



International Confederation of Midwives

Strategic Plan 2021-2023



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With a unique and vital role as the only organisation specifically focused on supporting associations of midwives and their midwife members around the world, ICM is recognised as a leader in providing knowledge, resources, and support to the midwifery profession.

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List of Acronyms

International Confederation of Midwives	ICM
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex	LGBTQI
Member Associations	MAs
Member Association Capacity Assessment Tool	MACAT
Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	SRHR
Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health	SRMNCAH
State of the World's Midwifery	SoWMy
Strengthening Midwifery Services	SMS
Sustainable Development Goals	SDGs
Young Midwife Leaders	YMLs
Universal Health Coverage	UHC
United Nations Population Fund	UNFPA
White Ribbon Alliance	WRA
World Health Organization	WHO



I. Executive Summary



ICM has and continues to also solidify its added value to the broader landscape of partners by contributing to improving sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (SRMNCAH), gender equality, and equal access to quality health care for women and communities.

With a unique and vital role as the only organisation specifically focused on supporting associations of midwives and their midwife members around the world, ICM is recognised as a leader in providing knowledge, resources, and support to the midwifery profession. ICM has and continues to also solidify its added value to the broader landscape of partners by contributing to improving sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (SRMNCAH), gender equality, and equal access to quality health care for women and communities.

With this role comes the responsibility to serve as a convenor, connector, and catalyst, both within the midwifery sector and outside – representing the interests of Member Associations (MAs) and midwives across new sectors, allies outside of the midwifery space, decision-makers, and non-traditional partners, and expanding the recognition and support that midwives receive. Refining this role required taking stock of what has worked for ICM in the past, what needs to shift and adapt to a changing global health and development landscape, and what areas ICM should focus on in the next three-year strategic plan (January 2021-December 2023).

The development of the 2021-2023 ICM strategic plan came at a time when the organisation was also assessing and updating the Professional Framework for Midwifery and internally piloting the Member Association Capacity Assessment Tool (MACAT)², which focuses on assessing the operational capacity of the organisation (e.g. governance, management, human resources, budgeting, etc.). The strategic planning process also aligned with the Year of the Midwife in 2020, and with plans to roll out the “Decade of the Midwife” campaign with other partners in 2021. This process allowed ICM to focus and define the way forward through a holistic approach that will further enhance its impact and reach.

The resulting three-year strategic plan (2021-2023) builds on key areas of success and lessons learned, leverages ICM’s unique value added and niche in the landscape, and reflects inputs from across the organisation as well as from key external partners and donors. The strategic plan positions ICM as a partner, advocate, technical adviser, and knowledge base for midwives’ associations and midwives around the world, allowing the organisation to grow and expand in tailored ways that will make the largest impact on the profession of midwifery, with broader impacts on gender equality, human rights, diversity, and universal health coverage. The core strategic priorities for 2021-2023 are summarised below.

¹ The MACAT was originally developed for Midwives’ Associations to assess their organisational capacity, but it was adapted for use by ICM Head Office in 2020.

ICM Strategic Priorities 2021-2023

Goal: Position ICM as an expert in creating, advising, influencing, and enabling the profession of midwifery globally.

Strategic Priority 1: Drive **innovation and sustainability** for the future of midwifery

- Ensure a sustainable ICM, including human, social, economic, and environmental elements
- Utilise and promote more digital and mobile tools and knowledge management resources to reach and support midwives and their associations (including at different stages of their professional development, and in different country contexts, digital access, and languages)
- Facilitate an agile ICM that is constantly learning and responding to the needs of its members in new and improved ways
- Foster and build the next generation of midwives while leveraging the knowledge and wisdom of older generations, fostering cross-generational learning

Strategic Priority 2: Develop, strengthen, and support the rollout of a **new professional framework** for midwifery

- Promote midwifery as an autonomous profession with a distinct philosophy and approach to care
- Facilitate an enabling environment for midwives
- Strengthen midwifery education, regulation, associations, leadership, and model of care
- Synthesise and drive research, evidence, and essential competencies for the profession of midwifery

Strategic Priority 3: Foster a **movement for midwifery**, enabling and strengthening partnerships, advocacy, and communications for midwifery, with women's voices at the centre

- Leverage advocacy and communications to influence and educate policy-makers and wider audiences on the impact of and need for midwives
- Utilise effective and equitable relationships to build and support the profession of midwifery and expand the influence of ICM
 - Build up partnerships between women and midwives, from the individual level, to the community level, to the global level (women's rights and empowerment, woman-centred, respectful care, and gender equality)
 - Support partnerships between midwives (support for MAs, mentorship, strong regional support, twinning)
 - Strengthen partnerships between midwives and other stakeholders, including global and national policy-makers, other health professionals (obstetricians, paediatricians, nurses), traditional caregivers, other health workers and associations, and partners across sectors (SRHR, Women's Rights, UHC, etc.)

