The ICM Midwifery Services Framework (MSF) Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the MSF? (definition)**
   The Midwifery Services Framework (MSF) is a tool designed by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and partners to support a step by step development and strengthening of a country’s health system and midwifery services, with a focus on developing a quality midwifery workforce.

2. **What is the MSF for?**
   The MSF shows governments and others how to set up or strengthen their health system, national midwifery programmes and integrate midwifery into the Human Resources for Health (HRH) agenda, assess what needs improvement and how to achieve the desired changes in SRMNH services.

3. **Why is it important? (required)**
   The goal of the framework is to lay the foundation of pragmatic steps and supporting tools that can be used by all involved in healthcare provision and all the decision makers, to support any country, whether they are high, middle or low income.

4. **What does the MSF have to offer?**
   The MSF offers a systematic step by step approach to tackle the wider issues of health system strengthening, quality improvement of SRMNH care and effective HRH development.

5. **How does it work?**
   The MSF uses a participatory approach, bringing together all stakeholders, key decision makers, programme planners and implementers, health care professional associations and the consumers of service, to discuss and agree on the package of care to be offered, the manpower required to offer that package, how to organize the health system to ensure optimum effectiveness and how to address some of the gaps and challenges impacting on quality of care provision. The MSF makes it clear that no one professional group can do it alone and that decision makers need input from implementers and consumers to provide optimum services to their populations.

6. **Why is the government involved?**
   The involvement of government is based on the premise that the health of any nation is the responsibility of government. At the same time, the health of a nation is everyone’s business. Hence the involvement of all stakeholders and individuals from both public and private sectors, not only health professionals and health professional decision makers.

7. **Who initiates the MSF process in a country?**
   The process is initiated by a request from the national government and ICM responds with an introductory visit. This introduction to the MSF gives the country an opportunity to decide whether or not to adopt it. Once a decision to implement is agreed, an agreement to collaborate is signed by both parties and the work starts.

8. **Who introduces the MSF in a country?**
ICM works with governments through the midwives associations and partners to introduce and implement MSF in countries where it is chosen. The process involves participation of Ministers of Health, health professional associations, key decision makers of different departments of the Ministry of Health, health care educational institutions, public and private organisations and development partners including JHPIEGO, GIZ and UN agencies (UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF, UNAIDS, World Bank) where they have country offices.

9. **How is the MSF assessment developed?**
   There are two preparatory steps, four service development steps and one ongoing activity in the framework:

   **Preparatory steps:**
   1. Collect essential background information
   2. Set up the M&E mechanism

   **Midwifery service development steps:**
   1. Agree on the package of SRMNH care that women and families should receive and define the services that midwives will provide
   2. Discuss how SRMNH services should be organized to deliver midwife-led care with effective back-up
      1. The midwife-led model of care
      2. Guaranteeing available, accessible, acceptable and quality care
   3. Workforce and enabling environment
      1. Develop the workforce
      2. Create an enabling environment
   4. Test, monitor, evaluate, adapt midwifery services

   **Ongoing activity:** set up and strengthen the midwives association.

10. **How are the MSF assessment results used?**
   National governments can initiate a meeting with ICM experts to identify what kind of support is needed, who would be involved and when. This is followed by the creation of Technical Working Groups (TWG) made up of nationals with expertise to address specific identified gaps and challenges. ICM supports each TWG in developing a work plan with timelines. ICM can also support the government in providing any expertise that might not be easily available in the country.
   The whole process may take up to 2 to 3 years and the government can repeat the assessment to measure progress.

For further information, please contact the International Confederation of Midwives at info@internationalmidwives.org, visit www.internationalmidwves.org or call +31 70 3060520.