UNFPA Statement at the World Health Assembly 2021

Item 15: Health Workforce: Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery

State of the World’s Midwifery 2021 and the Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery

- Excellencies, colleagues,
  The State of the World’s Midwifery 2021 report (SoWMy) developed by UNFPA, WHO and ICM estimates that, with its current composition and distribution, the sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health (SRMNAH) workforce could meet 75% of the world’s need for SRMNAH care. But only 41% in low-income countries.

- The impact of Universal Coverage of 31 midwifery-led interventions has the potential of saving 4,2 million lives of women, newborn and stillborn, annually by 2035.

- Among the SRMNAH workforce, the largest shortage (900,000) is of midwives. By 2030 the gap will still be 750 000 globally, and the gap in Africa will not have closed at all.

- Bold investment is needed in:
  - Planning, management, regulation, and the SRMNAH work environment
  - High quality education and training of midwives
  - Midwife-led improvements to sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health (SRMNAH) services, and
  - Midwifery leadership and governance.

- To ensure quality care we need to increase workforce numbers, improve skill mix, manage ineffective and inequitable distribution, varying levels and quality of education and training programmes, limited numbers of qualified educators and ineffective regulation.

- The Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery (SDNM) offer a perfect opportunity to discuss, re-think and review how nursing and midwifery services are organised and optimised to cover all needs.
• It is therefore important to recognise midwifery and nursing as two distinct professions. Midwifery’s expertise lies in accompanying women and families through a healthy life event - that of pregnancy and childbirth - with capacity to manage emergency complications and referral to the next level of care if needed.
• Building forward from Covid requires normal pregnancy and childbirth close to, but not in a medical facility, allowing SRMNAH and Covid care provision in an equitable, safe and holistic manner.
• UNFPA stands ready to support governments on the implementation of the SDNM in developing the workforce and the enabling environment for quality sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health care.

I thank you...