Happy Midwives for Happy and Healthy Mothers

The White Ribbon Alliance’s campaign to improve the status and recognition of midwives as the critical maternal health workforce in Malawi.

Poor working conditions and low status of midwives in Malawi affect midwives’ attitudes and provision of high-quality care to women. As a result, many women are put at risk by giving birth at home because they receive poor care at health facilities.

Who is a midwife? A midwife is a person who has successfully completed a midwifery education program that is recognized both in the country where it is located and based on the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice and the ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education. A midwife must be registered and legally licensed to practice midwifery.

Midwives save lives. Midwives do the noble work of helping mothers deliver babies, but they face many challenges in their work. • There are few midwives in Malawi, so they have to work long hours to care for a large number of women delivering babies. • The equipment and supplies midwives use in deliveries are often inadequate. • Midwives are poorly paid, so midwifery is an unattractive profession to many Malawians.

These challenges affect how midwives attend to women delivering babies and in turn affect public perception of midwives and the midwifery profession.

Campaign to promote midwifery: With support from the USAID-funded Health Policy Project, the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood (WRA Malawi) recently launched an advocacy campaign to strengthen community voices and improve midwives’ working conditions so they can provide high-quality and respectful maternal care to pregnant women.

What we would like to see: • Professional midwifery as policy priority in Ministry of Health planning and budgeting, by the end of 2015. • Mobilization of community members to influence the improvement of midwives’ working conditions for better care and services, by the end of 2014. • Steps taken by the Ministry of Health and midwifery professional bodies to improve client-provider interaction and the provision of respectful maternity care, by the end of 2015.

Join the White Ribbon Alliance in the campaign for “Happy Midwives for Happy and Healthy Mothers” and make it happen by: • Advocating to national policymakers to make professional midwives and midwifery a policy priority by allocating funds to train and employ midwives. • Calling on the government to employ and deploy adequate numbers of professional midwives in all healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas. • Persuading local leaders and decisionmakers to recognize and prioritize professional midwives in district development plans. • Mobilizing communities to ensure that pregnant women are attended to by professional midwives.

BECAUSE HAPPY MIDWIVES MAKE FOR HAPPY AND HEALTHY MOTHERS. www.whiteribbonalliance.org