The Midwifery Services Framework (MSF) for Developing Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn Health (SRMNH) Services is a tool developed by International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and partners¹ to support the development and strengthening of midwifery services across countries, focusing on a quality midwifery workforce.

The MSF offers a systemic approach for tackling the wider issue of health system strengthening and improvement of the quality of sexual and reproductive health care. The quality maternal and newborn health services can be improved by the integration of midwifery services across the health system.

The framework provides health system developers and planners, maternal and newborn health experts, policy makers and other stakeholders with an evidence-based tool. From this tool they are able to develop new or strengthen existing midwifery services to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. The MSF supports the implementation of the midwife-led model of care, which has proven to be an effective and desirable model of care provision for women and their families.

The MSF is designed to scale up midwifery programmes and strengthen health systems to deliver quality SRMNH services and to integrate midwifery in the national Human Resources for Health (HRH) agenda through effective programme and health system development and advocacy. It spells out the tools that can help countries to do that. It helps governments and stakeholders assess the current situation of their health system, workforce and service provision, what needs to be improved and what tools are available to achieve the desired changes.

The tool explains key midwifery and health system concepts, outlines a step-by-step approach on how to set up MNCH services including discussion of the package of care that women and newborn need, education, regulation, and effective management of the workforce and builds in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the process. The process results in a clear to-do list of what needs to be done to optimize the system and the services.

The components of the framework can be used in sequence, or separately to develop, strengthen certain parts of a country’s midwifery services, or to evaluate their efficiency.

¹ UNFPA, WHO, Jhpiego, ICS Integrare and various midwifery, obstetrics, health systems and health workforce experts
Why is MSF REQUIRED?

Many countries have identified the need to strengthen SRMNH services and understand the value of setting up or improving their midwifery services. Many global and national development partners are also interested in inserting midwifery care into national health systems to increase the survival, health and wellbeing of women, children and families. In many cases, however, the question remains – how does a country develop or strengthen midwifery services?

How does the MSF WORK?

Implementation of the MSF is initiated by a national government and starts with a meeting with ICM experts to identify exactly what kind of support is needed, who would be involved and what the potential timeline for MSF assessment and implementation would be. A workshop with national stakeholders in SRMNH services to work through the steps of the MSF (Box 1) is then organised and facilitated by ICM experts. This generates a set of actions to be undertaken nationally, using the tools that are linked to the steps of the MSF. ICM provides support in setting up technical working groups for the next steps and is available for further guidance over a period of one year after the conclusion of the national MSF workshop. Additional support within the working groups and beyond the one-year window can also be discussed and agreed.

1. Package of care - agree on the package of SRMNH care women and families receive and define the care that midwives will provide

2. How SRMNH services should be organised
   Agree how the service network should be organised to deliver midwife-led care with effective backup that guarantees available, accessible, acceptable and high quality integrated care

3a. Develop the workforce
   Required number and distribution of midwives
   Recruitment, deployment, retention
   Education and regulation capacity, institutions, faculty, curricula
   Regulation, regulatory bodies, roles and responsibilities

3b. Create an enabling environment
   Facilities, commodities, equipment, transport, communication
   Mentorship and peer support, professional and career development
   Respectful working environment – safe environment, coordination of integrated care along the continuum

4. Test, evaluate, adapt, monitor
   Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
   Adaptation of midwifery services to local need & situation

Ongoing: Develop or strengthen the midwives association

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