

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION



STRENGTHENING QUALITY MIDWIFERY EDUCATION for Universal Health Coverage 2030



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for
Universal Health Coverage 2030



Strengthening quality midwifery education for Universal Health Coverage 2030: framework for action

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Foreword

Childbirth should be one of the most transformative and rewarding events of a woman's life. It should also be safe and remembered with great joy and love. We all want newborns to be born healthy, live long and fruitful lives, and contribute positively to the future of their societies.

Yet despite significant gains in the era of the Millennium Development Goals, 830 women and 7000 newborns still die every day due to complications in pregnancy and childbirth. In the Sustainable Development Goals, we have committed to a rapid and dramatic reduction in these appalling statistics. However, 50% of maternal deaths and over 60% of neonatal deaths arise from poor quality care. This is unconscionable in the 21st century.

We have a solution, a key part of the puzzle. Recent evidence indicates that when midwives are educated to international standards, and midwifery includes the provision of family planning, it could avert more than 80% of all maternal deaths, stillbirths and neonatal deaths. Achieving this impact also requires that midwives are licensed, regulated, fully integrated into health systems and working in interprofessional teams.

Beyond preventing maternal and newborn deaths, quality midwifery care improves over 50 other health-related outcomes, including in sexual and reproductive health, immunization, breastfeeding, tobacco cessation in pregnancy, malaria, TB, HIV and obesity in pregnancy, early childhood development and postpartum depression.

Midwives educated to international standards not only improve overall health, but because they work across the entire continuum of care, from communities to hospitals, they are uniquely able to provide essential services to women and newborns in even the most difficult humanitarian, fragile and conflict-affected settings. This means that midwives will make a significant contribution to delivering on the commitments made in the Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care and the Global Action Plan on Healthy Lives and Well-Being. Yet there is a startling lack of investment in quality midwifery education. We must turn this around.

This Framework for Action identifies three strategic priorities for harnessing the power of midwives: "rethinking" the education and certification of midwives to international standards, with the title "midwife" given only when this is achieved; strengthening midwifery leadership; and stronger alignment of partners to improve quality midwifery education. A seven-step action plan to strengthen quality midwifery education has been developed, and partners have committed to action.

Led by educated and empowered women for centuries, midwifery has not been given its rightful place in health care, but has been diminished by institutionalized medical hierarchies. This year, we have a unique opportunity to empower and dignify midwives and ensure that women and newborns receive the quality care they deserve.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization



Natalia Kanem
Executive Director
UNFPA



The demand from women for quality midwifery care is increasing, and so is the demand from midwives for better education. Our hope is that this report will spur the international community to commit to investing in quality midwifery education to improve quality of care and ensure better outcomes for all women, newborns and families, everywhere.

Henrietta H. Fore
Executive Director
UNICEF



Franka Cadée
President
International Confederation of Midwives



Executive summary



Photo 1: Quality midwifery education in Viet Nam ensures positive communication between midwife and mother with her baby.

The impact of midwifery education: why we need to act now

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