Capacity Building of Professional Organisations: The FIGO Perspective

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Vision

FIGO has a vision that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and well-being throughout their lives.
Mission Statement

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO is dedicated to:
- the improvement of women’s health and rights
- the reduction of disparities in healthcare available to women and newborns
- advancing the science and practice of obstetrics and gynecology

The organisation pursues its mission through advocacy, programmatic activities, capacity strengthening of member associations, education and training.
FIGO membership - an overview

FIGO was founded in Geneva in 1954 - 42 national societies were represented; today it has 124 countries/territories in membership.

These member associations are a powerful, unifying voice for supporting women’s health and rights.

FIGO is committed to:

✓ Improving communication with and between member associations and building the capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, management, good practice and the promotion of policy dialogues.

✓ Strengthening capacities to enable societies to play a pivotal role in the development and implementation of sustainable programmes aimed at the improvement of care available to women and newborns, especially for poor and underserved populations.
What can a national society of obstetrics and gynecology do?

Scientific exchange

- To promote evidence-based medicine

- Scientific presentations should relate to the current global evidence-based information

- To promote discussions on how such evidence relates to the national context, from a public health point of view
Improving the quality of reproductive healthcare

- Development of national strategies and guidelines - experts can take part in Working Groups with the Ministry of Health and other partners in the development of broader strategies within sexual and reproductive health and rights

- Professional standards - guidelines can be further strengthened to set a standard for a certain procedure

- Systematic assessments - the reality of a situation often needs to be ‘mapped out’ before finalisation of guidelines or standards

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... Improving the quality of reproductive healthcare ...

- **Outcome analysis** - regular collection and assessment of data is extremely important; many health care providers do this regularly either as individuals, heads of departments or through their national societies.

- **Audit, confidential enquiry and near-miss analysis** - study of non-numerical data helps to indicate ways in which quality of clinical care can be improved.

- **Ethical standards** - a professional society has a vital role in promoting agreed ethical standards for its members and obstetrician-gynecologists in general within its country.
Addressing a broader women’s health agenda

- Professional societies also have the opportunity to work on societal issues through awareness raising, public education, strategic partnerships, the actions of ‘champions’ from their own ranks, special initiatives or specific ear-marked projects.

- Awareness raising should begin in the society’s own ranks, as strong internal support is needed for any successful initiative.

- Each area has its own characteristics, strategy and key partnerships.

... what can a national society of obstetrics and gynecology do? ...
What is weak organisational capacity?

- Undefined strategy to achieve a successful mission
- Weak management and financial structure
- Weak human resource management
- Weak communication
- Poor infrastructure
- Lack of evaluation and monitoring systems
- Out-dated rules and norms
What are the consequences of weak organisational capacity?

- Health care providers are not involved in the country process to achieve MDGs 4 and 5
- A link is missing between strategies adopted by the Ministry of Health and their implementation
- Actions to decrease maternal mortality and morbidity are not co-ordinated and will have less impact
- Lack of leadership
- Lack of human resources
- Lack of research capabilities
What is needed to make a national society strong?

✓ A solid membership base
  ❑ A strong national society will be attractive to obstetricians and gynecologists in its particular country, so the majority will be members

✓ Effective leadership
  ❑ Good membership and good leadership go hand in hand; leaders should be replaced at regular intervals

✓ A robust and flexible Constitution
  ❑ This is the instrument through which all members agree on the formalities of the society - it should be refreshed at regular intervals

✓ Transparency
  ❑ Information from the leadership and members should be clear, consistent and honest
... what is needed to make a national society strong? ...

✓ Meticulous financial order

- Budgets should be agreed through the Constitution, be well managed, audited and presented to members

- Financial capital can be built up through a variety of ways eg donations from members, direct support from donors etc

- As a society gains experience and standing, official bodies and grant givers may offer opportunities to carry out defined activities; this will require sound financial management and will ultimately provide the opportunity to gain economic strength

- A separate Finance Committee can be established from the available member skillset, with the sole aim of building up the society’s reserves
... what is needed to make a national society strong? ...

- Accurate information provision and exchange
  - Members must be provided with up to date contact details for the society’s elected officers - eg email, telephone etc

- General information-sharing should be actively encouraged - eg newsletters, group SMS etc

- Members should be kept abreast of current developments - this will encourage enthusiastic participation in the ‘nuts and bolts’ work of the society

- Information-sharing with external partners - eg Ministry of Health, NGOs, other professional societies etc - is an excellent way to publicise the good work being done within the society
... what is needed to make a national society strong? ...

✓ Being responsive

☐ A thriving society needs to respond to a large number of different initiatives and pursue a multitude of tasks at any one time eg react to suggestions and queries; follow up on decisions; send out relevant paperwork etc

☐ It is advisable to hire an assistant (to handle administration); delegate defined tasks to interested members (to capitalise on a wide skills-base); and form special Working Groups (to engage specialists in specific fields of interest to further important work)
Assessing strengths and weaknesses

Helpful tools are available to assist a society in this task:

❖ The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada’s (SOGC) ‘Organization Capacity Improvement Framework’ (www.sogc.com)

❖ Components of the Framework include:

- Organisational capacity assessment
- Data analysis
- Organisational capacity improvement plan
- Implementation and performance measurements
What are the current challenges in maternal and newborn health?

