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## Position Statement

# The Midwife is the First Choice Health Professional for Childbearing Women

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## Background

In the context of widespread discussion about the global consensus on skilled attendants at childbirth, and the recognition of the central role of the midwife, ICM recognises a need to identify the midwife specifically as the most appropriate health care professional delivering skilled care to women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period.

Access to educated, competent and regulated midwives and midwifery services are essential resources in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity<sup>i ii iii</sup>. Analysis confirms that the world lacks some 350,000 midwives to fully meet the needs of childbearing women<sup>iv</sup>, and potentially saving the lives of 3.6 million women and newborns – averting two thirds of maternal and newborn mortality<sup>v</sup>.

## Position

ICM recognises midwives as the professional of choice for childbearing women in all regions of the world. This universal standard is based on initial and ongoing competency based midwifery education. ICM promotes the Midwifery Model of Care based on respect for human dignity, compassion and the promotion of human rights for all persons.

Given that there are insufficient midwives throughout the world to meet the needs of all childbearing women, ICM recognises the vital role that other health professionals play in saving the lives of both mothers and babies, especially in low-resource countries. Midwives will work with all levels of health workers to make childbearing safe for all women and newborns, while at the same time aspiring to achieve universal care by midwives for all women

In all collaborative work, ICM will promote and endorse midwives and midwifery skills as defined by the ICM *International Definition of the Midwife*<sup>vi</sup> and the ICM *Essential*

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*Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice*<sup>vii</sup>, as vital to the health and wellbeing of women and the newborn. This will underpin all ICM collaborative efforts. When, following global negotiations, a compromised statement is issued; the ICM will release a parallel statement endorsing the value of midwifery care in achieving the above.

### **Recommendations**

Member Associations are urged to

- Promote and endorse midwives and midwifery skills, as defined by the ICM core documents and position statements, as vital to the health and wellbeing of women and the newborn.
- Use this position statement, as needed, as a guide for expanding education programmes and regulatory frameworks, which will lead to an increased number of competent midwives in their countries practising the full scope of midwifery, in order better to serve childbearing women and their families.

### **Related ICM Documents**

ICM. 2010. Core Document. Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice. Amended 2013.

ICM. 2010. Core Document. Global Standards for Midwifery Education. Amended 2013.

ICM. 2010. Core document. Global Standards for Midwifery Education - Companion Guidelines.

ICM. 2010. Core Document. Global Standards for Midwifery Education - Glossary of Education Terms.

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

ICM. 2011. Core Document. Global Standards for Midwifery Regulation.

### **Other Relevant Documents**

UN. 2010. Every Woman Every Child. Global strategy for Women's and Children's Health.

UNFPA. 2011. The State of the World's Midwifery Report

WHO ICM FIGO. 2004. Making pregnancy safer: the critical role of the skilled attendant, a joint statement. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO/RHR, 2004.

WHO. 2013. The World Health Report 2013. Geneva, Switzerland.

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<sup>i</sup> Yakoob et al. 2011. The effect of providing skilled attendance and emergency obstetric care in preventing stillbirths. BMC Public Health. Vol 11 (suppl. 3):S7. <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/11/S3/S7/>

<sup>ii</sup> UNFPA. 2011. State of the World Midwifery. <http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/report/home.html>

<sup>iii</sup> Second Global Midwifery Symposium Strengthening Quality Midwifery Care: Making Strides, Addressing Challenges, 26-27 May 2013, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/Joint%20Statements/Joint%20Declaration.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> UNFPA. 2011. State of the World Midwifery <http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/report/home.html>

<sup>v</sup> Second Global Midwifery Symposium Strengthening Quality Midwifery Care: Making Strides, Addressing Challenges, 26-27 May 2013, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/assets/uploads/documents/Joint%20Statements/Joint%20Declaration.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> ICM. 2011. International Definition of the Midwife

<sup>vii</sup> ICM. 2010. Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice. Amended 2013.