

The Hague, 26 January 2010



Dear Midwives of the World,

The recent earthquake in Haiti has been an unimaginable disaster for the people of this struggling country. As the search and rescue efforts are drawing to a close, it is time to support the Haitians in their journey of healing and recovery. During the days since the earthquake, the ICM has been in touch with Josée Angela Sam, President of the Haitian Midwives Association, and with Agnes Jacobs, a Belgian midwife who has been working in a rural health clinic in Haiti for more than a decade. Agnes is now a consultant with the ICM/ UNFPA Programme in Port-au-Prince. They have kept the ICM informed of the scope of the tragedy. At this time they are able to report that almost all of the midwives in Port-au-Prince have survived the devastation and that the National Midwifery School at the University of Port-au-Prince remains standing.

Unfortunately, the nearby nursing school was destroyed and dozens of students and faculty died. Among those who did not survive was Dr. Alix Laroche, an Obstetrician, who was teaching a class of students in the nursing school when the building collapsed. Dr. Laroche was also a long-time faculty member at the midwifery school. He was Assistant Director under Ghislaine Francoeur, posthumous recipient of the ICM Marie Goubran award at the ICM Congress in Glasgow (2008). Following her tragic death in a car accident, Dr. Laroche stepped in as interim Director of the school for more than a year. Dr. Laroche was devoted to the development of the midwifery profession in Haiti and was well loved by the midwifery students. We join with the midwives of Haiti in mourning his untimely death.

Midwives from around the world are expressing the desire to help in whatever way they can. **At this time the ICM will post on our website those international agencies that are requesting midwives to come to Haiti, as well as those agencies that are supporting maternal and newborn care in the country at this time.** Please contact these agencies if you have the time, experience and ability to join the relief efforts in Haiti. Otherwise, please support these agencies with donations. ICM will also be happy to post information on our website about any activities being undertaken by Members as part of the relief effort.

Prior to this disaster, Haiti was the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. In this time of desperate need, let us join in solidarity with the midwives, mothers, infants and families of Haiti. We must let them know that the midwives of the world care and that we are ready to help in whatever way we can.

Warmest regards to all of you,

Bridget Lynch
President
International Confederation of Midwives

Agneta S Bridges
Secretary General
International Confederation of Midwives