

WHAT IS A MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP PROJECT?

It's a core part of the Leadership Journey that allows you to design and lead work that taps into your expertise, network, passion, and creativity. It also helps you:

- **APPLY** new leadership skills approaches, and visionary mindsets to enhance gender-informed health impact
- **COLLABORATE** with your cohort and your broader network
- **BUILD** on the health projects of other WomenLift Fellows
- **ACCELERATE** health impact

At WomenLift Health we take an expansive definition of the word health to recognize that sustainable improvements in health require coordinated action across interconnected fields that shape and enable health such as climate change, food systems, agriculture, water and sanitation, education, economic policy, gender equity, and technology.



The Midwifery Leadership Project is an opportunity for you to design and lead an effort that stretches you and taps into your expertise, network, passion, and creativity to create health impact.

Participants enter the Journey with a project idea and develop a Theory of Change, stakeholder analysis, and implementation plan with the guidance of their mentor, coach, and global health experts within our team and network. The implementation phase of the project begins in the latter half of the Journey. Finally at the Lift-Off event, each cohort member presents a summary of their project's development and early outcomes.

Implementation of the project does not have to be fully complete by the end of the Journey and should continue beyond it.

THERE ARE ONLY THREE GUIDELINES FOR THE MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP PROJECT:

1. Focus on improving health outcomes and integrate gender considerations into interventions, policies, and systems to address differences in burdens, risks, care, and outcomes.
2. Apply and enhance your leadership skills. Strike a balance between exercising your control and influence, while stretching yourself and leveraging resources to build sustainable impact.
3. Channel your passion into health impact by addressing a public health issue through a systems lens, connecting to structures, policies, stakeholders, and root causes for sustainable, scalable change.

MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP PROJECTS FIT INTO ONE OF FIVE THEMES:

Center women, girls, and midwives in sexual, reproductive, and maternal health

Design, implement, or strengthen SRMNH/R initiatives that prioritize the lived experiences, needs, and rights of women, girls, infants, and the people who care for them with a strong focus on midwives as well as other SRMNH providers. Projects in this theme amplify marginalized voices, confront gendered and systemic barriers, and ensure equitable access to quality, respectful care across the continuum of pregnancy, birth, and postpartum.



Catalyze policy and institutional change through advocacy for enhanced midwifery impact

Lead strategic policy, regulatory, or institutional change that strengthens midwifery and improves SRMNH/R outcomes. Projects in this theme use advocacy, evidence, and coalition-building to align policies and organizational culture in ways that enhance performance, equity, and impact for women, girls, and the midwifery workforce.





Optimize pathways for midwifery leadership

Create clear, accessible, and supportive pathways for women to lead within midwifery and the broader SRMNH/R ecosystem. This includes dismantling structural and gendered barriers; strengthening leadership capabilities; expanding mentorship, sponsorship, and networks; and ensuring inclusive decision-making spaces where women leaders — midwives and other SRMNH professionals — can drive transformative change.



Develop and scale evidence-based innovation for maternal & newborn health and family planning

Lead the development, adaptation, or scale-up of evidence-based tools, models, or practices that improve maternal, newborn, and family planning outcomes and strengthen the role of midwifery. Projects in this theme harness data, research, and co-creation with communities and providers, placing midwives at the center alongside other SRMNH actors, to expand access, advance equity, and respond to evolving SRMNH/R needs.



Integrate midwifery practice into resilient health systems

Embed and strengthen midwifery within connected, resilient health systems that deliver continuous, high-quality SRMNH/R care and maintain essential services during shocks and crises. Projects in this theme position midwives and other SRMNH providers as leaders of continuity-of-care and community-responsive solutions, enhancing system resilience, equity, and impact.

YOUR MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP PROJECT COULD ACCOMPLISH ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO:

- Answer a midwifery or MNH-related research question that centers the experiences of women, girls, and midwives.
- Promote respectful, rights-based sexual, reproductive, maternal, and newborn health education within a specific community or group.
- Develop or adapt a new or improved tool, model of care, or technology to strengthen midwifery practice, MNH, or family planning services.

