



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

November 16, 2012

On World Prematurity Day midwives around the world say Let Us Save Lives!

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) joins with midwives around the world to mark World Prematurity Day and highlight the increasing tragedy of babies dying from pre-term birth - and the solutions.

The ICM President Frances Day-Stirk says the statistics are appalling: preterm birth is the world's largest killer of babies, 15 million babies are born too soon every year causing more than 1 million deaths each year. Evidence is clear that preterm birth rates are increasing in almost all countries.

She says: "Yet 75 percent of these babies' lives could be saved with minimum technological care. With skilled professional care babies need not die!"

"Our job is to provide the necessary care that can make the difference between life and death - keeping babies warm and clean, supporting mothers to breastfeed, and ensuring that babies who have difficulty breathing at birth get immediate attention and emergency resuscitation if needed."

"Midwives provide the continuum of care for mothers: Kangaroo Mother Care if scaled up to universal coverage could save 400,000 and 450,000 premature lives respectively. Both are not widely used in developing countries despite proven effectiveness."

"The message from ICM is that midwives have a major role to play to improve the quality of care before, during and after pregnancy. This can help to reduce preterm birth rates. Over 78 percent of the essential interventions that are most likely to save lives of mothers and babies fall within the remit of midwives working in community settings, clinics and hospitals."

"ICM is committed to the ongoing education of midwives to ensure they are well equipped to respond to challenges such as premature birth."

"Today we join with all of the organisations and our partners to support World Prematurity Day. Working together, everyone can help to prevent preterm births and improve the care of premature babies, accelerating progress towards the goal of halving deaths due to preterm birth by 2025," says Frances Day-Stirk.

For more information visit:

www.facebook.com/worldprematurityday

www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2012/20121117_world_prematurity_day/en/index.html

See the Film from BTS launch (KMC in Malawi):

<http://www.healthynewbornnetwork.org/multimedia/video/born-too-soon-kangaroo-mother-care-saves-preterm-babies>

See other Press coverage of launch:

http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2012/preterm_birth_report/en/index10.html

See Preterm birth estimates paper published in *The Lancet*:

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)60820-4/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)60820-4/abstract)

- Forthcoming paper in *The Lancet* on preventing preterm births is expected to be released and online by November 16, 2012

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Further information:

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