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Editorial – Dec 2025

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Editorial Dec 2025 - One Million More Midwives

We like to start this editorial by supporting the ICM's (International Confederation of Midwives) call for **One Million More Midwives**. The ICM (2025)¹ reminds us that midwives, as well educated and regulated professionals, can support the health and needs of women and gender diverse people. In fact, midwives can provide 90% of essential sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent health services. In 2026, the world needs one million more midwives!

This global appeal made us, as editors of *Journal of Asian Midwives*, wonder about the words women use for their local midwife. We are keen to find out what the local name for a midwife is your country, in your community or your dialect. We started thinking about what midwife means in the language we know. Starting with the English language and this idea was quickly linked to one of Shakespeare's famous quotes, namely "What is in a name?"

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.*

From *Romeo and Juliet* Act II, Scene II by William Shakespeare (1982 edition)³

Across languages, the term midwife carries meanings that reflect both the clinical role and the social positioning of the profession. In English, midwife is often interpreted as "with woman," emphasizing continuous support during pregnancy and childbirth. The French term sage-femme translates to "wise woman," highlighting experience and knowledge. In Dutch, two terms are used: verloskundige, a more modern term meaning "deliverer," and vroedvrouw, an older term meaning "wise woman."

In South Asian languages, the meanings are similarly nuanced. In Urdu and Hindi, daee (دائی / दाई) refers to a traditional birth attendant, historically a woman skilled in assisting childbirth within the community. In Bengali, dhatri (ধাত্রী) means "nurturer" or "one who supports and cares for a mother and newborn." In Tamil, commonly used terms such as maruttuvacci (மருத்துவச்சி) or paricharika convey the idea of a woman trained to assist in childbirth and maternal care. In Pashto translations for "midwife" are [قابله \(qaabila\)](#) and [دايه \(daaya\)](#). Qaabila is the more formal, clinical term for a trained midwife, while daaya aligns more closely with the traditional birth attendant, similar to the Urdu/Hindi daee.

Nepal, which recorded 124 languages in its 2021 census², also reflects this linguistic diversity. In Nepali, there are two possible translations सुडेनी (sudenii) and दाई (dai). Sudenii refers to a woman who assists with childbirth, often implying a traditional or community-based practitioner, whereas dai is a more informal term meaning "elder sister," reflecting familiarity, trust, and social closeness rather than a strictly professional designation.

JAM Dec 2025 Issue

The second issue of 2025 of *JAM* features 5 interesting articles covering work from countries such as Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Türkiye.

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1. ICM (2025) A Global Call for One Million More Midwives (online: <https://millionmore.org/petition/>)
2. Regmi, D.R. (2024) Status of the mother tongues in the 2021 census of Nepal, Journal of Nepalese Studies 16(1) 17-39.
3. Shakespeare, W. (1982) Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene II, The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare, Chancellor Press, London, p.708.

Assamese	ধাত্রী dhatrai
Bengali	ধাত্রী dhatri
Gujarati	મિડવાઇફ midava'ipha
Hindi	दाई daee
Kannada	ಸೂಲಗಿತ್ತಿ sulagitti
Malayalam	മിഡവൈഫ് midvaiph
Marathi	सुई su'i
Odia	ଧାତ୍ରୀ
Punjabi	ਦਾਈ da'i
Sanskrit	धात्री
Tamil	மருத்துவச்சி maruttuvacc
Telugu	మంత్రసాని mantrasani
Urdu	دائى