- Develop innovative approaches for collecting, analyzing, or using data (e.g., gender-, age-, or cadre-disaggregated) to improve midwifery and MNH decision-making.
- Improve a midwifery-related process or system in your organization or facility (for example, referral pathways, supervision models, or respectful care protocols).
- Expand the power, visibility, and influence of midwives in leadership and decision-making spaces to improve outcomes for women, newborns, and families.
- Incorporate or strengthen a gender-responsive, equity-focused approach in midwifery policy, practice, education, or research.
- Contribute to public discourse or advocacy on the value of midwifery, health equity, and high-quality, respectful care for women, girls, and newborns.

Within the application, you will be asked to describe your Midwifery Leadership Project idea, which is a critical element of your application. Implementation of your project does not have to be fully complete by the end of the Journey and can absolutely continue beyond it.

WomenLift Health does not provide funding for your Leadership Project. The support we provide is mainly in the form of connecting you with highly experienced mentors, coaches, and experts within our team and network. Your peers can also be an excellent resource for enhancing your project. We also encourage you to align your project with your work stream and gain buy-in from institutional leaders.

DESIGN FOR ACTION, COLLABORATION, AND SUSTAINABLE HEALTH IMPACT

- **Design:**
 - » Shape your project to meet real health needs and create lasting impact. The design should reflect your values, passions, and experience, grow your leadership competencies, and give you visibility.
- **Collaborate and Build Bridges:**
 - » Partner with Global Fellows, allies, mentors, and organizations to turn your project into a living leadership network. Connect across disciplines, sectors, geographies, and institutions to influence the broader health ecosystem and create bold futures.
- **Leverage Learning Loops:**
 - » Use reflection, adaptation, and candid dialogue about challenges to strengthen both your leadership and your project's lasting impact.



MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP PROJECT IMPACT



DEVELOP YOUR LEADERSHIP: SCOPE, SKILL, LENS

The **scope** of the Midwifery Leadership Project could leverage your day-to-day work to make it more sustainable, and it must include an opportunity to stretch you beyond the usual.

Develop or enhance a leadership **skill**

Build Influence, Trust, and Collaboration

Strive to engage others, believe in them, and get things done through trusting partnerships and collaboration.

Develop Leadership Presence

Set goals for communicating your ideas more effectively.

Engage with Complexity

Consider real-world challenges that are messy and multifaceted. This will stretch your ability to navigate ambiguity and think beyond simple solutions.

Practice Co-Creation and Collaborative Visioning

Learn to let go of control, invite in new ideas, and trust others — expanding from an individual contributor mindset to a collective leadership mindset.

Take Risks and Learn from Failure

This is an opportunity to try new approaches, reflect on what works, and build resilience. Experiencing setbacks can be humbling and can prompt reflection, adaptation, and personal growth.

ADD ANOTHER **LENS** TO YOUR THINKING

- 1. Listen Beyond Your Usual Circles** - Seek out voices you might not usually hear from to help you challenge assumptions and understand issues from new angles.
- 2. Think in Systems** - Notice how problems are part of larger systems shaped by history, policy, and structures, not just individual actions. This broader view can deepen your strategic thinking.
- 3. Put Your Values into Action** - This is a chance to live your values, not just talk about them. You'll be challenged to make decisions that align with what matters most to you and your community.
- 4. Expand Time Horizons** - Think beyond the Leadership Journey. Think about sustainability and long-term impact. This can shift your mindset from immediate wins to lasting change.



HEALTH IMPACT THROUGH DEVELOPING OTHERS



• Individuals:

- » **Support Agency** - Encourage voice and choice, especially among those who may not typically have influence.
- » **Spark Mindset Shifts** - Influence others to think differently, challenge their assumptions, and adopt new perspectives.
- » **Enhance the Leadership Pipeline** – Mentor, sponsor, or elevate others.
- » **Facilitate Skill Development** - Provide opportunities for others to grow new competencies, confidence, and leadership capacity.



