



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS - August 2018

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### International Day of the Midwife 2018

A statement was made on the occasion of IDM by Her Excellency Toyin Saraki, ICM Goodwill Ambassador:

‘As Global Ambassador for the International Confederation of Midwives, I am delighted to see the importance of midwives be exhibited so purposefully and effectively as we come together in celebration of International Day of the Midwife on the 5th of May.

‘This day marks several milestones on the journey towards ensuring all midwives across the world are given the tools to effectively provide the best information, life-saving services and platforms for them to do their best work.

‘The United Nations Population Fund indicates that midwives could help avert an estimated two thirds of all maternal and new-born deaths and, with the global theme “Midwives Leading the way with Quality Care”, the ICM is delivering on this notion and turning it into a reality.

‘I can attest to the transformational power of midwifery in helping mothers achieve better childbirth outcomes, as demonstrated when the Wellbeing Foundation placed midwifery, midwives, and their key compassionate competencies, at the core of our mission for safer childbirth in Nigeria.

‘Our MamaCare Antenatal and Postnatal classes across Nigeria have provided a successful continuum of counsel and care for hundreds of thousands of women, preparing them for birth, without a single fatality - also achieving the WHO benchmark of 8 antenatal visits for low and middle-income countries.

‘Midwives encompass Healers, Activists, Storytellers, Pathfinders and more. They are the best suited beside a woman when she needs it most – as she delivers life longing for itself and enters a constant process of caring for, protecting and nurturing this new life.

‘As we continue to grow in partners, volume and voices, I congratulate the International Confederation of Midwives and commemorate all those midwives across the world, whose work has delivered long-standing improvements for women and new-borns and whose work continues today, and tomorrow’.

Her Excellency Toyin Saraki is Founder-President, The Wellbeing Foundation for Africa; Independent Advisor to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Africa Office (AFRO); Chair of the White Ribbon Alliance Nigeria; Global Ambassador for the International Confederation

of Midwives; National Newborn Champion for Save the Children Nigeria.

<https://internationalmidwives.org/news/?nid=486>

### WHO says midwives are essential to the provision of quality of care, in all settings, globally

On 5 May 2018, International day of the Midwife, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated:

All women and newborns have a right to a quality of care that enables a positive childbirth experience that includes respect and dignity, a companion of choice, clear communication by maternity staff, pain relief strategies, mobility in labour and birth position of choice.

Evidence shows us that: midwives educated and qualified to international standards can provide 87% of services needed by mothers and newborns; and women in receipt of WHO-recommended midwife-led continuity of care experience a 24% reduction of preterm births, are 16% less likely to lose their baby, and report higher satisfaction with their birth experience.

We must work to ensure that all women have access to continuity of care delivered by a midwife educated and regulated to ICM Standards.

Safe water, sanitation and good hygiene save lives: for many midwives it is not possible to provide quality of care because of lack of basic water and sanitation services. Around 38% of facilities lack access to even rudimentary levels of water, 19% lack sanitation and 35% do not have water and soap for handwashing.

Lack of basic water and sanitation is a major cause of sepsis, which affects 3 million newborns, can kill up to 500,000 neonates and causes 1 in 10 maternal deaths. WHO’s annual call to action WHO SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands, also on 5 May, focussed this year on the control and management of sepsis.

[http://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/news\\_events/events/international-day-midwife-2018/en/](http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/news_events/events/international-day-midwife-2018/en/)

### WHO and UNICEF issue new guidance to promote breastfeeding in health facilities globally

In April 2018, WHO and UNICEF issued new ten-step guidance to increase support for breastfeeding in health facilities that provide maternity and newborn services.

Breastfeeding all babies for the first two years would save the lives of more than 820,000 children under age 5 annually.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2018.05.012>

The *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* underpin the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative, which both organizations launched in 1991. The practical guidance encourages new mothers to breastfeed and informs health workers how best to support breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is vital to a child's lifelong health, and reduces costs for health facilities, families, and governments.

Breastfeeding within the first hour of birth protects newborn babies from infections and saves lives. Infants are at greater risk of death due to diarrhoea and other infections when they are only partially breastfed or not breastfed at all.

Breastfeeding also improves IQ, school readiness and attendance, and is associated with higher income in adult life. It also reduces the risk of breast cancer in the mother.

"Breastfeeding saves lives. Its benefits help keep babies healthy in their first days and last will into adulthood," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore. "But breastfeeding requires support, encouragement and guidance. With these basic steps, implemented properly, we can significantly improve breastfeeding rates around the world and give children the best possible start in life."

WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says that in many hospitals and communities around the world, whether a child can be breastfed or not can make the difference between life and death, and whether a child will develop to reach his or her full potential. "Hospitals are not there just to cure the ill. They are there to promote life and ensure people can thrive and live their lives to their full potential," says Dr Tedros. "As part of every country's drive to achieve universal health coverage, there is no better or more crucial place to start than by ensuring the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* are the standard for care of mothers and their babies."

The new guidance describes practical steps countries should take to protect, promote and support breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services. They provide the immediate health system platform to help mothers initiate breastfeeding within the first hour and breastfeed exclusively for six months.

It describes how hospitals should have a written breastfeeding policy in place, staff competencies, and antenatal and post-birth care, including breastfeeding support for mothers. It also recommends limiting use of breastmilk substitutes, rooming-in, responsive feeding, educating parents on the use of bottles and pacifiers, and support when mothers and babies are discharged from hospital.

The Ten Steps are based on the WHO guidelines, issued in November 2017, titled *Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services*.

Early initiation of breastfeeding, within one hour of birth, protects the newborn from acquiring infections and reduces newborn mortality. Starting breastfeeding early increases the chances of a successful continuation of breastfeeding. Exclusive breastfeeding for six months has many benefits for the infant and mother. Chief among these is protection against gastrointestinal infections and malnutrition, which are observed not only in developing but also industrialized countries.

Breast-milk is also an important source of energy and nutrients in children aged 6–23 months. It can provide half or more of a child's energy needs between 6–12 months, and one-third of energy needs between 12–24 months. Breast-milk is also a critical source of energy and nutrients during illness, and reduces mortality among children who are malnourished.

Children and adolescents who were breastfed as babies are less likely to be overweight or obese.

<http://www.who.int/news-room/detail/11-04-2018-who-and-unicef-issue-new-guidance-to-promote-breastfeeding-in-health-facilities-globally>

### UN Commission on the Status of Women moves to ensure the rights of rural women and girls

The UN's largest annual gathering on gender equality and women's rights concluded with the strong commitment by UN Member States to

achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. Coming on the heels of unprecedented global activism and public outcry to end gender injustice and discrimination worldwide, the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) reached a robust agreement highlighting the urgency of empowering and supporting those who need it most and have, for too long, been left behind.

Today, 1.6 billion people still live in poverty, and nearly 80 per cent of the extreme poor live in rural areas. Many of them are rural women. They continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged – for instance, they have less access to economic resources and opportunities, quality education, health care, land, agricultural inputs and resources, infrastructure and technology, justice and social protection.

The outcome of the two-week meeting, known as the Agreed Conclusions adopted by Member States, puts forth concrete measures to lift rural women and girls out of poverty and to ensure their rights, well-being and resilience. These include ensuring their adequate living standards with equal access to land and productive assets, ending poverty, enhancing their food security and nutrition, decent work, infrastructure and technology, education and health, including their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and ending all forms of violence and harmful practices. Member States recognize in the conclusions rural women's important role in addressing hunger and food insecurity. This strong outcome provides a roadmap on next steps that governments, civil society and women's groups can undertake to support the realization of rural women's rights and address their needs.

The Executive Director of UN Women, which serves as the CSW Secretariat, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, said: "The Commission's agreement on measures to bring substantive equality to women and girls in rural areas is a vital step forward. In the Commission's two weeks of dialogue we have heard clearly from the women and girls themselves what they want: from the rights to own property, to the need for quality infrastructure, to the rights to make decisions about their own bodies and lives. Effective action to bring the changes they need will take the continued engagement of all partners, from governments to civil society. Rural women themselves must be able to speak up and be heard in all consultations, and youth delegations must be included at all levels. These agreements are made in the meeting rooms of New York but must take effect in the lives of women and girls we are here to serve."

Member States expressed deep concern about the increasing challenges that are exacerbating the disadvantages and inequalities that rural women and girls face – from humanitarian emergencies and armed conflicts to the adverse impacts of climate change. In its final agreement, the Commission emphasized that rural women and girls are essential to sustainable development, and their rights and empowerment needs to be prioritized. A broad range of concrete next steps and recommendations were outlined in the Agreed Conclusions.

They include:

- Provision of universal health coverage, and realizing the need for women and girls in rural areas to manage and exercise their sexual and reproductive health.
- Accelerate action to end all forms of violence against women, including harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018/session-outcomes>

### Global advocacy initiative launches to demand quality healthcare for women and girls

Across 25 countries and 6 continents, 145 global and national partners united on the International Day for Maternal Health and Rights in April to reach a million women and girls.

With growing consensus among global and national health leaders that quality healthcare for women and girls is vital if we are going to achieve related Sustainable Development Goals and universal health

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