Weekly News Review – 5 May 2017

Today is International Day of the Midwife, which was marked in the press and on social media with stories about the importance of midwives in maternal care, in reducing maternal deaths, and the importance the individuals can make, in Liberia, Zimbabwe, Somalia, and Uganda, among others. In Uganda two additional aspects to the story: MPs calling for more midwives to be trained, and a health minister accusing some midwives of belittling patients because of their own past experience with domestic violence. And in Nigeria, 100 midwives were taken out of retirement because there aren’t enough new trainees to take over. Do have a look at CIRHT’s post about midwife training on our website.

US restrictions on family planning and reproductive health continue to cast a shadow over organizations domestically and internationally. The Trump Administration appointed a “contraceptive skeptic” to be in charge of family planning disbursements, and signed an executive order allowing religious employers to deny contraception insurance coverage; the American Health Care Act, passed by the House to replace Obamacare, defunds Planned Parenthood and includes sexual assault, C-sections, domestic abuse, pregnancy, and postpartum depression as “pre-existing conditions.” On the international front, the Kaiser Family Foundation concluded that “the majority of countries that received U.S. bilateral global health assistance… allow for legal abortion in at least one case not permissible by the MCP…accounting for 53% of bilateral global health assistance.” In the other countries, some other activities are prohibited by the policy.

The fighting in South Sudan is forcing pregnant women to flee into the bush or across the border, sometimes having their babies along the way. One report from a refugee camp in Uganda, says that the crisis offers “an opportunity to be seized.”

And from opposite sides of the Maghreb, Morocco announced that its maternal mortality ratio has dropped to 72.6, while in Egypt, President Sisi said, “Population growth is no less dangerous than terrorism.”

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