Midwives play an instrumental part in improving maternal and neonatal health worldwide. The theme of this year’s International Day of the Midwife, ‘Women and Newborns: The Heart of Midwifery’ provides us with the perfect opportunity to recognize their efforts.

Bangladesh did remarkably well to achieve Millennium Development Goal 4 before 2015, and the government is committed to ensure that every woman and newborn baby receives the best possible health care. To uphold this momentum and reach the Sustainable Development Goal targets by 2030, the government and other stakeholders must coordinate their efforts to expand midwifery services to increase the percentage of deliveries attended by skilled birth attendants. To this end, it is commendable that the Government of Bangladesh has approved 3,000 new posts for midwives in line with the “Every Woman Every Child” strategy of the United Nations.

WHO is committed to helping by providing continuous technical support to the Directorate of Nursing Services (DNS) and the Bangladesh Nursing Council (BNC) to strengthen midwifery services. WHO has supported the revision of the three year Diploma in Nursing Science and Midwifery course curriculum ordinance and examination system. We have also provided a six-month basic Midwifery Training course to 431 midwives since 2010 and will complete the training of another 80 midwives by mid-2016.

We fully recognize that increasing the number of trained midwives alone is not enough; a supportive work environment with appropriate infrastructure and technical supervision at the community level also needs to be put in place. WHO continues to pledge its full support to strengthening and expanding midwifery services across the country. We are committed to contributing to the health and wellbeing of all pregnant women, mothers and newborns in Bangladesh.

Dr N. Paranietharan
WHO Representative to Bangladesh