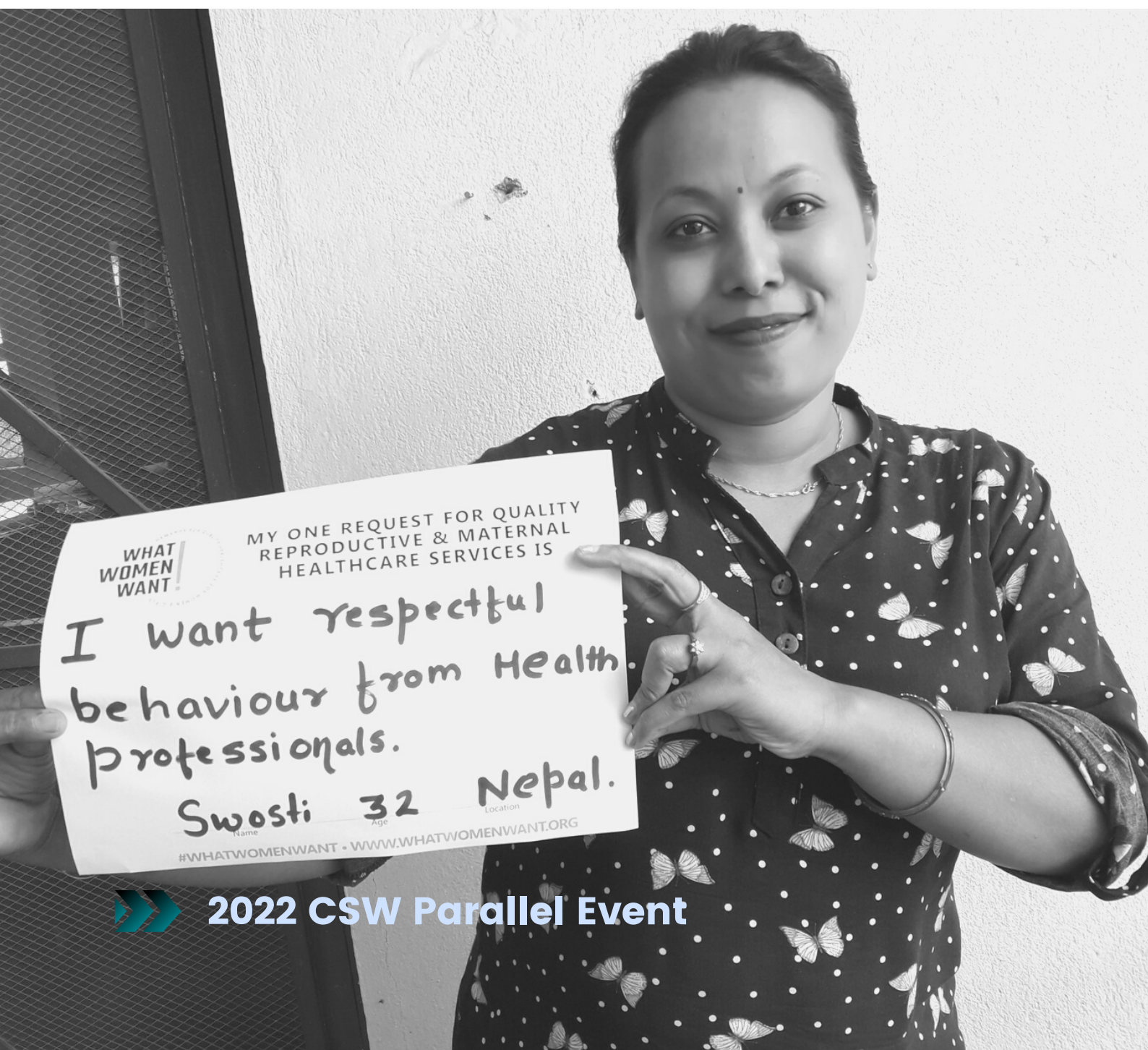


HONORING WOMEN'S DEMANDS

Professional Associations Joining Forces to Ensure
Respect and Dignity in Maternal, and Newborn Care



2022 CSW Parallel Event

INTRODUCTION

Women and girls* from around the world are demanding respectful and dignified care. More than 1.2 million women from 114 countries took part in the global **What Women Want campaign** and identified respect and dignity as the number one priority for quality healthcare.

Now, it is time for professional associations to honor women's demands and respond to the need for respect and dignity during the continuum of care – from reproductive health to pregnancy, childbirth, post-delivery, breastfeeding, care after stillbirth and maternal or newborn death.

