

2nd Arab States Regional Midwifery Conference

Preparation of midwives: challenges and opportunities

1-2 April 2014

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

We, the group of experts and representatives of the ministries of health from 17 Arab States including Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Sultanate of Oman, Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, Tunisia, U.A.E., and Yemen, International Organizations, concerned with the advancement and development of midwifery in Arab countries, met in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to participate in the second Arab States Regional Conference for Midwifery from 1 to April 2, 2014, to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the midwifery education programs, exchange of experiences and lessons learned, agree upon and advocate for adopting regional strategies and actions that are necessary to advance midwifery education, as one of three the pillars of the framework adopted by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) for the development of midwifery.

The starting point

In November 2012, a group of midwifery experts and officials from ten Arab States met in Dubai, U.A.E. for the first time to discuss and analyze the situation of midwifery in the Arab region, and suggest a number of strategic goals and interventions to promote and support the development of midwifery and midwives in the region.

Acknowledging the crucial role of midwives, and in order to accelerate the achievement of targets related to maternal health, and recognizing the impact of the unity of midwives, civil society organizations and countries supporting midwifery profession, a plan with strategic objectives had been developed to support midwifery practice in response to the results of the preliminary situation analysis of midwifery in the region.

The initial analysis highlighted the general characteristics of midwifery in the region as well as the key strengths and challenges, and also touched upon existing opportunities that would enable enhancing midwifery in the region.

Participants in the Dubai meeting proposed a number of objectives and strategic interventions to strengthen midwifery in the region, concluded the meeting with the production of "Dubai Declaration" which called upon for governments, donors and midwifery associations to commit to strengthening midwifery throughout the region.

Midwifery education: an urgent priority

Initial situation analysis stressed that there is an urgent need to improve and develop mechanisms and modalities to better educate and empower midwives, and ensure availability of required financial, human and technical resources that are necessary to improve the performance of midwives in the Arab region; which, unfortunately, is not getting enough attention and support to fulfill its mandate and provide appropriate care for mothers before, during and after birth.

In response, the Ministry of health in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund -UNFPA Arab States Regional Office in Cairo, and in order to maintain the momentum that emerged from the first meeting, co-organized this regional conference with the intention to ensure in-depth discussions on mechanisms for strengthening education and training of midwives in the region as one of the three pillars adopted by the ICM to advance midwifery.

We also engaged in discussions addressing the different components of midwifery education including the identification of good practices and lessons learned, as well as the identification of gaps in midwifery education programmes, and proposing a methodology and work plan for the improvement and development of midwifery in the region.

As a result of our discussions during the conference

We *Reaffirm the key role of midwives in improving the health of mothers and children, and women in general, and advocate for and demand governments of the Arab states, international organizations, and civil society organizations working on advancing midwifery to lead, in every possible way, the following:*

- Adopting the internationally agreed upon, WHO-ICM definition of “midwives” and link it to competency-based midwifery education/training programmes on the national level
- Supporting the undertaking of in-depth country situation analysis of existing midwifery training programme and services to allow for effective midwifery planning and investment
- Investing in developing cadres of qualified expert midwife trainers and educators in all Arab countries, as well as operationalizing the south-south cooperation modality for exchange of experiences and maximizing mutual benefit
- Supporting and ensuring the availability of needed resources to conduct relevant research to advance “evidence based practice” of midwifery and inform midwifery policies in the region

We *Commit to work on developing national follow up work-plans and programmes that translates the recommendations of the conference into reality with joint follow up from UNFPA offices.*