



# National Standards for Midwives

(Core Competencies and Education)

2015



**Ministry of Health and Sports**  
**Department of Health Professional**  
**Resource Development and Management**

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# FOREWORD

The WHO first report of the independent Expert Review Group (iERG) on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health declared that there has been considerable progress in addressing maternal and child mortality, but MDGs 4 and 5 will not be met in most developing countries by 2015 where women and infants continue to die from preventable causes.

In order to improve maternal health, it has been recognized that the cornerstone of good quality maternal health care is a person with adequate knowledge and skills in midwifery. In Myanmar, basic health staff including midwives are responsible for providing health services to approximately 70% of the population, largely in rural areas. Additionally, nurses and midwives are the largest number among health personnel, and midwives play a pivotal role in providing care to reduce maternal & child deaths. In light of this, and in response to the needs expressed by the public, the Ministry of Health has undertaken a number of initiatives to strengthen midwifery education and practice in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. Moreover, the current National Health Plan (2011-2016) highlights the importance of developing a comprehensive National Strategic Plan for Health Human Resource to strengthen health system through effective health human resource planning, development and management. The Ministry of Health is also making major investments in strengthening the capacity of universities and other training institutions for health professionals to provide quality education. (Health Workforce Strategic Plan 2012-2017).

The new midwifery curriculum which was upgraded from one and a half year certificate course to a two year diploma course was approved by the University Senate in February 2012 and it has been in use since November 2012. With UNFPA support, the Department of Health Professional Resource Development and Management (DHPRDM) has been conducting Training of Trainers and hands-on trainings on Basic Emergency Obstetric Care & Emergency Newborn Care for faculty members of nursing and midwifery schools across the country since 2012 to equip them with updated knowledge and skills.

Led by the Ministry of Health and supported by UNFPA, the ASEAN Task Force on Maternal and Child Health organized a workshop in October 2013 to develop the ASEAN Regional Guideline for Minimum Requirements for Training and Accreditation of Skilled Birth Attendants. The Guideline was launched in December 2014 and in the following consultation for midwifery standards, stakeholders discussed in detail, earlier recommendations made at the launch of the State of the World Midwifery Report 2014 and the Stakeholder Meeting for Midwifery in Myanmar which was organized by the Ministry of Health, UNFPA and Jhpiego. These recommendations included strengthening midwifery education, developing a definitive career path for midwives and enhancing midwifery accreditation/licensing. Higher authorities' commitment was taken for these recommendations at the Executive Committee Meeting 4/ 2015 of the Ministry of Health in February 2015.

As one of the outcomes of these developments, a stakeholder meeting on the development of national midwifery standards and strengthening midwifery education was conducted in June 2015, culminating in the publication of the National Standards for Midwives (Core Competencies and Education) which provides critical information on the required core competencies of midwives in Myanmar, the standards for the training programmes, as well as relevant requirements for training institutions.

The Ministry of Health would like to take this opportunity to thank UNFPA for its partnership and contributions towards advancement of midwifery in Myanmar. I am confident that this National Standards for Midwives (Core Competencies and Education) will be followed by midwives and faculty members of nursing and midwifery institutions in providing maternal and newborn care in their respective communities, contributing to better health outcomes for mothers and their newborns.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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In Myanmar, where 70% of the population live in rural areas, midwives play an important role in providing vital support to a woman who is pregnant or giving birth. Midwives can make a difference between life and death of mothers and newborns when they provide basic emergency obstetric care. According to WHO standards, 23 health workers (doctors, nurses and midwives) per 10,000 population are needed for delivering quality maternal and newborn health services. Myanmar is yet to reach this minimal standard. And, in a country that has approximately 21,435 midwives and 66,000 villages, where the Government is ambitiously aiming to have “one midwife for every village”, there is considerable way yet to go in order to fill the need for more midwives.

Myanmar’s first report on midwifery was launched in October 2014, having for the second time also participated in the State of the World’s Midwifery (SoWMY) 2014 global survey. The findings of this study and the consultations that ensued outlined how midwifery in Myanmar needed to be strengthened as well as promoted. Midwifery education and its professionalization especially were cited as two key areas that needed to be addressed in order to ensure consistent, competent and safe clinical practice.

“The National Standards for Midwives (Core Competencies and Education)” are the culmination of a joint effort that began in June 2015, between UNFPA Myanmar and the Department of Health Professional Resource Development and Management (DHPRDM), Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Council (MNMC). Technical and financial support was provided to develop the national midwifery standards in line with ASEAN Regional Guidelines.

UNFPA congratulates the Ministry of Health and Sports for this accomplishment. These National Standards for Midwives will provide critical information on the required competencies for midwives in Myanmar. They set out the standards for training programmes and the requirements for training institutions. They are fundamental to larger efforts in the skilling and professionalizing of midwives.

Our grateful thanks, therefore, go to the concerned departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports, including the Department of Health Professional Resource Development and Management, the Department of Public Health and the Department of Medical Services, the professors and heads of nursing universities, the principals and trainers of midwifery schools from across the country, the assistant directors of nursing from states and regions, as well as WHO, UNICEF, Jhpiego and members of the Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Association and the Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Council. Special thanks also go to the steering and working committees, facilitators and participants of the workshop who contributed to the development of these standards.

UNFPA continues to be committed to promoting and supporting the role of skilled birth attendants and midwives and recognizes the important contribution they make to reducing maternal and neonatal mortality. The production of the National Standards is a clear step towards midwifery being recognized as a profession in its own right in Myanmar. This will make for a stronger and more confident health workforce and in delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.



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