

Definition of a Midwives's Association

ICM defines a midwives' association as a professional association of midwives that is the voice for midwives, supporting midwives, building professionalism and representing the interests of midwives to governments and other stakeholders. The ultimate goal of a midwives' association is to enhance personalised, quality sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health services through autonomous, responsible and accountable midwives working across their full scope of practice. As an association representing and speaking for midwives, a midwives' association does not regulate the profession, although it may provide standards and professional activities that contribute to regulatory frameworks. Midwives' associations are usually organised as non-profit, civil society organisations, with voluntary membership.

Most midwives are women, as a result, midwives' associations are primarily women-led organisations. Midwives' associations can have paid staff, be fully run by volunteers, or a combination of the two. Although midwives' associations are led by midwives, some staff members may be experts in other fields (e.g. finance, communications) and are not midwives.

Activities of midwives' associations may include:

- Promoting the profession and encouraging people to utilise midwives for care and/or to become midwives and join the profession.
- Educating the public on the role of a midwife and the benefits of care from a midwife as well as issues that prevent access to midwife-led care, including continuity of midwife care.
- Lobbying policymakers to improve services for girls, women, gender diverse people and newborns through strengthening the midwifery profession and enabling midwives to practise across their full scope of practice.
- Providing professional development for midwives through practice standards, continuing education, learning resources, newsletters, journals, conferences, workshops and other activities to ensure quality midwife services.

- Advocating for appropriate financial remuneration and working conditions for midwives, working with unions and other organisations during pay negotiations.
- Providing advice and support to midwives regarding professional practice and during disciplinary procedures.
- Collaborating with other professional associations such as those that represent obstetricians, paediatricians, neonatologists, neonatal nurses, nurses and others on initiatives to improve SRMNH care.
- Representing the profession and advising schools of midwifery and midwifery regulatory authorities.
- Collaborating with ministries of health and education in relation to strengthening midwifery.
- Representing midwives and the profession in national, regional and global fora.
- Improving the status of the profession.

ICM is a midwives' association, and most of our members are national midwives' associations.