Concept Note

Midwifery Symposium

Young Midwives in the Lead

Women Deliver 2016

Background

On 25th September 2015, world leaders from 193 countries unanimously adopted a historic set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 targets on eliminating poverty, achieving gender equality, and securing health and well-being for all people.

While the last decade and a half saw great progress in addressing maternal and child mortality which reduced by almost half globally from the 1990 levels, the new global policy agenda sets the bar much higher. The objective under the health Goal inter alia is to bring down by 2030, maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births; end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age and bring down neonatal mortality to at least 12 per 1,000 live births and under 5 mortality to at least 25 per 1,000 live births; end the epidemics of HIV, TB and malaria; and to substantially increase health financing and recruitment, education and retention of health workers. Clearly, if these ambitious targets are to be achieved, investments in quality midwifery education, services and workforce policies need to be rapidly scaled up and strengthened.

Since 2008, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other H4+ partners (UNICEF, World Bank, UN Women, UNAIDS), Jhpiego and other civil society and private sector partners has been spearheading a global midwifery movement. Globally, UNFPA with partners have supported global dissemination of WHO/ICM education standards, strengthening of associations and regulatory policies in over 65 countries. The evidence generated in the recent State of the World’s Midwifery Report 20141 makes a strong case for investing in midwifery services and workforce policies to eliminate preventable maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity while the most recent Lancet series2 on midwifery clearly shows that universal coverage of Midwifery with both family planning and interventions for maternal and newborn health could avert a total of 83% of all maternal deaths, stillbirths, and neonatal deaths.

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In their commitment to the UN Secretary General’s Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health, a number of countries have decided to invest in human resources for health, in particular midwives, and significant progress is becoming visible in many countries. A number of programmes, including the UNFPA/ICM midwifery programme, the WHO/AFRO new pre-service education curricula, the South East Asia Region Roadmap for Midwifery Services, are assisting governments in revising plans, strengthening training and education programmes and regulations, with the goal to improving access to skilled health care for women and their newborns. Midwifery workforce assessments have been conducted or are ongoing in six of the countries with high numbers of maternal and newborn deaths.

UNFPA and ICM in collaboration with the H4+, civil society and private sector partners organized two high profile Midwifery Symposia in 2010 and 2013 as pre Women Deliver events. These were well attended by a few hundred midwives, high level policy makers, programme managers and partners. Both resulted in strong global commitments and calls to action by partners to make a fundamental push for enhanced investments in midwives and midwifery services; improved midwifery education to ensure competent midwives; effective recruitment and deployment of midwives; promotion of woman-centered care; regulation of midwives and other providers of midwifery services; support for midwifery associations; and better data collection and research on midwifery as a way to reach MDGs 4, 5 and 6.

A third Midwifery Symposium titled “Call the Midwife: A Conversation About the Rising Global Midwifery Movement” was organized by UNFPA, the Government of Sweden and the Woodrow Wilson Center on 23 March 2015 in Washington DC. Global experts and midwifery practitioners discussed the latest evidence from the Lancet series; learned about the progress in various global midwifery initiatives and midwifery related achievements and challenges in Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Liberia South Sudan, and discussed innovative programmes and technologies to scale up midwifery capacities through public-private partnerships.

These symposia, together with broader efforts by governments and partners to strengthen midwifery using the three ICM pillars of Education, Regulation and Association (ERA), have contributed towards placing midwifery front and center of global, regional and country strategies to eliminate preventable maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity. Midwifery workforce policies, retention and distribution mechanisms, however, remain weak. Most importantly, respectful maternal care needs to be enhanced. A number of midwives associations lack strength and organizational skills and are often unable to advocate effectively

3 Second Global Midwifery Symposium Strengthening Quality Midwifery Care: Making Strides, Addressing Challenges 26-27 May 2013, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

4 Ranked among the top 10 Think Tanks in the United States
for midwifery or support their members. Moreover, the profession of midwifery is still not adequately regulated and respected in a number of countries. There is an urgent need to improve and scale up midwifery education, including improvements in midwifery philosophy, professional values/ethics and advocacy skills, so that midwives themselves can provide quality midwifery care and become champions for the health of women and girls in their countries.

As the era of the Millennium Development Goals draws to a close in 2015 and with the launching of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs / 2016-2030) towards which the UN system and 193 countries have pledged their commitment, the upcoming Women Deliver Conference in Copenhagen from the 16-19 May 2016 offers an excellent opportunity to draw the attention of world leaders to the contributions that midwives can make in achieving the sexual and reproductive health and universal health care agenda of the SDG and to improve the health and well-being of women, their babies and their communities.

Proposal of Midwifery Symposium at Women Deliver 2016

UNFPA in collaboration with the ICM, WHO, H4+ and civil society partners like Jhpiego, AMREF and others, proposes to once again organize a 1.5 day Midwifery Symposium immediately preceding Women Deliver on 15-16 May. The aim would be to support and harmonize the voices of young midwife leaders in strongly advocating for quality midwifery care in identifying solutions to maternal and newborn health issues. A leadership orientation training for young midwives will be conducted on 14 May by UNFPA, ICM and partners in collaboration with the Danish Midwives Association. Professional translation in French and Spanish will be provided for the 1.5 day Symposium and informally for the 1 day leadership orientation.

