The International Confederation of Midwives affirms our support of the WHO, midwives and other members of the health workforce in their efforts to respond to this Covid-19 pandemic. Midwives are at the frontline of the crisis while continuing to provide care throughout the childbirth continuum as pregnancy and birth continue as always. Midwives globally are among the hardest hit while striving to balance disease prevention with quality midwife-led care for women and their babies. As a predominantly female workforce, midwives face the same gender inequalities that put women and girls at the highest risk during any crisis with increases in gender based violence, de-prioritization and de-funding of essential health and social services and inherent institutional bias that see the female workforce working in unpaid, unsafe working environments.

ICM voices our concern that maternity services are at risk due to a lack of resources, information and support for midwives at a time of increased need. Without personal protective equipment and WASH resources midwives are unable to deliver quality care safely and the needs of childbearing women and the right of women to respectful maternity care are impeded. These issues can only be addressed through an appropriate response to facilitate midwives to provide care within a regulatory framework that protects both the midwife and the public. For this governments will need to involve and listen to advice from their Midwives Associations.

Globally, severe staff shortages, closure of maternity units and redeployment of midwives are compounding the challenging situation for midwives and childbearing women. The staff shortages come at a time of increased demand for homebirths and community-based care. To meet these essential needs, we must support and resource midwives to provide decentralised care and recognise the unique role of midwives in safeguarding the health, wellbeing and rights of women and newborns.