

Manila Declaration

Call to Action

International Committee on MCH Handbook

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) advocates, experts, practitioners, and policymakers from Calabarzon (Region IV-A) and from 20 countries congregated in Manila, with additional online participation via the University of the Philippines Manila's social properties (Facebook and Youtube) and Zoom Meeting platform, met at "Safe Beginnings: 1st Regional Conference on Maternal and Child Health (MCH) in Calabarzon in partnership with 14th International Conference on the MCH Handbook". This conference is a strategic opportunity to recognize the significance of effective MCH and MCH Handbook programs in ensuring a "safe beginning" for the health and well-being of both the mother and the child.



A safe beginning for every baby, which begins with a healthy mother, will improve health outcomes before, during, and after pregnancy. The MCH Handbook is a comprehensive instrument, designed to be kept by the family that contain integrated health records and information from pregnancy, delivery to child rearing. More than 50 countries and areas over the world have already implemented it as an essential measure to address the need to provide a continuum of care for maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health in the manner of people-centered approach.

Following the Toronto Declaration adopted by the 13th International Conference on the MCH Handbook, held in Toronto in November 2022, the Manila Conference has provided an opportunity to reflect on what has been learned about development and implementation; to re-examine the values and effects of the use of the MCH handbook; and to identify the directions and strategies required to meet the requirements of Universal Health Care.



We, the participants of “Safe Beginnings: 1st Regional Conference on Maternal and Child Health (MCH) in Calabarzon in partnership with 14th International Conference on the MCH Handbook”, hereby conclude and recommend:

1. That the MCH Handbook is an essential and effective family-based tool that can promote a “safe beginning” in the first 1000 days of life and beyond for all mothers and children.
2. That the MCH Handbook should be recognized as a necessary component in health service delivery in MCH facilities and be used as guidance for all families to improve their health literacies on maternal and child care.
3. To ensure equitable access to care for all, including vulnerable groups:
 - a. the inclusion of information and care for mothers and children with special needs;
 - b. adequate access to convenient format of the MCH Handbook, digital version for pregnant women and mothers with supporting technologies and paper-based version for those with limited technological capacity; and
 - c. maximize all available resources and innovations to create opportunities for more partnership with local governments, scaling-up utilization, and inclusivity of users while ensuring data collection and improvement of civil registration for planning and programming.



4. To foster a sense of ownership of one’s health with the inclusion of a page/s for mothers and fathers to write their experiences/concerns that their children can read about.
5. To institutionalize the MCH Handbook within the frame of government policies and acclimate more data and evidence to help guide MCH-related decisions to develop and provide evidence-based programs and practices, which will facilitate optimal outcomes in mothers and newborns.
6. To ensure successful collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders, among others with local governments, professional organizations, academics and scientists, and civil society communities, to address common issues on MCH Handbook utilization and ensure sustainability of the MCH Handbook as an integrated part of MCH programs.



The Manila Declaration aims for the inclusive, equitable and sustainable implementation, monitoring and updating of MCH handbook worldwide. It reflects the firm commitment of participants in the conference to draw upon the widest possible range of resources to utilize the MCH Handbook.

We, with renewed commitment and strengthened collaboration and a common goal towards effective implementation and sustainability of MCH Handbook program, have committed to ensure a safe beginning and thriving future to mothers and children in Calabarzon and worldwide.

No one will be left behind.

Manila, Philippines
10th May 2024

