The report shows that:

1. The 73 Countdown countries included in the report account for more than 92% of global maternal and newborn deaths and stillbirths but have only 42% of the world’s medical, midwifery and nursing personnel. Within these countries, workforce deficits are often most acute in areas where maternal and newborn mortality rates are highest.

2. Only 4 of the 73 countries have a midwifery workforce that is able to meet the universal need for the 46 essential interventions for sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health.

3. Countries are endeavouring to expand and deliver equitable midwifery services, but comprehensive, disaggregated data for determining the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of the midwifery workforce are not available.

4. Midwives who are educated and regulated to international standards can provide 87% of the essential care needed for women and newborns.

5. In order for midwives to work effectively, facilities need to be equipped to offer the appropriate services, including for emergencies (safe blood, caesarean sections, newborn resuscitation).

6. Accurate data on the midwifery workforce enable countries to plan effectively. This requires a minimum of 10 pieces of information that all countries should collect: headcount, percentage time spent on SRMNH, roles, age distribution, retirement age, length of education, enrolments into, attrition and graduation from education, and voluntary attrition from the workforce.

7. Legislation, regulation and licensing of midwifery allow midwives to provide the high-quality care they are educated to deliver and thus protect women’s health. High-quality midwifery care for women and newborns saves lives and contributes to healthy families and more productive communities.

8. The returns on investment are a “best buy”:
   - Investing in midwifery education, with deployment to community-based services, could yield a 16-fold return on investment in terms of lives saved and costs of caesarean sections avoided, and is a “best buy” in primary health care.
   - Investing in midwives frees doctors, nurses and other health cadres to focus on other health needs, and contributes to achieving a grand convergence: reducing infections, ending preventable maternal mortality and ending preventable newborn deaths.