Cross-cutting: Promote **gender equality** by employing a gender lens and prioritisation across all elements of the strategic plan



Strategic Priority 1: Drive innovation and sustainability for the future of midwifery



ICM Values

- We **strengthen and build the capacity of midwives and Midwives' Associations** so that midwives can better support women and provide quality SRMNCAH care
- We work **locally, regionally and globally** with our Midwives' Association members and on behalf of the midwives they represent
- We work in **partnership with others** to advance the profession of midwifery
- We take a **rights-based approach**
- We promote and prioritise **justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion**
- We use **information and evidence** as the basis for our decisions
- We operate responsibly, with **integrity and accountability**

II. Introduction

With the current strategic plan coming to a close in 2020, ICM was at a pivotal juncture in its organisational history. Developing a sound strategic plan is a powerful tool to help drive priorities, expand visibility, and achieve the vision – *ICM envisions a world where every childbearing woman has access to a midwife's care for herself and her newborn*. With a rich history rooted in supporting Member Associations (MAs) and midwives, ICM has stayed true to its core mission, while supporting MAs and midwives in the six focus regions and undertaking a series of partner collaborations and successful projects and programmes (e.g. The 50,000 Happy Birthdays project, The Young Midwife Leaders (YML) project, and the Strengthening Midwifery Services (SMS) programme, etc.)

Building from the impressive work undertaken to date and the 2017-2020 strategic plan, this strategic plan positions ICM to more effectively deliver on its mission, and outlines a vision for the future that is both realistic and aspirational. A forward-looking strategy for ICM offers an exciting opportunity for the organisation to build on the current strengths and successes, while being proactive and innovative about the vision for the future of the midwifery profession, and the critical role that midwives play in supporting mothers and newborns, and in turn families, men, and communities. While ICM refers to women as the critical population that it serves and partners with, the organisation also recognises and values other populations also served by midwives (e.g. adolescent girls, LGBTQI and non-binary people, etc.). In addition, ICM recognises and respects the varying gender identities that represent the populations served by midwives and Member Associations across different contexts and countries, and the gender identities and preferred pronouns of all ICM partners.

Rooted in a commitment to serving midwives and women, ICM champions midwifery as a basic human right for all women, as evidenced, along with other key tenets, in the [ICM Bill of Rights](#) and the [Philosophy and Model of Midwifery Care](#). By acknowledging and working to value diversity, examining institutional biases such as racism, sexism, ageism, etc., and working to combat inequality in all its forms, ICM also strives to model and prioritise justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in all work. This includes efforts to promote diverse leadership and focusing on the various regions of ICM's remit as well as equity and inclusion within ICM's staff, programmes, and across MAs. ICM will strive to advance justice and stand against racism by fighting barriers to equitable, respectful, and culturally appropriate midwifery care for all women and communities (See ICM's [Anti-Racism Statement](#)). These efforts will enhance outcomes and drive sustainable progress for midwives, women, and communities, regardless of their ethnicity, race, origin, religion, or sexual orientation/identity. These tenets are central to ICM's strategic approach. Additional [ICM position statements](#) also highlight the organisation's beliefs and principles.

The strategic planning process – led by the ICM Board, with support from Global Health Visions (GHV) – served to (1) reflect and align the diverse perspectives of key ICM stakeholders (including, the ICM Board, staff, Member Associations, and YMLs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the World Health Organization (WHO), the White Ribbon Alliance (WRA), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Laerdal Global Health (LGH), Latter Day Saint Charities (LDSC), and other key partners), (2) define the broader landscape and value-added of ICM within that landscape, and (3) outline clear priorities that underpin the framework of a strategy that is both visionary and practical.

III. Strategic Priorities

The overarching goal of the strategic plan over the next three years is to position ICM as an expert in creating, advising, influencing, and enabling the profession of midwifery globally. In support of that goal, the following three areas have been identified as key strategic priorities for ICM for 2021-2023:

1. Drive innovation and sustainability for the future of midwifery
2. Develop, strengthen, and support the rollout of a new professional framework for midwifery
3. Foster a movement for midwifery, enabling and strengthening partnerships, advocacy, and communications for midwifery, with women's voices at the centre

As separate entities, these three priorities deliver on key areas of interest for ICM's growth, while as a collective, they serve to pave the way for a stronger, more sustainable, and impactful ICM. Cutting across all three of the strategic priorities is a commitment to foster and promote gender equality both within ICM and across the midwifery profession.

