

Regional Strategic Directions for
Strengthening Midwifery
in South East Asia Region
2020–2024



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

South-East Asia

Regional Strategic
Directions for
strengthening midwifery
in the South-East Asia
Region 2020-2024

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Foreword

The WHO South-East Asia Region has made significant progress towards ending preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths. Between 2000 and 2019 the Region reduced the maternal mortality rate by more than 57%. Between 1990 and 2018 the Region reduced neonatal mortality by 60%. To meet the Sustainable Development Goal targets, sustained and accelerated progress is needed: By 2030, all countries must reduce maternal mortality by at least two thirds from the 2010 baseline. Neonatal mortality must be at least as low as 12 per 1000 live births. To achieve these targets, all countries must strengthen human resources for health, especially for sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health.



Across the Region, the services midwives provide, and the settings in which they work, vary. In many countries, at the primary health care level, midwives provide antenatal and postnatal care for the mother and newborn, as well as family planning. At secondary and tertiary levels, they provide intrapartum care, alongside medical doctors, nurses and, when complications occur, obstetricians/gynaecologists. In all settings, an adequate number of competent midwifery professionals and associate professionals must be trained and deployed to provide quality maternal and newborn care to all who need it.

Member States in the Region are making progress. Bangladesh, India and Nepal have in recent years introduced midwifery education. They joined DPR Korea, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste in establishing midwives as an independent cadre of the health workforce. In Bhutan, Maldives and Thailand, nursing professionals continue to cover midwifery services. All countries must identify the policies and plans of action required to maximize the strength and quality of midwifery cadres.

This document – *Regional Strategic Directions on Strengthening Midwifery Education and Services in SEAR* – is designed to guide Member States and partners to assess, develop and strengthen midwifery education and services in a systematic and harmonized manner. It provides a set of key elements, strategic directions and key actions to support countries, and encourages them to learn from one another's experiences and adapt best practices. Member States are encouraged to use this document to understand and examine gaps and chart the way forward for improving midwifery education and services.

As we celebrate 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, I urge all Member States and partners to make full use of this resource to strengthen midwifery education and services across the South-East Asia Region. We must continue to reduce all preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths and accelerate towards the 2030 SDG targets.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Poonam Khetrpal Singh'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh

Regional Director
WHO South-East Asia Region

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