



CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE FOR
INDIGENOUS AND TRADITIONAL
MIDWIVES OF THE AMERICAS



From Recognition to Action: A Call to Advance Indigenous Midwifery and Self Determination

Joint Statement on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
9 August 2026

On the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we join Indigenous communities around the world in celebrating the rich cultures, knowledge systems, and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This year marks a significant moment. For the first time, the global commemoration of the International Day is dedicated to **"Honoring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being."** Together, we celebrate this historic recognition as a milestone for Indigenous midwives and their movement across the world. This recognition reflects decades of leadership, advocacy, and collective action by Indigenous midwives and their organizations to uphold their knowledge systems, defend their rights, and ensure that Indigenous voices are heard in local, national, and international spaces. It reflects the growing recognition of Indigenous midwifery and creates an important opportunity to honor Indigenous midwives as leaders, knowledge holders, caregivers, and protectors of Indigenous health, whose contributions have sustained Indigenous Peoples and communities for countless generations.

Indigenous midwifery is more than a health practice or service. It's a living expression of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and a distinct Indigenous health system rooted in relationships with territories, cultures, languages, spirituality, and ancestral knowledge. This understanding is reflected in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues' (UNPFII) Indigenous Determinants of Health Framework, which recognizes that the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples are inseparable from their lands, governance systems, cultures, languages, knowledge systems, biodiversity, and the health of Mother Earth. For generations, Indigenous midwives have safeguarded birth and community well-being, strengthening cultural identity, sustaining Indigenous systems of care, ensuring the continuity of Indigenous Peoples lifeways.

Indigenous midwifery and Indigenous Peoples' own health systems must be recognized and respected as autonomous systems that are rooted in their territories and communities. Our goal is to uphold Indigenous Peoples' right to maintain, practice, and strengthen their own health systems, developed over generations, in accordance with each Indigenous People's own knowledge systems, governance structures, and cultural practices, in parallel to healthcare systems.



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This recognition is firmly grounded in the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**, including Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination to maintain and strengthen their institutions, to develop and administer their own health programs, to maintain and practice traditional medicines and health practices, and to protect and develop their traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.

Indigenous midwives continue to face threats to their practice and physical integrity, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, and an attempted eradication of their knowledge systems in many parts of the world. These barriers also reflect the fragmentation of policies and institutions that too often separate health from culture, land, language, governance, and Indigenous knowledge systems as demonstrated in the 2026 UNPFII Study on Indigenous Determinants of Health. Protecting Indigenous midwifery means protecting Indigenous Peoples' rights, strengthening Indigenous-led systems of care, health and well-being for future generations and honoring the knowledge, wisdom, and leadership of Indigenous midwives.

We call on governments, United Nations entities, philanthropy, civil society, and all partners to:

- **Recognize Indigenous midwifery** as an Indigenous health and knowledge system and an expression of self-determination.
- **Ensure meaningful participation and Indigenous Women leadership** by engaging Indigenous midwives and their representative organizations in decisions affecting them.
- **Strengthen Indigenous-led health systems** by supporting Indigenous midwives and their organizations to maintain, develop, and lead their own systems of care.
- **Protect Indigenous knowledge and its intergenerational transmission** by recognizing Indigenous midwives as knowledge holders and supporting the continuation of their knowledge, practices, languages, and cultural traditions in accordance with Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- **Move from recognition to sustained action and investment** through long-term, flexible, and accessible resources that strengthen Indigenous-led midwifery and support Indigenous Peoples' priorities and self-determination.



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- **Promote policies and investments informed by the Indigenous Determinants of Health Framework**, recognizing that improving Indigenous maternal and newborn health requires coordinated action across health, education, environment, culture, land, governance, and human rights, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.
- **Recognize continental, national, and territorial organizations of Indigenous and traditional midwives** as legitimate political actors in global Indigenous health governance, guaranteeing their direct participation in decision-making spaces, policy development, and the setting of territorial, national, and international agendas.
- **Protect the knowledge of Indigenous midwives** from processes of appropriation, extraction, folklorization, and institutional subordination.
- **Promote historical reparation and the strengthening of collective memory** of midwives and their peoples, recognizing the impacts of extractive models on their territories, and guaranteeing measures of non-repetition that transform these forms of relationship.

As we commemorate this important day, we honor the leadership, knowledge, resilience, and contributions of Indigenous midwives worldwide. This recognition must lead to sustained action by governments, UN agencies, donors, and partners to recognize, protect, strengthen, and invest in Indigenous midwifery as an expression of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and a vital part of Indigenous health systems.

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