

UN: Global Shortage of Nearly 1 Million Midwives Will Cost Lives



A new [report](#) from the United Nations raises the alarm on the number of midwives, warning that millions of lives could be saved if the shortfall were addressed.

The acute shortage of 900,000 midwives represents a third of the required global midwifery workforce, says a study carried out jointly by the UN Population Fund, the World Health Organization and the International Confederation of Midwives. And as a result of this deficit, the lives of millions of women and newborn babies are at risk.

You might also like: Despite recent progress, female labour participation in Pakistan stands at 25%. This is markedly lower than those of countries with similar gross national income per capita. While 80–85% of the students in medical colleges in Pakistan are girls, only 44% registered with the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) are female. Why is this so, and what is behind this phenomenon of doctor brides? [Learn more](#)

"The Covid-19 crisis has only exacerbated these problems, with the health needs of women and newborns being overshadowed, midwifery services being disrupted and midwives being deployed to other health services," said a UN statement about the study covering 194 countries.

An analysis conducted for this report, published in [the Lancet](#) last December, showed that fully resourcing midwife-delivered care by 2035 could avert 67 per cent of maternal deaths, 64 per cent of newborn deaths and 65 per cent of stillbirths, saving an estimated 4.3 million lives per year.

Gender inequality is an unacknowledged driver of this shortage, the statement said.

The UN estimates that women account for 93 percent of all midwives and 89 percent of the world's nurses, and that healthcare systems do not give priority to the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls. "Governments must prioritise funding and support for midwifery and take concrete steps to include midwives in determining health policies," the report says.

"Midwives play a vital role in reducing the risks of childbirth for women all over the world, but many have themselves been exposed to risk during the COVID-19 pandemic," says Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "We must learn the lessons the pandemic is teaching us, by implementing policies and making investments that deliver better support and protection for midwives and other health workers. This report provides the data and evidence to support WHO's longstanding call to strengthen the midwifery workforce, which will deliver a triple dividend in contributing to better health, gender equality and inclusive economic growth."

Source: [WHO](#)

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