



GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION & COMMITMENT

*5th Global Midwifery Symposium. Midwives: Leading the Way in Improving Quality Maternal & Newborn Care
8 May 2023*

At this 5th Global Midwifery Symposium, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and more than 20 global partners from civil society, academia, private sector, professional bodies and donors, renew our commitment to support, strengthen and promote midwifery models of care. Midwives provide the critical pathway to end preventable maternal and newborn deaths and stillbirths.

There is solid evidence that midwives play an important role in improving maternal and newborn health outcomes. Well-trained and supported midwives have the potential to provide 90% of all essential sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health services, amounting to 4.3 million lives saved annually by 2035. Midwives also enhance a positive birthing experience for women and reduce healthcare costs. Yet, they constitute just 10% of the global health workforce and there is a current shortage of 900,000 midwives. Investments are inadequate and political commitments are weak. The global context has never been more demanding as we see stagnating rates in maternal and newborn mortality reduction in many parts of the world. Achieving a global maternal mortality ratio of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030, SDG 3, will now require an annual reduction rate of 11.6% - a feat never previously achieved. Universal coverage of midwife-delivered care could prevent more than two-thirds of maternal and newborn deaths worldwide.





We, the Global Partners on Midwifery, therefore, call upon all United Nations member states to:

Promote midwifery care: Mainstream midwifery care in national reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health policies, primary healthcare and universal health coverage strategies, including country action plans around *Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP)* and *Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM)*.

Strengthen the Midwife Workforce: Invest in quality education, competent educators and educational institutions for sustainable results. Focus on building adequate numbers of midwives in low and middle-income countries, strengthen equitable deployment, and invest in retaining midwives in the workforce.

Improve Working Conditions and Support for Midwives: Ensure that midwives have support, access to adequate resources, equipment, are well regulated and work well within interdisciplinary teams. Also ensure midwives are not overlooked during health emergencies, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Prioritise the mental and physical well-being of midwives by providing them with fair wages, a safe working environment, and essential psychosocial support.

Address Barriers to Accessing Care from Midwives: Work to eliminate financial, geographical and cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing quality midwifery care. Invest in integrating models of care that promote woman-centred care by midwives and facilitate trust, empowerment and continuity.

Ensure Provision of Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Services by Midwives: Fully integrate midwives within health systems and enable them to provide comprehensive SRHR services, particularly contraceptive counselling, safe abortion care, and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

Monitor Progress and Strengthen Accountability: Establish monitoring and evaluation systems to measure the impact of midwifery interventions on maternal and newborn health outcomes. Hold governments, decision-makers, donors and health institutions accountable for their commitments to strengthen midwifery care. Encourage transparent reporting and data sharing to facilitate learning and inform evidence-based policy and practice.

We, the Symposium partners, also pledge to take this Call to Action and Commitment forward ourselves and integrate midwifery in all our respective maternal and newborn health programmes. We also seek support to help us implement a global joint programme on midwifery. We will speak with one voice and coordinate with each other to maximise our impact. Together, we will ensure that every woman and newborn has access to quality, respectful and rights-based care, regardless of their circumstances. This Call to Action reaffirms our commitment to our collective journey towards a healthier, more equitable world for all. **THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.**