

Midwives 'lead the way with quality care', as world marks International Day

Midwives are vital to driving sustainable development and key to helping mothers, and expectant-mothers, make informed, healthy choices, said the United Nations health agency's chief nurse on Friday.

WHO's Chief Nursing Officer, Elizabeth Iro, said ahead of the International Day of the Midwife, marked on Saturday, that communities everywhere were best served by letting midwives work together with mothers and their newborns, to provide continuity of care, as children develop.

"This is based on research that demonstrates that not only is [continuity of care preferred by women but also that there are profound impacts](#), including a 24 per cent reduction in pre-term births," said Ms. Iro.

Evidence has also found that professionally-qualified midwives are able to meet 87 per cent of the needs of women and newborns, she added.

The International Day of the Midwife, observed each 5 May, recognizes the vital role these healthcare professionals have in preventing maternal and newborn deaths and empowering women to make the best choices for themselves and their babies.

The theme for this year's celebration of one of the world's oldest and most important professions is: "Midwives leading the way with quality care."

In her message, Ms. Iro also highlighted the importance of the role of midwives in delivering on the globally-agreed [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Key health targets to meet development goal 3, include progress on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health.



UNICEF/Keïta

Midwife Fadimata Maïga holds a newborn infant before placing it beneath an infant radiant warmer in order to proceed to a newborn health assessment at the Baraouéli Health Center in Baraouéli, Ségou region, Mali.

At health facilities and in communities, midwives help women and newborns work together to improve child health overall.

“This puts midwives at the centre of delivering this agenda,” highlighted the WHO official.

“As midwives we have come a long way” she said, “to help all women, newborns and their families to not only survive but to thrive and transform the world we live in.”

Safe hands save lives

Hand Hygiene Day is also being marked on 5 May, highlighting the importance of the simple but beneficial act of washing your hands regularly to ward off infections or disease.

“It’s in your hands: prevent sepsis in health care”, is the theme this year.

According to Ms. Iro, it’s a practice that is all the more important for midwives, as [sepsis](#) – a life-threatening condition – affects three million newborns, can kill up to five hundred thousand before they are a month old, and causes one in ten maternal deaths.

“Join us and be a champion [promoting hand hygiene and preventing sepsis in health care](#),” she said.