

Many midwives around the world celebrate the 'International Day of the Midwife' on **May 5th** each year. The ICM established the idea of the 'International Day of the Midwife' following suggestions and discussion among member associations in the late 1980s, then launched the initiative formally in 1992. The aim of the day is to celebrate midwifery and to bring awareness of the importance of midwives' work to as many people as possible. This is done in many different ways according to what works best in each country. Examples of activities with which midwifery associations mark the day include:

Organizing a street parade and rally in a public place.

- Setting up stalls in a market to publicize midwifery services and to offer information and advice.
- Holding a meeting, workshop or conference to hear about new developments in midwifery and exchange news with other midwives in the region.
- Giving awards to individual or groups of midwives for special pieces of work.
- In countries where midwifery is well established, raising money to help midwives overseas where extra resources are greatly needed (for example buying bicycles for midwives' transport in remote areas, or sponsoring a midwife to attend an important conference).

Some midwives just get together to talk, eat, drink, perhaps sing or dance, and generally have a good time!

The International Day of the Midwife is an occasion for every individual midwife to think about the many others in the profession, to make new contacts within and outside midwifery, and to widen the knowledge of what midwives do for the world. In the years leading up to 2015, ICM will use the overarching theme "The World Needs Midwives Today More Than Ever" as part of an ongoing campaign to highlight the need for midwives. This reflects the WHO call for midwives and the need to accelerate progress towards MDGs 4 and 5.

International Day of the Midwife – 5 May

The World Needs Midwives Now More Than Ever!

Midwife numbers must be expanded to achieve Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 by 2015
350,000 more midwives are needed!

The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2008 states: *The high risk of dying in pregnancy or childbirth continues unabated in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia ... little progress has been made in saving mothers' lives. Over 60% of women in these areas of the world still do not have skilled care during childbirth.*

This report notes better progress for all of the MDG goals, apart from MDG5! Yet all the goals are linked: until poverty and hunger are reduced, until diseases such as HIV and malaria are controlled, until there is more equality between men and women, until every child completes primary education, until all women have access to reproductive healthcare - then mothers and babies will continue to die.

Midwives are key healthcare providers in achieving MDG 5: Improving Maternal Health

That is the clear message coming from the WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank: the four UN agencies that have recently united to pledge increased support to countries with the highest maternal mortality rates.

They identified mortality in pregnancy and childbirth as the “highest health inequity in the world with over 99% of deaths occurring in the developing world”. They committed to work with governments and civil society organizations to address the “urgent need for skilled health workers, particularly midwives”.

Midwives provide skilled newborn care to achieve MDG 4: Reduce Child Mortality

Every year in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia more than 1 million infants die within their first 24 hours of life due to lack of adequate health services, including midwifery care. The midwives of the world understand that every childbearing woman deserves to give birth within a safe and supported environment for herself and her baby. Skilled midwifery care includes emergency care for both mothers and their newborns.

The achievement of MDGs 4, 5 and 6 requires a global commitment to grow a strong, well educated midwifery workforce within functioning health service delivery systems.