Midwives’ Associations leading efforts across Europe to address unmet needs of women and their families

The Netherlands, 2 June 2022 – New surveying from the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) reveals how midwives’ associations (MAs) throughout Europe are leading efforts to provide vital health services and other forms of support to Ukrainian refugees, specifically women and children. In May of this year, ICM reached out to select member associations to understand their contributions to the Ukrainian war’s relief efforts. Responses from seven MAs in seven European countries demonstrate the essential yet undervalued role of grassroots women’s groups – such as midwives’ associations – in assessing the needs of women and children during humanitarian emergencies and spearheading responses to address those needs.

Here are examples of how ICM MAs are providing care to the Ukrainian women and families fleeing war:

- The Estonian Midwives Association is running a donation campaign to collect hygiene products to place at facilities housing Ukrainian refugees;
- The Federation on Finnish midwives has made donations to humanitarian organisations. Some local, Finnish midwives’ associations have provided hygiene products to reception centers in Finland;
- The Hungary Midwives Association is located just 70 HMs from the Ukrainian boarder. Together with other NGOs and community members, the association is providing sustainable food items, diapers, hygiene products and vitamins to families crossing into Hungary. They have spent the majority of their annual budget on providing this vital support;
- Since day three of the war, the Polish Midwives’ Association has been working with Dobrze Urodzeni (another Polish MA) to provide more than 700 emergency birth kits to pregnant women in the Ukraine. These kits help midwives, other healthcare professionals and birthing women themselves deliver during times of war;
- The Independent Midwives Association of Romania has partnered with a group of approximately 50 mothers to secure housing for Ukrainian women and families entering Romania. Through this initiative, they have rented apartments for pregnant women, women with small children and children with special needs and are providing complete antenatal care, antenatal classes, postnatal consultation for mothers and babies, access to abortion, legal support, translation services, integration service, access to jobs and psychological support. They’ve also organised programming for children, including a drama club for teenagers. To date, they have helped more than 500 families.

ICM’s Chief Executive, Dr. Sally Pairman believes that funding midwives’ associations during humanitarian emergencies is one of the most impactful ways to mitigate the adverse effects of war and natural disaster on women, newborns and children. She says: “Midwives work and live in the communities they care for, providing individualised and comprehensive reproductive health care, counseling, support services and more. When humanitarian emergencies occur, midwives and their associations are on the ground and well-positioned to deliver primary health services, including quality and respectful maternal and newborn care, contraceptive care and pre- and post-abortion care.”

Irina Mateescu is the Vice President of the Independent Midwives Association of Romania. Through participation in her associations efforts to house and care for Ukrainian refuges, she has seen how midwives and their associations
can provide timely and responsive care to displaced women and children. She says: “The role of the midwife generally involves individualised care, focused on women, children and families, so we are perfectly suited to the current needs of mothers with children fleeing the war.”

Through new grant funding from Direct Relief (DR), ICM aims to strengthen the support its able to provide to its MAs by directly funding their tailored and grassroots responses to humanitarian emergencies. The war in Ukraine and resulting refugee crises represents the first time ICM is seeking applications from its MAs to access this funding, and the beginning of a long-term partnership between ICM and DR that will bolster the support MAs are able to provide during humanitarian emergencies.

European midwives’ associations supporting the humanitarian and refugee response to the war in Ukraine are encouraged to review the call for applications for the ICM/Direct Relief Ukraine Humanitarian Fund and submit their application by Friday 10th of June 2022 at 23.59.

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For more information on the work of MAs supporting the crises in Ukraine, additional details about the ICM/Direct Relief Ukraine Humanitarian Fund or to set up interviews with media spokespeople, please contact the people below:

ICM media relations contact:

Molly Karp

Communications Lead, International Confederation of Midwives

m.karp@internationalmidwives.org

+1-204-698-7030

About the International Confederation of Midwives

Founded in 1922, The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) is an accredited non-governmental organisation 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 internationalmidwives.org