



international  
*stillbirth* alliance

**INTERNATIONAL STILLBIRTH ALLIANCE  
STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020**

**This document outlines the mission, vision, guiding principles and  
strategic goals for ISA over the next 5 years**

For more information about ISA's strategic direction and goals over the next 5 years please  
contact the International Stillbirth Alliance at [info@stillbirthalliance.org](mailto:info@stillbirthalliance.org).



## Introduction

**A stillbirth is the death of an unborn baby.** Many countries have different definitions of stillbirth, but the World Health Organization (WHO) defines a stillbirth as the birth of a baby without signs of life weighing more than 500 grams, or after 28 weeks of pregnancy. Many high income countries (HIC) use the lower threshold definition of 20 weeks or 400 grams. For international comparisons WHO recommends the definition of 1000gms or more birthweight or 28 weeks' gestation (if birthweight unknown) (referred to as late gestation stillbirths).

About 2.6 million late gestation stillbirths happen every year, 98% of which occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). Using the definition applied in high income countries (HIC), the global number of stillbirths could be twice as high. However, many stillbirths are not counted, and global numbers are often estimates. The EPS series shows that half of all stillbirths happen during labour and birth. **Most stillbirths result from problems that can be avoided with good maternity care** such as the prevention or treatment of infections and pregnancy-related complications (e.g. high blood pressure, diabetes, or poor growth of the baby before birth). While rates of stillbirth in HIC are much lower than in low and middle income countries, many HIC deaths are also avoidable and increased effort on prevention is required.

**Stillbirth places a heavy burden on families and society.** Stillbirth is a tragedy for families and can have long lasting psychological, social and financial effects. The behaviour of doctors and midwives and other health care providers can make a real difference to parents' experiences; respectful maternity services which include good quality bereavement care can reduce the negative impacts for parents. The attitudes of all those who are around parents at this tragic time are important. Stillbirth is stigmatised, and parents often feel shunned and blamed for their babies' deaths.

**The International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA)** is an alliance of member organisations and individual supporters which works to research, support and promote high-quality, evidence-based strategies for stillbirth prevention and bereavement care worldwide. Both for the ultimate goal of stillbirth prevention, as well as to provide better care for those affected by stillbirth, ISA believes there is a need for a wide range of research. Basic research in the physiology of pregnancy and labor, understanding disease mechanisms in the many different causes of stillbirths, the genetic susceptibilities, the environment, understanding effective prenatal care, maternal risk factors, socioeconomic disparities, psychosocial care and bereavement, and many more topics can all provide keys to stillbirth prevention and improved care for families whose child is stillborn.

**A global collaboration of parents working with health care professionals and researchers** is required to reduce stillbirths, including the sharing of perinatal audit protocols, bereavement support practices, and prevention strategies including raising awareness. **ISA provides a forum for collaboration on stillbirth research and action**, including international workshops and an annual international stillbirth conference. The highest quality research will be futile in saving babies' lives if it is not known and implemented in conjunction with high-quality maternal health care. **ISA works to make the results of stillbirth research known, and in particular to facilitate the diffusion of knowledge.** For further information see our website: [www.stillbirthalliance.org](http://www.stillbirthalliance.org)

## Mission

### why we exist

*To raise awareness of stillbirth and to promote global collaboration in the prevention of stillbirth and provision of appropriate care for parents whose baby is stillborn.*

## Vision

### what we aspire to

*To reduce the risk of stillbirth and to enhance bereavement care of families who experience stillbirth through public awareness initiatives, community engagement, development and promotion of best clinical practice standards and facilitating high quality collaborative research.*

## Guiding Principles

## what we believe

### Collaboration

- ISA promotes collaboration between all health care professionals, researchers and affected families as well as between organizations and countries and continents.
- ISA provides opportunities to meet and build networks, share information and knowledge, experience, culture and history in the scientific and bereavement areas of stillbirth which will accelerate progress toward best care.
- ISA provides a forum for better understanding and prevention of stillbirths and in so doing prevention of related adverse pregnancy outcomes such as neonatal death and serious neonatal morbidity.

