

## **Initial understanding and basis for a multinational nomination for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

### Midwifery / Obstetrics by midwives

#### **We stand for:**

1. Respect for the great diversity of midwifery worldwide.  
R.2 (iii)
2. Midwifery can be exercised by women and men as well.  
R.1 (ii)
3. The respectful treatment of natural processes from pregnancy through childbirth to the end of breastfeeding in all of which midwives are crucial companions.  
R.1 (i)
4. Respectful interaction of and collaboration on an equal footing with all individuals and groups involved in these natural processes.  
R.2 (ii)
5. Midwifery is about promoting the health and well-being of mother and child.  
R.1 (i)
6. Midwives are companions and supporters of pregnant women and their families before, during and after birth. They support and empower the women and families to discover their own resources for these crucial moments and to use them purposefully (capacity building). They rely on the skills of women and include them, whenever possible, in all decisions, according to WHO guidelines.  
R.1 (ii)
7. The clear commitment to respect human rights.  
R.1 (v)
8. Reliance on the senses touching, smelling, feeling and observing are crucial for midwifery knowledge.  
R.1 (i)
9. Modern developments and evidence-based research are integrated into activities and decision-making. Traditional knowledge and science are not opposed. They complement each other.  
R.2 (i)
10. Birth is not a purely physical process; at the same time, it is a life-changing transition process (*rite of passage*, quasi-ritual),

associated with diverse rituals, practices and symbolic dimensions (for example, cutting the umbilical cord).

R.1 (iv)

11. A better recognition of the traditional knowledge and skills of midwives in our societies is a contribution to sustainable development, especially with regard to SDG 3, i.a. on reducing maternal mortality (SDG sub-goal 3.1) and universal access to reproductive health services (SDG sub-goal 3.7) and SDG 5 (empowering women). Traditional practices of midwives also include the use of medical plants; a link to the conservation of biological diversity is therefore evident.

R.1 (v)

12. In order to safeguard and develop further the traditional and, at the same time, evidence-based knowledge of midwifery, the transmission has to be professionalized depending on the context. A further development in the direction of a formal and non-formal education means, on the one hand, a structured transmission of knowledge and skills, on the other hand also an increase in quality of midwives' activities, connected with increasing social recognition of the midwives.

R.3

13. Knowledge can be deepened and extended through interpersonal exchange between midwives and continuing education measures within the community. Exchange is practiced on an international level (including congresses, stays and employments abroad, etc.), too.

R.1 (iii)/R.3

14. Between women giving birth as well as within families, transmission also plays an important role: the passing on of knowledge about the kind and nature of pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding is threatened to get lost if the experience of midwifery care is not available.

R.1 (iii)

15. For a society it is decisive how one is born, because pregnancy and childbirth lay the foundations for bonds and relationships in the further life. Healthy attachment is a basis for functioning relationships and a functioning society. This bonding promoted by midwifery activities thus lays the foundations for social cohesion and mutual trust, and thereby constitutes a contribution to worldwide well-being and peace.

R.1 (iv)