• Institutions:

- » **Inspire Innovation** - Introduce new or needed approaches or systems that improve health outcomes are impacted.
- » **Strengthen Capacity** - Build the abilities of staff across all levels to take on health challenges more effectively.
- » **Change Culture** - Set new norms for collaboration, equity, transparency, learning from mistakes, and/or psychological safety.
- » **Prioritize Sustainability** - Embed practices or processes that can have long-term health benefit beyond the project.
- » **Develop Strategy** – Align stakeholders, consider health systems-level influences, anticipate risks, design for sustainability and scalable impact.



• Society:

- » **Shape the Conversation** - Contribute to thought leadership by informing or reframing public understanding of key health issues, fostering dialogue and engagement.
- » **Build Community** - Connect people and groups to amplify collective power and health impact.
- » **Influence Policy** - Contribute to influencing or informing health policy or advocacy efforts.
- » **Impact Systems** - Add your voice and strategy to shift health systems toward more just, equitable, and effective outcomes.

You can see the presentations and titles of the previous cohorts' Midwifery Leadership Projects on their Lift-Off pages:

[East Africa](#)

[India](#)

[North America](#)

A NOTE ON USING AI TO SUPPORT YOUR MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP PROJECT

We've noticed an increase in the use of AI tools to draft Midwifery Leadership Projects in past applications. While AI can be helpful for refining your writing style or organizing your ideas, your project must ultimately reflect your own thinking, experience, and goals.

Midwifery Leadership Projects should be specific, contextualized, rooted in your work or interests, and include clear, realistic goals. They should demonstrate your understanding of your contexts, communities, and your unique skills, things AI simply won't know. If your submission includes vague ideas and reads the same as multiple other submissions, our reviewers will not get a true sense of your skills and abilities. This might result in a poor rating and lower the probability of your selection in a highly competitive process.

We live in a world shaped by AI, and we welcome thoughtful, transparent use of these tools. But your Midwifery Leadership Project should showcase you, not just what a chatbot can generate.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

WomenLift does not provide funding for your project, but we do provide the following support:



Leadership Project Office Hours

- With Hub staff
- With Midwifery Leadership Project Reviewers



Cohort Peers and Journey Buddies

- Help to hold each other accountable, provide support, and inspire each other's creativity for the Midwifery Leadership Project to stay motivated together



Mentor Check-ins

- Each mentoring session, we encourage you to let the Hub team and your mentors know how you're progressing on your Midwifery Leadership Project.
- Mentors can help with your Midwifery Leadership Project in multiple ways:
 - » Bring technical, institutional, and sectoral knowledge
 - » Help to expand vision and plan for long-term health impact
 - » Determine strategy to navigate barriers and challenges
 - » Act as a sounding board and provide accountability for Midwifery Leadership Projects

- » Enhance self-belief to enable risk-taking and provide strategies for risk mitigation
- » Expand the network of people and opportunities
- During Mentoring Touchpoints with your peers and mentors:
 - » Clarify your idea
 - » Ask questions or get informal feedback on project deliverables
 - » Discuss implementation-related challenges
 - » Prepare for your Lift-Off presentation

MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP PROJECT ROADMAP

You enter the Leadership Journey with a project idea which you can adapt based on current developments and as you consider joint Midwifery Leadership Projects with cohort members. After the initial outline of the project, you develop a theory of change, stakeholder analysis, and implementation plan with the guidance of your mentor, coach, and global health experts. The implementation of the project begins in the latter half of the Leadership Journey. Finally, at the Leadership Lift-Off event, you'll present a summary of your project's development and early outcomes.

Implementation of the project does not have to be complete by the end of the Leadership Journey and should continue beyond it.