The Symposium will draw young midwife leaders (YML) under the age of 35 (from both the North and the South) who have demonstrated leadership potential in their countries in myriad of ways, such as strengthening and improving midwifery workforce policies; strengthening associations; improving midwifery service delivery; enhancing access to quality midwifery services in remote rural communities etc. and have learned from their experience. Dedicated and dynamic young midwives with leadership potential working both in communities and at the national level will be considered. In addition, some selected policy makers, senior/experienced midwives and midwife leaders, advocates, journalists, civil society partners, H4+ agencies and private sector will also be invited to discuss and brainstorm on SRH initiatives with the young midwife leaders on how best global efforts can be galvanized to achieve the SRH, including maternal and newborn health goals and targets of the SDGs.

**Symposium Title (Tbc):** Young Midwives in the Lead or Voices of Young Midwife leaders

**Date:** 15 -16 May, 2016 (end at around noon 16 May)

**Venue:** Bella Center (UNFPA will do the contract)

**Leadership Orientation:** 14 May 2016 (tbc by the Danish Midwives Association)
Symposium Objectives:

a) Enhance the ability of young midwives with leadership potential to become powerful strategic leaders and advocates, and to engage in national policy dialogues with a stronger evidence-based voice.

b) Highlight the role that midwives can play in achieving the new SDGs and to enhance their potential for fulfilling this role through increased knowledge about latest research findings and data (Lancet, State of the World’s Midwifery Report) as well as about emerging issues at national, regional and global level.

c) Create a global network of young midwife leaders (YML) to serve as a forum for exchanging good practices in scaling up midwifery and latest innovations in improving quality of midwifery care in order to enable the young midwives to have a wider impact across the entire health and social care system.

d) Showcase how investments in YML from both the South and the North can help improve quality of care within midwifery practice; highlighting the importance of investment in research, advocacy, mentorship and leadership skills of young midwife leaders.

Symposium Outcome:

1) Joint declaration of commitment from the young midwives and the supporting global partners to enable the midwives to serve as advocates and providers of quality midwifery care in their countries

2) Identifying the support midwives need from the global community, regional and national partners to fulfil the commitment

Note: The young midwife leaders attending the Symposium will be requested to spread certain key messages during the entire Women Deliver by participating actively in various events and helping to raise the profile of midwifery.

Partners will be requested to highlight the Symposium discussions and outcome in the various panels in which they participate.

Symposium Participants:

Maximum 100 participants, comprising young (below 35 years) aspiring midwife leaders from both north and south, midwifery programme managers, policy makers, UN H4+/civil society/private sector partners, and donors. (Note: The leadership orientation training on the 14th will be limited to the young midwives who have demonstrated leadership potential and the key facilitators to the training)

Scholarships to 30 Young Midwife leaders:
UNFPA, and partners will offer approx. 30 scholarships to young midwife leaders on the basis of a clear selection criteria which will be determined jointly. A call for applications will be issued globally and young midwife leaders from low and middle income developing countries as well as developed countries would be encouraged to apply by submitting a proposal/essay on the midwifery situation in their country; the leadership role they have been playing in strengthening midwifery in their communities or at national level and suggesting effective solutions in scaling up and accelerating progress in access to quality midwifery services. The applicants would need to further specify how they would personally contribute to the strategies they propose in scaling up midwifery services in their country. Majority (at least two thirds) of the scholarships would be reserved for the high burden maternal mortality countries. The successful applicants are to be informed no later than 29th February.

A **selection committee** would review the applications based on the specified criteria to be defined (e.g. quality of proposal, relevant experience, geographic representation etc)

**Symposium Agenda**

The agenda will be determined in a participatory manner by the partners supporting the Symposium. Periodic monthly and later bi-weekly teleconferences would be held to discuss participation, scholarships, agenda, advocacy etc. Once speakers are identified UNFPA, ICM and WHO would issue a joint invitation letter to the identified speakers.

A one day meeting on leadership development will be provided to the sponsored participants prior to the symposium.

Some suggestions for agenda include:

Discussions along key identified issues: Role of Midwifery under the new SDGs; strengthening midwifery capacities (education, regulation and association) and retention; respectful care during maternity and respect for the profession; Midwifery Education; Midwifery and Quality of care; Gender and Midwifery; Midwifery and Global Health.

An innovative format of the agenda will be defined in group discussions with the sponsoring partners. The structure could include various interactive elements of debates, panels, group work, lectures and round tables. For example, there could be a round table where the young midwives could present a key midwifery bottleneck in their country and seek solution from others.

In addition to the participants, speakers and facilitators, the supporting partners will be asked to nominate a few representatives to attend the Symposium, mainly as observers and facilitators.
As indicated the Symposium would conclude with a pledge/commitment by the young midwife leaders and the key global partners, possibly also covering their recommendations for global and national support for strengthening key suggested strategies in scaling up midwifery in their countries.

Women Deliver organising committee will be requested to mainstream the outcome document within the outcome documents of WD and in High level Panels of the Conference to promote Midwifery as a key strategy for achieving the health goal of the SDGs.

**Key Organizers:**

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), World Health Organization and other multilateral, civil society and private sector partners (H4+, Danish Midwives Association, Jhpiego, AMREF, Woodrow Wilson Center, AMDD, ACNM, ACOG, Laerdal Global Health, Johnson & Johnson, WRA, PMNCH, donors etc).

**Coordinator and Symposium Secretariat:**

The coordination of the Symposium would be done by UNFPA.

**Funding:**

Funding for the Symposium needs to be generated. Donor support is needed to pay for the following:

- a) 30 scholarships for young midwives with leadership potential to support their travel to attend the Symposium, Women Deliver registration charges, per diem for their stay and airport transfer expense.
- b) Logistics – venue costs, tea/coffee breaks, AV equipment, lunch on 15 May
- c) Translation expenses
- d) Advocacy & communication expenses
- e) 1 day pre-leadership training workshop for scholarship holders