of care during pregnancy and childbirth.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, women everywhere will continue to get pregnant and give birth. In low-resource countries and in humanitarian settings affected by conflict, pregnant women, new mothers, newborns and the health personnel providing them care face great risks in the new reality brought by the virus. Health systems are facing enormous pressure with lack of staff, resources and training to take necessary preventative measures against the virus. Midwives and other skilled health personnel providing care during childbirth need immediate support and tools to be able to still provide quality maternal care in the light of the pandemic. A new digital tool launched today aims to do just that.

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Maternity Foundation, University of Copenhagen, and Laerdal Global Health in collaboration with International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and UNFPA have partnered up to develop and disseminate an immediate and digital response for healthcare personnel – particularly midwives – to protect themselves, women and newborns from COVID-19.

The coalition is launching tools for capacity building and training for midwives through the Safe Delivery App, a mobile application developed by Maternity Foundation and University of Copenhagen, which provides visual, clinical and practical guidance on how to handle the most common childbirth complications. Through the Safe Delivery App, midwives can now get key information, animated video instructions, and check lists as well as guided training to support them to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the health facilities, including information on infection prevention, breastfeeding and vertical transmission.

The Safe Delivery App is a free application that is already being used by midwives and other skilled health personnel providing care during childbirth in over 40 countries worldwide. Thereby, the partners are leveraging an existing platform that is already reaching thousands of frontline health workers. All current users of the App will receive a pop-up message creating awareness about the new module and the importance of taking pre-cautions during COVID-19. It works offline once downloaded, making it easy to use in remote settings without a stable internet connection. The new COVID-19 content in the App is available in English as of today and will be available in French in a near future. The content of the Safe Delivery App is updated according to WHO standards and guidelines.

Laerdal Global Health has 10 years of experience of simulation-based training for midwives and other health care providers in low resource settings through the *Helping Mothers Survive* and *Helping Babies Survive* training programmes, implemented in over 80 countries. The current collaboration on merging scenarios for simulation into the Safe Delivery App will expand use of the App and support training in an efficient way, supporting the midwives where they are working.



In Moshi in northern Tanzania, senior nurse midwife at Mawenzi Regional Hospital Anne Shuma and her colleagues have just been introduced to the new COVID-19 module in the Safe Delivery App. The hospital is one of the hospitals in the country selected for receiving COVID-19 patients, and preparations are in full motion to prepare isolation centers, so they are ready when the first cases arrive. In the first week of April alone, they had 50 deliveries in the hospital.

“Going through the Safe Delivery App and the COVID-19 module made us realise that we were not prepared to receive pregnant women with suspected COVID-19. Immediately, we prepared a delivery kit and brought it to the isolation center and prepared a cube where suspected cases can give birth. We have now developed checklists based on the content in the App, so we are ready for when suspected cases come. It’s a very helpful tool for us midwives in an outbreak like this. It takes a concrete case and gives guidelines that are aligned with our national guidelines; procedures for handwashing and how to handle personal protective equipment. The App has opened our minds, we’re prepared now”, says Anne Shuma, who will spend the next weeks training fellow midwives and nurses in nearby clinics and hospitals to use the Safe Delivery App in their preparations for the COVID-19 response.

Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director UNFPA

“The enormity of the COVID-19 crisis and its consequences is testing us all. As essential frontline health care workers, midwives must be protected and prioritized so that they can continue providing quality care to women and their newborns during the pandemic. UNFPA is pleased to collaborate with the Maternity Foundation, Laerdal, ICM and University of Copenhagen in developing innovative online resources to support midwives and other maternity care providers working in the field. These new digital tools will enable them to access the latest evidence-based approaches to care delivery in the context of COVID-19.”

Dr. Sally Pairman, CEO of the International Confederation of Midwives:

“Midwives everywhere are frontline health care professionals in the face of the coronavirus, providing essential care to pregnant women and their babies during the childbirth continuum, despite the risk this presents to their own health. Many midwives have never had to work in pandemic situations before, and for everyone the coronavirus is new. In speaking with our Midwives’ Association members, we’ve been saddened by news of midwives dying from Covid19, simply because they were not adequately protected from the virus or did not have proper information on how to protect themselves. It’s essential that midwives and all other health professionals providing maternity care can access up-to-date and evidence-based advice on the changes they need to incorporate into their practice to keep women and their babies, and themselves, as safe as possible. The new modules in the Safe Delivery App will help guide midwives everywhere with advice they can count on.”

Chairman of Laerdal Global Health, Tore Laerdal:

“Our mission has always been helping save lives and now it has come even closer. During these extraordinary days, we work even harder towards our mission. There are hundreds of thousands of health workers who heroically continue to work through challenging situations and are in need of all the support we can offer. We hope our manikins and simulation solutions will be the helping hand that will support them in providing safe and respectful care.”



CEO of Maternity Foundation, Anna Frellsen:

“The direct and indirect consequences caused by the covid-19 pandemic can be fatal for mothers and newborns in many parts of the world. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2013-16 showed a dramatic increase in maternal deaths because the health system was under too much pressure to fight the pandemic to also provide quality care. In a situation like this we need to respond fast and we need to do it together. By building on an existing digital platform and our global partners’ strong channels, we are now availing essential clinical guidelines instantly to midwives, even in some of the most vulnerable settings.”

How to download the Safe Delivery App:

- Search for Safe Delivery App in Google Play or App store
- Click Download – the App is free of charge
- Open the App and select language version – the COVID-19 content is in the global English version
- If you already have the Safe Delivery App on your phone: Update the App and the COVID-19 module will appear in the global English version

The full Infection Prevention video can be found here: <https://youtu.be/CzYQlhUcte8>

About UNFPA

UNFPA is the UN sexual and reproductive health agency. Working in 150 countries, their mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. For more information, visit www.unfpa.org

About the International Confederation of Midwives

Founded in 1922, The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) is an accredited non-governmental organization that represents midwives’ associations worldwide to achieve common goals in the care of mothers and newborns. Currently, there are 143 ICM member associations in 124 countries. For more information about ICM visit www.internationalmidwives.org

About Laerdal Global Health

Laerdal Global Health seeks to develop innovative, highly affordable, durable, easy-to-use and culturally acceptable products that can help reduce child and maternal mortality, as well as make a significant contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. Laerdal Global Health has 10 years of experience of simulation-based training for midwives and other health care providers in low resource settings to help save lives of mothers and babies. For more information, visit www.laerdalglobalhealth.org

About Maternity Foundation

Maternity Foundation is a non-profit organization working to reduce maternal and newborn mortality through digital tools and clinical training, particularly through their digital learning tool, The Safe Delivery App, which is being used in 40 countries. Maternity Foundation was founded in 2005 and is based in Copenhagen. For more information, visit www.safedelivery.org

For more information, please contact Johanne Møller, Maternity Foundation Communications Manager: johanne@maternity.dk / +45 61606106