Strategic Priority 1: Drive innovation and sustainability for the future of midwifery²

The global health landscape is rapidly shifting, including a more holistic focus on universal health coverage and strengthening health systems, a greater recognition of the importance of gender equality as central to advancing all health issues, and a notable shift in efforts to drive decision-making and resources to low and/or middle-income countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has had and will continue to have a profound impact on countries' health systems and economic stability as well as individuals' lives. In light of this dynamic and ever-changing landscape, positioning ICM to be both innovative and flexible will ensure ongoing sustainability. This priority is central to ensuring ICM's continued role as a respected convenor, connector, and catalyst for MAs and midwives nationally, regionally, and globally, ensuring that the organisation is poised to broaden impact and to bolster support for the next generation of midwives.

Key Objectives

- Ensure a sustainable ICM, including human, social, economic, and environmental elements
- Utilise and promote more digital and mobile tools and knowledge management resources to reach and support midwives and their associations (including at different stages of their professional development, and in different country contexts, digital access, and languages)
- Facilitate an agile ICM that is constantly learning and responding to the needs of its members in new and improved ways
- Foster and build the next generation of midwives while leveraging the knowledge and wisdom of older generations, fostering cross-generational learning

Our Approach

Ensuring a sustainable ICM is vital to the achievement of the other two strategic priorities that follow. Therefore, ICM will balance its growth with the commitment to ensuring that MAs, midwives, ICM Board members, and ICM staff are supported and capacitated. This will also include developing and honing the skills of ICM's staff and Board and strengthening ICM's governance and internal structures for the sustainability of the organisation into the future, ensuring that it is able to effectively execute on the strategic priorities (human sustainability). Understanding that ICM's growth and the growth of the midwifery profession are mutually dependent is critical to ensuring that the larger midwifery community plays an active role in shaping and supporting ICM and vice versa. ICM will commit to utilising the feedback from MAs and midwives, through membership surveys and programme evaluations, to push for policies and actions that align with their needs and support their wellbeing and that of their communities (social sustainability). ICM will also focus on ensuring its financial security during the duration of the strategic plan and beyond, by diversifying

² Please see [ICM's definitions of midwives and midwifery](#).



funding sources and securing longer-term funding for ICM's core strategic activities (economic sustainability). Finally, as an organisation, being environmentally responsible in both internal and external-facing efforts is critical to the health and wellbeing of our natural world and ensuring that the next generation of midwives is able to succeed in their given environments (environmental sustainability). ICM will prioritise environmental sustainability by limiting unnecessary travel and printed materials, prioritising virtual meetings for its staff, members, and partners, and sourcing goods and services produced sustainably, whenever possible. ICM will also raise awareness among MAs about effective ways to be more environmentally sustainable in their respective contexts.

To drive innovation and learning and to continue to be an agile organisation, ICM will assess and update its digital platforms for reaching and supporting MAs and midwives, especially given the recent implications of COVID-19 and limitations on travel. This includes prioritising an updated, more user-friendly website and effective virtual platforms for information-sharing (e.g. Moodle, etc.) to share current evidence and tools with MAs and those in the midwifery space, developing new technologies (e.g. mobile-friendly apps, videos, graphics that are transferrable across contexts, including those with limited telecommunications and internet services, etc.), and enhancing translation availability and translated materials to reach diverse regions and partners.

ICM will also commit to supporting, fostering, and building the next generation of midwives to ensure this profession continues to grow and meet the needs of women and newborns around the world. This will include enhancing and building upon the Young Midwife Leaders (YMLs) project, and exploring other ways to support MAs and midwives with tools and/or guidance around mentorship, leadership, and harnessing and utilising the knowledge of older generations of midwives.

Strategic Priority 2: Develop, strengthen, and support the rollout of a new professional framework for midwifery

As a central component of ICM's work, the professional framework for midwifery, a tool developed by ICM and partners to support the development and strengthening of midwifery services across all countries focusing on a quality midwifery workforce, is both highly recognised and utilised as an informative and guiding tool for the profession. The framework includes a distinct philosophy and approach to care that underpins all elements of ICM's work. It supports midwives and other stakeholders in implementing and advocating for the key components needed to comprehensively support midwives around the world and it outlines the standards of practice, core competencies, and model of care for the profession that ensure that midwives can practise both safely and effectively. Yet, the framework must evolve as new evidence and research emerges, and as the global landscape shifts.

As an organisation rooted in connecting with and supporting midwives, ICM is well-positioned to draw on the knowledge and experiences of midwives in the development of a robust, updated professional framework. The updated framework will underscore the need to support and develop an enabling environment for autonomous midwives, while advancing gender equality, promoting JEDI principles,



Strategic Priority 2: Develop, strengthen, and support the rollout of a new professional framework for midwifery

rights-based approaches to care, and leadership, to ensure the profession remains relevant, innovative, and ahead of the curve.