We call on the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the International Pediatric Association (IPA), the International Council of Nurses (ICN), and the Council of International Neonatal Nurses (COINN), to make concrete commitments to achieve these demands and to report on progress in yearly reports, presented at the PMNCH Accountability Breakfast at the annual UN General Assembly.

Even a little progress to achieve these commitments is meaningful.

* We acknowledge that gender exists on a spectrum and not all people with reproductive needs or the capacity for pregnancy identify as women or girls. We recognize that women and trans, genderqueer, intersex and otherwise marginalized communities have equal rights and should be included in reproductive health and rights conversations and decision-making.



WOMEN'S DEMANDS

We ask professional associations to commit advancing the following:



No. 01 – **Acknowledge Systems of Oppression**

Western medicine has participated in and perpetuated racism, sexism, and colonialism. In order to build an equitable future, professional associations and organizations must acknowledge their professions' role in the past and the resulting structures and norms that continue to be prevalent today.

- Issue statements and commitments to change, acknowledging the respective profession's role in the perpetuation of racist, sexist, or colonial attitudes and practices.
- Work with national professional organizations to issue similar statements.

“Doctors and nurses should avoid tribalism, nepotism and racism.”
- 24 years old, Kenya



WOMEN'S DEMANDS

No. 02 – Open the Doors to Diverse Professionals



Ensure that the profession takes the needs of historically marginalized people seriously, by encouraging that providers come from the communities they serve and by ensuring every provider is culturally competent to provide services.

- Ensure professional organizations' management and leadership-level staff and board represent the diversity of people served.
- Recruit diverse populations, at every level of the profession, to ensure that women are served by providers who represent them in all their diversity. Create scholarships and educational programs that provide the means by which people from historically marginalized populations can become members of the profession. Ensure historically marginalized populations are prioritized and supported in educational programs and the workplace.
- Develop guidelines for improving culturally competent education.
- Engage with community members to identify best practices for anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and bias awareness.

“Have indigenous doctors and nurses in highly marginalized communities.”

- 26 years old, Mexico



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“Discriminations based on caste, creed, gender, religion, social status, etc. should be avoided at all times. Respectful and sensitive behavior at all times.”

- 39 years old, India



“Community members should take part in decision making and bring local knowledge and views on how to improve maternal health.”

- 23 years old, Uganda



WOMEN'S DEMANDS

No. 03 – **Acknowledge People as Experts on their Bodies**



- Adopt and promote provider education and training that is informed by women and women’s definition of respectful and dignified care for themselves and their newborns, including newborns who are stillborn.
- Develop guidelines and transparent processes to include women, in all their diversity, as members of professional and regulatory bodies.
- Develop clear guidance regarding bodily autonomy, informed consent, and medical decision-making. Acknowledge women’s and girls’ autonomy in decision-making in any aspect of their care – e.g., abortion, sterilization, long-acting contraception, childbirth, breastfeeding, newborn care, care after stillbirth or newborn death.

“Stop telling women what we need and listen to what we say we need.”

- 53 years old, Kenya

“Being treated with respect and tact, as a human being instead of as a body, and have the possibility of being provided with good and vast information about my own health to be able to take the decisions I consider as the best for me.”

- 19 years old, Mexico



WOMEN'S DEMANDS

No. 04 – **Improve Accountability**



- Develop guidelines for the inclusion of women, in all their diversity, in the review and re-certification procedures for professionals.
- Establish mechanisms for on-going, real-time feedback and provider accountability at community and facility level.
- Partner with women's rights organizations to develop guidelines on human rights education/know your rights and ethics standards.
- Support intra-professional accountability at global and national level by modeling collaboration and sharing examples of successful approaches to improve accountability between the professions.

“I want the doctor to respect my decisions regarding my pregnancy and my labor. I want them to not take me as a mental because I want my midwife to assist my labor. They can work together, midwives and doctors should work as a team...”

- 25 years old, Mexico



CONCLUSION

These asks can be realized by developing and implementing specific policies, guidelines, and standards, that guide the professions around the world. Each association may have different avenues to bring weight and accountability to these commitments, but we call on you to adopt these commitments not only in principle but in action. For example, some can be embedded into your constitutions, strategic plans, and advocacy agendas. They can be amplified through position statements and press releases. They can also become requirements for affiliation or membership standards for national associations. Others can be Board resolutions. They can be shared through Congresses, which bring together associations around the world at country, regional and global levels.

As organizations working to improve reproductive, maternal, and newborn (including stillborn) healthcare in support of women's asks, we call on professional organizations to honor women's demands. International professional associations set the tone and model behavior for the rest of the professions. They support and promote national professional organizations in their work and are critical partners in ensuring professional associations in every country represent the professions in a way that builds trust among the people served.

