



Australian College of
Midwives

ACM: For midwives. With women. For the future.

POSITION STATEMENT

on the midwives' role
in humanitarian crises

Issued March 2024



The Australian College of Midwives position on the midwives' role in humanitarian crises

The Australian College of Midwives (ACM) is the **national peak professional body for midwives in Australia**, and supports continuous improvement of the midwifery profession. The ACM recognises the unique and essential role of midwives in the face of humanitarian crises¹. During natural disasters, conflict situations, or in refugee camps, the availability of skilled midwives is critical². Midwives provide life-saving services in life-threatening situations. Midwives must be considered first responders in humanitarian situations³, and should be included in crisis management planning.

“The rights of women, newborns and children must be upheld under all circumstances.” (International Confederation of Midwives, 2023)⁴.

Midwives in humanitarian crises

In humanitarian settings, where health infrastructure may be disrupted, and people may be experiencing trauma, displacement, or loss, midwives can provide:

- Clinical care during pregnancy, labour and birth, and the postnatal period, which can significantly reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates⁵.
- Health education and promotion of healthy behaviours^{1,3}.
- Counselling and psychosocial support³.
- Breastfeeding support, which can save the lives of babies and children, and improve maternal mental health⁶.
- Sexual and reproductive healthcare.

“The status of midwifery during a crisis will depend to some extent on the status of midwifery in that country before the crisis, so some countries will need to consider ways of improving the status of the profession.” (UNFPA, 2016).

Midwives supported and kept safe from harm to work to their full scope of practice, be seen as autonomous professionals, and support women, newborns and their family's choice, access to and provision of care is essential. This will improve the ability of midwives to respond effectively to humanitarian crises as they arise.

Politics and religion

The ACM promotes inclusivity and acceptance of all cultures, ethnicities, and religions, regardless of emerging world events. All women and children have an equal right to unbiased, compassionate healthcare. During humanitarian crises, midwives should promote the wellbeing of women and children as the most important principle, regardless of the political landscape.

Midwives' personal beliefs should not impact on their professional standing. All midwives have the right to work without risk of harassment, discrimination, bullying or any other negative response to their culture, ethnicity, or their personal religious or political beliefs.

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The Australian College of Midwives acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live.

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