Key Objectives

- Promote midwifery as an autonomous profession with a distinct philosophy and approach to care
- Facilitate an enabling environment for midwives
- Strengthen midwifery education, regulation, associations, leadership, and model of care
- Synthesise and drive research, evidence, and essential competencies for the profession of midwifery

Our Approach

ICM is in a unique position to reassess the professional framework and update it to reflect a more comprehensive view of the needs of midwives, ensuring they are able to learn and practise effectively and to grow the profession. This includes considering and integrating gender equality and the enabling environment – two key pieces required for midwives to be able to lead and do their jobs well.

The current professional framework is rooted in the ICM essential competencies for midwifery practice – driving research, and supporting education, regulation, and associations. The updated framework will build on the current framework components while expanding the core tenets to also include leadership, the midwifery philosophy, the enabling environment, and the midwife-led continuity of care model of practice. Through an updated framework, ICM will continue to prioritise awareness around the importance of recognising the midwifery profession as autonomous and distinct from other health professions, including nursing.

Updating and rolling out a new professional framework will include drawing on the best research and evidence and conducting consultations with key stakeholders, including midwives globally. Given that evidence-based research is critical to forward momentum, ICM will support midwife-led research and will work to ensure that research is both available and easily accessible to all MAs and midwives. The framework will be promoted and shared across various geographies to align midwives and other stakeholders around the key components that are needed to support and advance the profession. It can also be used as an advocacy tool with stakeholders, including governments, development partners, and civil society allies, to push for midwives to be at decision-making tables and to foster the implementation of the framework in all settings.

Strategic Priority 3: Foster a **movement for midwifery**, enabling and strengthening partnerships, advocacy, and communications for midwifery, with women's voices at the centre

Reaching out, connecting, and involving others in recognising, supporting, and

advancing the profession of midwifery is central to ICM's mission. Movement building will allow ICM to harness the power of MAs, midwives, and key stakeholders across the globe to build the support network for midwives, create advocates across new sectors, and strengthen the sustainability of the profession, its recognition globally, and the policies and funding needed at global and national levels to secure an enabling environment.

We know that many of the issues that are central to women's rights movements are also issues that impact midwives. Every day, midwives work to uphold the rights of the women in their care. ICM will continue to stand with midwives and women, supporting the relationships that expand the impact of midwives and drive progress towards gender equality.

Key Objectives

- Leverage advocacy and communications to influence and inform policy-makers and wider audiences on the impact of and need for midwives
- Utilise effective and equitable relationships to build and support the profession of midwifery and expand the influence of ICM
 - Build up partnerships between women and midwives, from the individual level, to the community level, to the global level (women's rights and empowerment, woman-centred, respectful care, and gender equality)
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Our Approach

ICM will focus on improving staffing and funding for advocacy and communications efforts, which will be critical to ensuring ICM can build an impactful movement to drive awareness and policy change around the important role midwives play in ensuring the health and wellbeing of women, newborns, and their communities. A robust advocacy and communications strategy will focus specifically on establishing proactive and targeted goals, allowing for a cohesive and united voice for ICM and its allies, better positioning the organisation, MAs, and midwives to push for needed change and to combat opposition when present. As a cross-cutting tactic that supports all of the other strategic priorities, ICM's focus on advocacy and communications will help to leverage and diversify partnerships and funding streams that will bolster collective action and inform new audiences about the importance of midwives.

In an effort to build partnerships, ICM will identify key civil society and women's organisations both regionally and globally to advance common goals together with ICM and its MAs. ICM will also create new opportunities for MAs and midwives to support one another within and across regions, and through mentorship



Strategic Priority 3: Foster a **movement for midwifery**, enabling and strengthening partnerships, advocacy, and communications for midwifery, with women's voices at the centre

programmes. ICM will also engage other like-minded stakeholders across new sectors to advance the movement for midwifery, including a focus on pushing for policy change and increased funding to the profession.

Cross-cutting: Promote gender equality by employing a **gender lens** and prioritisation across all elements of the strategic plan

As gender equality impacts every element of the three priorities of ICM's newly developed strategic plan, understanding how pervasive inequalities affect the profession of midwifery is vital to ensuring ICM's remit is poised to work to address these issues. By utilising a gender lens (e.g., examining elements of work and their impact on women and gender equality), across all of the strategic priorities as well as their key objectives, ICM will be better positioned to both promote gender equality and to work to enact processes and approaches that will help to shape the lived realities of midwives and the women they serve in a variety of geographies.

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ICM would like to acknowledge the Board for its leadership and oversight in the development of the 2021-2023 ICM Strategic Plan. ICM would also like to thank its staff, Member Associations, young midwife leaders (YMLs), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the World Health Organization (WHO), the White Ribbon Alliance (WRA), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Laerdal Global Health (LGH), Latter Day Saint Charities (LDSC), and other key partners for their critical inputs throughout the strategic planning process. Finally, ICM would like to acknowledge Global Health Visions (GHV) for their steadfast guidance and support in the development of the strategy.