PHASE 1

PROJECT IDEA CREATION

In your Leadership Journey application craft an idea for your Midwifery Leadership Project using the guidance shared above

Share a title and a short description that includes:

- Brief background (no more than 1-2 short paragraphs)
- How you plan to accomplish & implement your project. We do not need a full implementation plan at this stage, but would like to get a sense of milestones and timeline during the Leadership Journey and beyond.
- Intended impact: Think about sustainable health impact which leverages collective action

Remember, the most successful Midwifery Leadership Projects are:

- Targeted, specific, relevant, achievable, measurable
- Fueled by your passion and positioned for health impact
- Leverage a broader network of resources, skills and people
- Begun during the Leadership Journey with a clear plan to sustain progress beyond the year



PHASE 2

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & REFINEMENT



From Month 1 to Month 3 of the Journey:

- Lean on the WomenLift Health team, your mentor, your Midwifery Leadership Project Reviewer, and your peers to refine your project idea
- Take advantage of office hours



- » Update the title and description of your project as you learn and grow

- Do I want/need to change my originally proposed project?
 - » Is it designed to achieve health impact?
 - » Is it going to advance my own growth and/or develop or impact others?
 - » Is there potential to collaborate with a cohort member or Global Fellow?
 - » Are there projects that have synergies and could be an opportunity for cross-sharing & learning?
 - » See guidelines on [Joint Midwifery Leadership Projects](#)
 - » Is it still well aligned with my passions, goals, work and workload, areas where I need to stretch, etc.?



Month 4:

- Submit your Midwifery Leadership Project proposal
 - » Theory of Change
 - » Stakeholder Analysis
 - » Implementation Plan



Month 5:

- Receive your Midwifery Leadership Project review feedback
 - » Review, edit, adapt, and/or collaborate
- Optional Midwifery Leadership Project office hours/ check-in meetings
- In the Expand Your Mindset month - discuss the challenges you are facing and receive peer coaching

PHASE 3

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Month 6 – 7:

- Begin Midwifery Leadership Project implementation work on your Midwifery Leadership Project pitch, discuss the challenges you are facing and receive peer coaching.
 - » Work on your Midwifery Leadership Project pitch, discuss the challenges you are facing and receive peer coaching.

Month 9 – 10:

- Submit Progress Summary Report
 - » How is the project progressing? What successes have you seen, what challenges are you facing, how can WomenLift be of support at this phase?

Month 10 – 11:

- Begin preparing your Lift-Off presentation
 - » Leverage the support of your mentors, peers, and the WomenLift team.

PHASE 4

PROJECT PRESENTATION

Month 12:

- Lift-Off Presentation
 - » Present on the background, methodology, learnings, successes, challenges, and early progress of your Midwifery Leadership Project to your cohort, mentors, invited colleagues, WomenLift staff, and special guests.
 - » Reflect on how the Midwifery Leadership Project and Journey has challenged you to grow throughout the year.



PROJECT CONTINUATION



Post-Journey:

- Advance Your Midwifery Leadership Project
- Your project is more than a one-year exercise. It is a long-term contribution to gender-informed health impact. Your leadership is needed, and the changes you are driving take persistence, partnership, and continued commitment.
- **Adapt and Integrate**
 - » Refine your project as contexts shift, track progress, share learning, and embed it into your institutional or system-level work.
- **Collaborate and Sustain**
 - » Engage Global Fellows, new cohort members with overlapping projects, and other allies to strengthen networks, secure support or funding, and ensure long-term sustainability.
- **Mentor and Amplify**
 - » Use your project as a model to mentor others. Share your story and learnings through WomenLift Health's platforms [website, social media, blogs, newsletter, WhatsApp, etc.], and through other publications, talks, and conferences.
- **Influence and Lead**
 - » Leverage your project to drive institutional change or policy impact. Continue leading boldly knowing your project is part of a broader movement.



Please visit www.womenlifthealth.org to learn more about the Leadership Journey



