In 2004, the community of Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip was closed off during a military incursion and pregnant women could not reach hospitals to deliver their babies, until Feeza Shraim and her other volunteer health workers were able to help.

Feeza is a midwife from Beit Hanoun with 13 children and 30 years' experience in nursing and midwifery. When the incursion took place she contacted the Ministry of Health and requested help to fit out the local health clinic with the equipment required for delivery and labour. Following this she was able to help women get to and from the clinic from their houses and deliver their babies.

"The work was under very challenging circumstances, sometimes I would get home very late and then I would get a call from one of the women and I would have to go running to her aid. Many cases were delivered amid clashes and bombing. Thankfully I was able to deliver 52 babies with another two volunteers," said Feeza a Shraim.

WHO celebrated celebrated the work of nurses and midwives on World Health Day on April 7 to remind world leaders of the critical role nurses and midwives play in keeping the world healthy. Healthworkers like Feeza help us live in a happier healthier world and keep our families safe.

“You know the most important thing for me was to help the women deliver with qualified support. The experience of childbirth is a special experience, the mother’s health and her baby’s health was the most important thing for me. It is not easy to have a woman work as a midwife, you have to have experience because the life of the mother and baby depend on you, there is no room for error in this work.”

After this event in 2004, Feeza a was nominated for an award from the Women’s health and dignity, offered by UNFPA and when she received the award she was nominated for an award from an American institute. “I was supposed to travel to New York to receive the award, but I was not granted a visa and could not attend. I received my financial award but the hospital at Beit Hanoun needed medical equipment for the maternity ward so I donated my award to help buy that equipment.”

Feeza has 13 children, eight daughters and five sons and 32 grandchildren, who were all delivered by her. During this COVID-19 outbreak Feeza a and her colleagues are following all safety precautions recommended by local health authorities and they haven’t had many people with COVID-19 symptoms come in. “Those who come are worried to get infected and take the illness to their family. We are still in the first stages in Gaza so we are keeping all precautions as recommended.”

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