### Understanding

- ISA works toward understanding of stillbirths in broader society: supporting activities to understand why stillbirths occur, how they can be prevented, and how to provide optimal care for those affected; but also in terms of understanding and awareness by the public and society.
- ISA works to facilitate the development and implementation of international standards with regard to monitoring the definitions, evaluation, management, data collection and classification of stillbirths.
- ISA works for improved quality of physical and emotional care for affected families, both in health care and through parental support.

### Prevention

- In LMIC countries, vast improvements could be achieved at very low cost compared to health care expenses in developed countries.
- In HIC countries, many important and largely inexpensive practice improvement opportunities exist.
- Research, education and awareness are key to stillbirth prevention.

## Goals and strategies **what we aim to achieve and how**

### **Goal 1**

#### **Collaboration**

Promote collaboration between organizations and individuals including parents, bereavement carers, health care professionals, researchers and policy makers

#### **Strategies**

- I. Establish collaborations with organizations world-wide through membership or partnership with ISA
- II. Ensure that all relevant organizations and collaborators are well informed about the activities of ISA through regular newsletters, other website materials and annual reports
- III. Host and/or co-host regular meetings and conferences addressing stillbirth priority areas covering geographic, cultural and economic diversity
- IV. Hold additional workshops and meetings as required to promote activities in stillbirth priority areas
- V. Engage and support volunteers who wish to work with ISA

### **Goal 2**

#### **Capacity building**

Increase local capacity to address stillbirth

#### **Strategies**

- I. Facilitate and promote meetings and workshops to engage local community, government and health care professionals
- II. Seek out and support local champions in establishing networks and organisations to support the goals of ISA
- III. Establish regional offices of ISA to assist in taking forward the work of ISA within the local context

## **Goal 3 Awareness**

Increase the availability of high-quality evidenced-based information on stillbirth

### **Strategies**

- I. Synthesize and disseminate new findings of high quality research and other high quality information on stillbirth suitable for a wide range of users
- II. Develop and disseminate evidence-based responses to frequently asked questions on stillbirth for parents and clinicians
- III. Ensure ISA website is up-to-date and meets the needs of member organizations and individuals seeking information
- IV. Ensure ISA meetings and conferences provide a forum for dissemination of high quality information on stillbirth and educational opportunities for stillbirth prevention and bereavement care
- V. Include respected speakers on stillbirth from around the globe at ISA meetings and conferences

## **Goal 4 Prevention**

Promote best practice in stillbirth prevention and facilitate high quality research and audit which addresses causes of stillbirth

### **Strategies**

- I. Improve the quality of data on stillbirths through standardisation of registration, comprehensive investigation, autopsy, data collection and classification
- II. Identify research, clinical practice and policy priority areas in stillbirth prevention
- III. Promote and facilitate the development and dissemination of evidence-based risk management guidelines
- IV. Support and conduct educational programs for health care professionals and other activities aimed at increasing the uptake of best practice in stillbirth prevention

## **Goal 5** **Bereavement care**

Improve the delivery of appropriate care for parents

### **Strategies**

- I. Connect parents with existing support services
- II. Facilitate and promote the establishment of adequate support services
- III. Support and promote educational programs on bereavement care for health care professionals and carers
- IV. Collect and disseminate information on bereavement programs, web resources, ongoing programs and conferences

## **Goal 6** **Sustainability**

Ensure a strong and healthy organisation

### **Strategies**

- I. Actively seek new member organisations
- II. Establish partnerships with global organisations
- III. Establish regional offices to support the work of ISA globally
- IV. Procure sufficient funds to allow successful undertaking of activities according to this strategic plan
- V. Review and amend ISA by-laws as required to ensure the ability of ISA to adapt to changing needs in meeting our goals