- Maternal and newborn health constitutes a major international health and development issue in low-resource countries.

- MDGs 4 and 5 will not be achieved without a greater effort.

- Weak organisational capacity of professional ob/gyn organisations prevents them from playing a major role.
FIGO and professional societies: an example of a successful FIGO collaborative project

LOGIC Initiative (Leadership in Obstetrics and Gynecology for Impact and Change)

**Aim:** Improving maternal and newborn health in low-resource countries through strengthening the role of obstetric and gynecological national associations

Over five years, FIGO hopes to enable these member associations to play a catalytic role in making positive changes in policy and practice and improve maternal and newborn health services for under-served populations

*Countries involved:* Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda

*Project length: 2008-2013; funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*
What are the project objectives of the LOGIC Initiative?

Objective 1
 To strengthen the institutional capacity of FIGO MAs in eight countries so they may play an active role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national maternal and newborn health plans

Objective 2
 To enable MAs to undertake advocacy activities aimed at raising awareness, and influencing policy on issues related to maternal and newborn health issues at the national and regional level

Objective 3
 To promote collaboration between the eight countries through the establishment of knowledge-sharing processes (workshops, ongoing technical exchanges), making best use of evolving communication technologies
**Objective 1**

To strengthen the institutional capacity of FIGO MAs in eight countries so they may play an active role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national maternal and newborn health plans

Examples of activities:

- Strengthening the capacities of MAs by using the ‘Organization Capacity Improvement Framework’ (SOGC) through:
  - Organisational capacity assessment
  - Data analysis
  - Organisational capacity improvement plan
  - Implementation and performance measurements

- Developing of work plans for specific activities with regard to project objectives

- MAs adapting and translating protocols and guidelines for improving the quality of maternal and newborn health services as needed
Objective 2

To enable MAs to undertake advocacy activities aimed at raising awareness, and influencing policy on issues related to maternal and newborn health issues at the national and regional level

Examples of activities:

- Identifying appropriate messages for each target group eg parliamentarians, policy makers, the media, civil society organisations, especially women’s and youth groups

- Facilitating meetings, seminars, workshops, TV and radio coverage, and newspaper and magazine articles as appropriate
Objective 3

To promote collaboration between the eight countries through the establishment of knowledge-sharing processes (workshops, ongoing technical exchanges), making best use of evolving communication technologies

Examples of activities:

- Facilitating a one-day orientation workshop for country representatives at the FIGO World Congress in Cape Town (2009)

- Organising half-day sessions at the Cape Town Congress (2009) and the forthcoming Rome Congress (2012), providing updated information on the international situation of maternal and newborn health and family planning

- Creating a dedicated LOGIC Initiative Web Forum (to be launched shortly) - accessible via www.figo.org - for selected people to exchange information easily and discuss important and confidential documents
Health research: its growing importance and how professional organisations can play a critical role

In 2008, the Final Declaration of the Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health called upon all parties and stakeholders:

‘To ensure civil society and community participation in the entire research process, from priority setting to the implementation and evaluation of policies, programmes and interventions; and to support civil society in advocacy to key decision-makers, including politicians, for increased investment in and commitment to research for health’

- The Call for Civil Society Engagement in Research for Health identifies strategies and actions that government, academia, funding agencies and civil society organisations can apply to strengthen civil society engagement in health research
Key benefits of health research for health professionals

- Health professionals are expertly placed to identify knowledge gaps and shape research questions and agendas.

- They can collect and help interpret data so that the results improve the quality of health services, facilitate understanding of health behaviour, and help improve access to health services.

- Where health care provision takes priority over health research for many professionals, civil society organisations are an important partner in obtaining and using the information needed to improve service delivery.

- A good partnership between civil society organisations and health professionals can provide health workers with better data to manage their day to day challenges.
What are the strategies for civil society engagement in research for health?

For Governments
- Develop legal and policy directions that specify citizens’ rights to have a say in research
- Co-ordinate the other actors in research; facilitate partnership building
- Facilitate inclusive agenda setting for research, and encourage civil society participation in this process

For research institutions
- Adjust institutional policies to facilitate civil society engagement within their research programmes
- Provide training for researchers and civil society partners
- Develop clear partnership arrangements
- Play a key role in developing the research agenda, and work with civil society in this process
... what are the strategies for civil society engagement in research for health? ...

For funding institutions and development agencies
- Provide planning grants, training grants and long-term funding to civil society partners
- Set funding criteria that ensure a focus on collaboration with civil society for part of their funding schemes

Civil society organisations
- Develop networks of civil society organisations to create a stronger voice to influence policies, strategies and agendas of other actors
- Engage with media to disseminate information to the public about the benefits of research
- Highlight priorities and real needs of populations, and use this to contribute and influence the agenda-setting process
- Identify their own capacity building needs and ensure staff training where needed

(Sylvia de Haan et al; 2010)
In conclusion

- Health professional organisations (HPOs) could play a **pivotol role** in promoting policy and practice in health services.

- Health research should be an **essential component** of the activities of HPOs in low- and middle-resource countries.

- HPOs are usually weak and contribute minimally to policy and research; strengthening capacities in low- and middle-resource countries is greatly needed to **utilise the talents and resources available** for the improvement of health in these settings.
FIGO
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Thank you for your attention

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