
Core Document

Bill of Rights for Women and Midwives

Background

The International Confederation of Midwives calls for governments globally to recognise and support accessible and effective midwifery care as a basic human right of all women, babies and midwives.

The issues for women around gender equity and access to education also extend to midwives as a woman-dominated profession. The Bill of Rights for Women and Midwives addresses those basic human rights of women and midwives that have been systematically denied and adds another framework to approach governments when demanding change to improve midwifery and maternity services.

Recognition and support of the ICM's vision, mission, philosophy and standards by governments will enable nations to meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically:

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages,

- 3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births,
- 3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

ICM believes women have a right to a midwife as the most appropriate care provider in most situations and midwives have a right to obtain adequate education, regulations to foster their practice and associations to forward their mission.

Bill of Rights

In keeping with other similar documents, the ICM believes that there should be recognition of the following as basic human rights for women and midwives across the globe; namely that:

Women's Rights

1. Every woman has the right to receive care in childbirth from an autonomous and competent midwife
2. Every newborn baby has the right to a healthy and well informed mother
3. Every woman has a right to be respected as a person of value and worth
4. Every woman has a right to security of her body
5. Every woman has a right to be free from any form of discrimination
6. Every woman has a right to up-to-date health information
7. Every woman has a right to participate actively in decisions about her health care and to offer informed consent
8. Every woman has a right to privacy
9. Every woman has a right to choose the place where she gives birth

Midwives' Rights

1. Every midwife has the right to a midwifery-specific education that will enable her to develop and maintain competency as a midwife
2. Every midwife has the right to practise on her own responsibility within the International Confederation of Midwives definition and scope of practice of a midwife
3. Every midwife has the right to be recognised, respected and supported as a health professional
4. Midwives have the right to access a strong midwifery association that can contribute to midwifery and maternity policy and services at a national level

Women's and Midwives' Rights

1. Midwives and women have the right to a system of regulation that will ensure a safe, competent and autonomous midwifery workforce for women and their babies.
2. Midwives and women have the right to national midwifery workforce planning to ensure sufficient midwives to meet the needs of women and babies
3. Women and midwives have the right to be respected by governments and government institutions for health and education
4. The midwifery profession has the right to be recognised as a separate and distinct profession

Relevant ICM Documentation

ICM. 2014. Core Document. International Code of Ethics for Midwives.

ICM. 2017. Core Document. International Definition of The Midwife.

ICM. 2010. Core Document. Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice. (Amended 2013)

ICM. 2010. Global Standards for Midwifery Education. (Amended 2013)

ICM. 2011. Global Standards for Midwifery Regulation. (Amended 2013)

ICM, WHO and ICN. 2007. Joint Statement Islamabad Declaration on Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery March 4-6, Pakistan.

Adopted at Durban Council meeting, 2011

Reviewed and adopted at Toronto Council meeting, 2017

Due for next review 2023