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## Position Statement

# Migrant and Refugee Women and their Families

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### Background

ICM's International Code of Ethics for Midwives (2014) emphasises the importance of midwives to respect the basic Human Rights of all people and to value cultural diversity. The number of migrants and refugees worldwide has continued to increase rapidly and there are particular concerns for migrant and refugee women who are pregnant.

The health and well-being of migrant and refugee women may have been damaged in their country of origin or during their journey and may expose them to reproductive health risks, including sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. Additional risks include malnutrition, poor sanitation and lack of maternity care, including psychological care in pregnancy, labour and postpartum. HIV screening is often delayed or unavailable. Support for infant care and breastfeeding may be lacking or suboptimal.

### Position

ICM believes that the rights of migrant and refugee women and children should be protected in all countries and in all circumstances.

ICM advocates for the inclusion of culturally sensitive equal care to all childbearing women and their families irrespective of their status and country of origin.

ICM advocates for the use of translators if at all possible

ICM urges that midwives should promote the rights of women and newborns including gender equality.

ICM urges midwives to ensure equity in access to quality maternity care regardless of a woman's refugee status.

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ICM promotes humanised care for refugee women within midwifery education as well as in service provision.

### **Recommendations**

ICM urges its Member Associations to:

- To liaise with local governments to ensure access to midwifery services
- Encourage its members to provide midwifery care to all women irrespective of their nationality and status
- Adopt this statement within their organisations and to disseminate it to all relevant institutions and individuals.

### **Related ICM Documents**

ICM. 2014. Core Document. International Code of Ethics for Midwives.

ICM. 2017. Position Statement. Midwives, Women and Human Rights.

ICM. 2014. Position Statement. Role of the midwife in disaster preparedness.

ICM. 2014. Women, Children and Midwives in situations of War or Civil Unrest.

### **Other Relevant Documents**

United Nations, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA),  
International Migration Report 2015

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015.pdf>

UNHCR Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees

<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>

### **Adopted at ICM Council meeting, Toronto 2017**

*Due for review 2023*