



Joint message of Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund, and Agneta S. Bridges, Secretary General, ICM, International Confederation of Midwives

International Day of the Midwife, 5 May 2012

Investing in Midwifery Pays

On this International Day of the Midwife, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund and ICM, the International Confederation of Midwives, commend the important work of midwives in promoting good health and making pregnancies and childbirths safe.

The right to health is a basic human right that every woman should enjoy. Yet, every day, almost 1000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth. Every year, 8 million women suffer serious pregnancy-related illnesses and disabilities, such as obstetric fistula, and 2 million babies don't survive the first 24 hours of their lives. One of the main causes for these tragedies is lack of access to maternity services, including the care of midwives or others with midwifery skills at childbirth.

UNFPA and ICM are leading efforts to promote midwifery around the world. The two organizations scaled up efforts to strengthen midwifery training programmes and policies in 30 countries. Last year, together with 28 partners, UNFPA and ICM also launched the first ever State of the World's Midwifery report, which showed that no health-care system can be efficient and effective if it ignores the importance of midwifery.

Urgent action is needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 on child and maternal health before the target year of 2015, and investing in human resources for health, especially midwifery, is one of the soundest investments a country can make to accelerate progress. Midwives are the unsung heroes of women's and children's health, and their work must be supported every step of the way.