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## Position Statement

# Collaboration and Partnerships for Healthy Women and Infants

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## Background

For centuries midwives have worked in partnership with women, families and communities to achieve good outcomes for pregnancy and birth. However it is increasingly apparent that the effective promotion of health and prevention of disease within maternity and newborn care cannot be accomplished by a single professional, community or policy-making group. Many women and babies continue to die needlessly because there is delay in seeking midwifery care, no access to the next level of health services when complications arise, or no medication available at community level to prevent or treat complications. It is appropriate that midwives lead the way to expand the traditional partnerships for care, to include other health professional groups, policy makers and global agencies that share a common vision of healthy women and newborns throughout the world.

ICM supports the demand for continuity of care for childbearing women, and the collaboration with other health professionals that may be needed by an individual pregnant woman. This collaborative chain links community health workers into family and community-based primary care provided by professional midwives; and also with district and regional hospital-based care from professional midwives and medical specialists. At each level of care, women should be valued and her culture respected. She should receive quality care, timely consultation and referral when necessary to doctors and other specialists. Collaboration between midwives, other health professionals and consumer groups, and between ICM and other international partner organizations, should be constructive and focused on women's and newborns' needs at every level.

Midwives worldwide, as autonomous health professionals, are responsible not only for the care they give directly to women and their newborns, but for the timely identification of those women who would benefit from consultation at the next level of care, including referral for specialist attention when needed. It is also acknowledged that, in many areas of

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the world, midwives are those to whom pregnant women are referred by community health workers, when complications are suspected.-ICM believes that all women will benefit when there is continuity and collaboration among the range of health care providers from community to district to regional settings, where such collaboration is based upon mutual trust and respect. The power of partnerships goes beyond what each individual, group or agency can do alone, thereby maximising the effectiveness of strategies to promote the health of women and newborns.

### **Position**

ICM recognises the importance of continuity of care that needs to be available to optimise health-outcomes for women and their newborns. At the same time such clinical collaboration needs to be supported by partnerships at the level of national associations and international agencies. The ICM encourages all midwives to:

- Work collaboratively with other health providers caring for childbearing women and their newborns
- Promote respect, trust and open communication among all levels of health care providers as the hallmarks of midwifery care that result in the best possible health care available to all women.

ICM is also interested in establishing and strengthening partnerships that will promote the health and wellbeing of women and newborns, and the advancement of the profession of midwifery, in keeping with the following principles:

- Partners share the common goal or purpose of promoting the health of women, newborns and childbearing families in keeping with the ICM Vision Statement.
- Each partner brings a special expertise to the table with a commitment to listen, learn and respect others' views and suggestions for joint actions.
- Shared leadership, based on the required expertise for a given strategic goal, along with teamwork, is the norm.
- Each partner is able to commit resources to support individual participation in the group or coalition, in keeping with financial guidelines and priorities of the partner agency.

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## **Recommendations**

Member Associations are encouraged to offer assistance and advice to midwives in practice, education, policy and management to ensure care for women in their communities, based on continuity and collaboration. Member associations are also encouraged to seek appropriate partnerships for the benefit of women and newborns within their country or region.

## **Related ICM Documents**

ICM. 2008. Core Document. Vision Statement.

ICM. 2011. Core Document. International Definition of the Midwife.

ICM. 2014. Core Document. International Code of Ethics for Midwives.

## **Other Relevant Documents**

Bruce T, McKane S. Community-Based Public Health: A Partnership Model. Washington, DC, USA: American Public Health Association, 2000.

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health: Conceptual framework 2005

Save the Children Fund. 2014. Ending newborn deaths. Ensuring every baby survives. London, UK.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon. 2010. Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health.

WHO. World Health Report 2005: Make every woman and child count.

WHO. World Health Report 2006: Human resources for health.

## **Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008**

Reviewed and adopted at Prague Council meeting, 2014

*Due for next review 2020*