



‘Saving Lives: highlighting the unique role of midwives in global maternal and newborn health’

FIGO supports International Day of the Midwife, 5 May 2012

International Day of the Midwife - held on 5 May each year - was originally launched by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) in 1992 as a campaigning day on which to raise awareness of midwifery and to highlight the importance of midwives' work worldwide. Taking place in the same month as the World Health Assembly, the day provides an ideal opportunity to rally global health leaders.

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) - the only global organisation representing gynecologists and obstetricians, with member associations in 124 countries/territories - strongly believes that there are excellent reasons for obstetricians and gynecologists to collaborate closely with midwives to help strengthen midwifery.

The urgent global need for midwives

- Every year 48 million women give birth without the support of someone with recognised midwifery skills.
- Over 350,000 women die each year as a result of preventable maternal causes. Millions more suffer infection and disability.
- Every year 2.6 million babies are stillborn.
- Every year over 800,000 newborn babies die during childbirth, and more than three million babies die before they are one month old.
- More than 7.6 million children die before the age of five.

In essence, many of these tragedies are preventable with proper midwifery care: midwives truly help to save lives.

Last year, a landmark publication - ‘The State of the World’s Midwifery Report 2011’ - launched at ICM’s triennial Congress in Durban, presented vital independent evidence to support the case that adequately educated and resourced midwives are crucial to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 4 (reducing child mortality) and 5 (improving maternal health).

In 2012 the aim of the International Day of the Midwife is to build on the achievements of the Durban campaign to engage stakeholders and to provide a platform to campaign globally for investment in midwifery education, employment and deployment.

The unique role of midwives

FIGO believes that it is essential that midwives receive proper training and support to enable more cost-effective and better quality maternal healthcare, and it continues to work with the ICM and other global partners towards securing these objectives. It recognises that midwives perform a truly versatile role - in addition to caring for women during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-natal period, and providing vital newborn care etc, they may also provide pre-pregnancy advice and education, help with breastfeeding and give assistance with immunisations and common illnesses, among numerous other responsibilities.

Promoting effective collaboration:

Health professional organisations and midwives

FIGO encourages its member societies to collaborate with midwifery associations -it believes that partnerships between these health professional organisations (HPOs) and midwives can produce effective professional results through complementary professional strengths, effective networking, and through encouraging sustainability.

Education, training and capacity building are major areas within FIGO's work. Obstetricians and gynecologists at national and international levels have been greatly involved in the institution, scaling up and upgrading of levels of midwifery education. There is a great need in many low- and middle-resource countries for the implementation and upgrading of midwifery education, with the aim of increasing quantity and improving quality.

Two of FIGO's major initiatives work actively with midwives.

FIGO LOGIC (Leadership in Obstetrics and Gynecology for Impact and Change) Initiative in Maternal and Newborn Health. A grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation enables FIGO to help improve the lives and health of women and newborns in low- and middle-resource countries with high maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity, especially underserved populations. Midwifery associations in all of the Initiative's countries are actively involved with this project. The countries involved are: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, India and Nepal.

FIGO Saving Mothers and Newborns Initiative FIGO has been building and sustaining the capacity of the ob/gyn and midwifery societies in 10 developing countries to conduct essential projects relevant to the promotion of safe motherhood and the improvement of maternal health. The countries involved are: Haiti, Kenya, Kosovo, Moldova, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Uganda, Ukraine and Uruguay.

FIGO's support for ICM global standards

FIGO is committed to working with ICM, and aligns itself with its global standards in education, regulation, and essential competencies. At national and international levels FIGO could play a vital role in advocacy, policy development and implementation of the midwifery education initiative. FIGO and ICM could work together with national policymakers and international

agencies for support in availing resources for scaling up midwifery education both in quantity and quality.

A recent high-level meeting of global midwifery education representatives - organised by the ICM, and in which FIGO actively participated - took place at The Hague in January 2012. The occasion provided focus on the issue of education and standards, and enabled stakeholders to identify an effective workplan for collaboration and resource-sharing, among other issues.

FIGO is committed to working with ICM and partners on raising the status and profile of midwives and their training, recognising that midwives have a critical role to play in achieving quality of care across the life-cycle, and in ensuring that women and children receive the best available care during the most vulnerable times of their lives.

Sources/useful links/joint statements

<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/>

<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/Whatwedo/InternationalDayoftheMidwife/InternationalDayoftheMidwife2012/tabid/1094/Default.aspx>

<http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/report/home.html>

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2011/stillbirths_20110414/en/index.html

In 2009, FIGO joined forces with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the International Pediatric Association (IPA) and the White Ribbon Alliance to sign a global open letter to G8 leaders on the needs for midwives.

(<http://www.figo.org/news/maternal-mortality-campaign-letter-signed-figo-presented-g8-leaders>).

Adolescent Reproductive Health and Adolescent Pregnancy (ICM-FIGO-IPA)
<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/Portals/5/ICM%20FIGO%20IPA%20Joint%20Statement%20on%20Adolescents%20-%20Sept%202009.pdf>

Family Planning: A Key Component of Post-Abortion Care (ICM-FIGO-ICN-USAID)

<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/Portals/5/Joint%20Statement%20on%20FPPAC-Eng.pdf>