



ISA 2024

Colombo, Sri Lanka

19th Annual Conference of the International Stillbirth Alliance

Leaving no country behind: Moving beyond awareness to action to save babies

3rd – 6th November 2024

**At the Hilton Hotel, Colombo,
Sri Lanka**

Conference Report

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE



Stillbirths have been largely overlooked, even at the global level, with many countries lacking processes to count or prevent them. It is crucial for countries to adopt tailored approaches to reducing stillbirths, guided by their specific priorities, resources, global evidence, and best practices.

The annual International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) conference was established to place stillbirth prevention on both global and regional agendas, emphasizing the need for local action. The inaugural conference was held in 2005, and from 2010 to 2021, ISA partnered biannually with the International Society for the Study and Prevention of Perinatal and Infant Death (ISPID) for joint congresses. To date, 18 annual ISA conferences have been held across all continents, offering a platform for bereaved parents, academics, researchers, clinicians, and policymakers dedicated to prevention, bereavement care, and advocacy. This conference provides a valuable opportunity to exchange knowledge and discuss local, national, and international strategies for stillbirth prevention, highlighting multidisciplinary approaches to this complex issue.

PARTNERS



GLOBAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

<p>Dr. Paula Quigley President, International Stillbirth Alliance</p>		<p>Dr. Neena Raina <i>Former Director, Family Health/ Universal Health Coverage at WHO SEARO, Delhi</i></p>	
<p>Dr. Chithramalee De Silva <i>Director of Maternal and Child Health, Family Health Bureau, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka</i></p>		<p>Dr. Mangala Dissanayake <i>Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, President, Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists</i></p>	
<p>Prof. Vajira Dissanayake <i>Dean, Faculty of Prof. Vajira Dissanayake of Medicine, University of Colombo</i></p>		<p>Dr. Shiromi Maduwage <i>Former President of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka</i></p>	

CONFERENCE CHAIR



Dr. Kapila Jayaratne
*President
College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka*

CONFERENCE CO-CHAIR



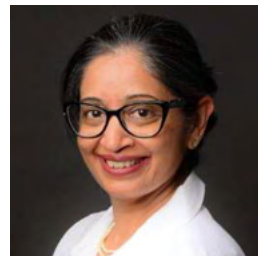
Prof Sanath Lanerolle
Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE



Dr. Ruwan Ferdinando

*Scientific Committee Co-chair, Secretary
College of Community Physicians
of Sri Lanka*



Prof. Rakhi Dandona

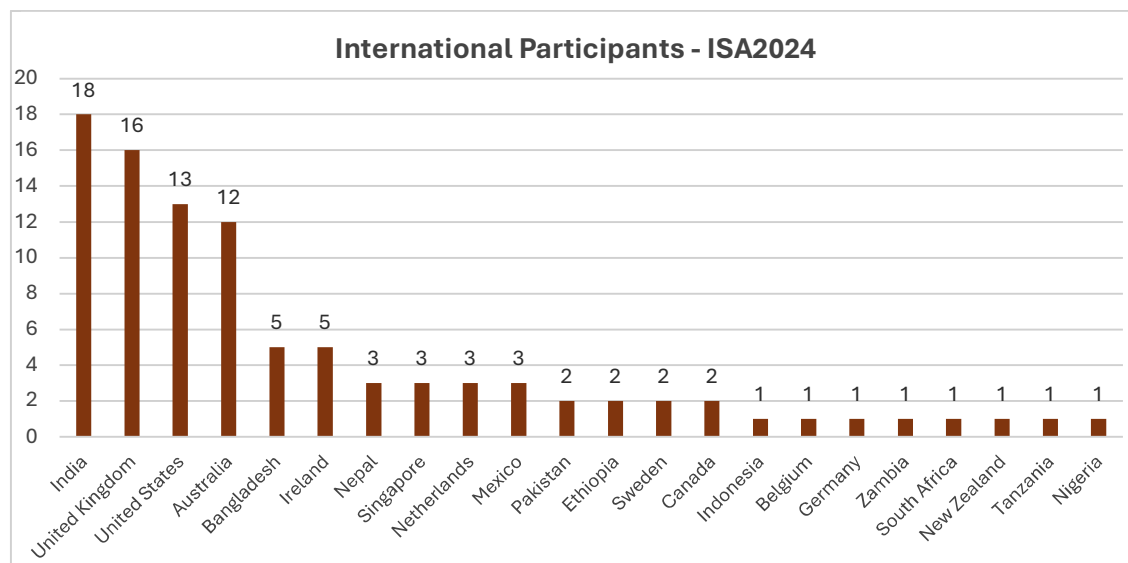
*Scientific Committee Co-chair,
Public Health Foundation of India, New
Delhi, India & University of Washington,
Seattle, USA*

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Vinaya Ariyaratne | 8. Dr. Shailendra Bir Karmacharya |
| 2. Dr. Francine De Montigny | 9. Dr MRM Rishard |
| 3. Dr. Adrienne Gordon | 10. Dr Nishani Lucas |
| 4. Prof. Upul Senarath | 11. Dr Kaushalya Kasturiarachchi |
| 5. Mr. David Wanjal | 12. Dr Hemali Jayakody |
| 6. Ms. Stacey Fletcher | 13. Prof Nuwan Wickramasinghe |
| 7. Dr. Ramita Kandel | 14. Dr. Prabodhana Ranaweera |

PARTICIPANTS

There were 281 participants checked in for the conference. A significant proportion (35%) of them were international participants. The country breakdown is given in the figure.



PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

Date: 3rd November 2024

Time	Event
10:00am - 3:00pm	Pre-congress Session: Improving Perinatal Mortality Review & Outcomes Via Education (IMPROVE)
6:00pm onwards	Conference Inauguration Ceremony

Date: 4th November 2024

Time	Event
08.45am - 09.00am	Welcome Address
09.05am - 10.30am	OPENING PLENARY SESSION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing 1.9 million Stillbirths – What will it take? Programmatic approaches in reduction of stillbirths Economics of stillbirth Community voice from Sri Lanka
10.30am - 11.00am	Refreshments / Poster Walk
11.05am - 12.05pm	PARALLEL SYMPOSIA <div> <div> <p>Symposium 1: Birth defects and stillbirths <i>Supported by the Expert Committee on Birth Defects of Sri Lanka Medical Association</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burden of birth defects and stillbirths Genetic diseases & birth defects Role of fetal medicine in birth defects and stillbirths </div> <div> <p>Symposium 2: Stillbirths in the SEARO region <i>Supported by WHO SEARO</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding horizons in the reduction of stillbirths in the region and beyond Contributions from professional organizations in reducing stillbirths in Bangladesh Sri Lanka's success story in reducing stillbirths </div> <div> <p>Symposium 3: Early pregnancy losses <i>Organized by Asia & Oceania Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global best practices of Early Pregnancy Losses and situation and challenges in the region Therapeutic approach for early pregnancy loss Genetic causes of miscarriage - The chromosome and beyond </div> </div>
12.10pm - 1.10pm	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 1: ANTE-NATAL CARE I
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 2: DATA AND INFORMATION I
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 3: EPIDEMIOLOGY I

Time	Event
1.15pm - 2.30pm	LUNCH ISA Working Group Meeting
2.30pm - 3.30pm	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 4: ANTE-NATAL CARE II
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 5: EPIDEMIOLOGY II
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 6: PERINATAL AUTOPSY I
3.30pm - 4.00pm	Refreshments / Poster Walk
4.05pm - 5.30pm	PLENARY SESSION – 2: Antenatal Care <i>Supported by WHO SEARO</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing stillbirths through evidence-based antenatal care Coverage of quality antenatal care at every visit Quality antenatal care for stillbirth prevention - Sri Lanka's experience

Date: 5th November 2024

Time	Event
08.45am - 10.00am	PLENARY SESSION 3: Intrapartum Care <i>Supported by the Gates Foundation, India Office, New Delhi</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intrapartum care for preventing stillbirths Intrapartum care for better neonatal outcomes WHO knowledge translation compendium for respectful maternal and newborn care
10.00am - 10.30am	Refreshments / Poster Walk
10.35am - 11.45am	PARALLEL SYMPOSIA
	Symposium – 4: Sick newborns & early neonatal deaths <i>Supported by UNICEF Country Office, Sri Lanka</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A global perspective of Sick Newborns & Early Neonatal Deaths Implementing best practices in Pakistan Country successes and challenges in managing sick newborns
	Symposium 5: Maternal mental health <i>Supported by United Nations Population Fund</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maternal mental health – a regional perspective Unseen struggles: Addressing women's mental health needs: Insights from the What Women Want campaign Addressing the perinatal mental health issues in local settings
	Symposium 6: Improving relational care following stillbirth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to stillbirth and neonatal death programme Development and evaluation of a respectful maternal and newborn care bundle in Malawi and Tanzania Development and evaluation of a bereavement care package in India, Pakistan, Uganda and Kenya The importance of community engagement and involvement in stillbirth research

Time	Event
11.50am - 1.00pm	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 7: DATA AND INFORMATION II
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 8: POSTPARTUM CARE
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 9: PERINATAL AUTOPSY II
1.00pm - 2.00pm	LUNCH Bereavement Training Session
2.05pm - 3.30pm	PLENARY SESSION – 4: Parent round table
3.30pm - 4.00pm	Refreshments / Poster Walk
4.30pm – 6.00pm	Memorial Service
7.00pm	Gala Dinner

Date: 6th November 2024

Time	Event
08.45am - 10.15am	PLENARY SESSION 5: Bereavement care & Perinatal autopsy <i>Supported by UNFPA</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement care: A global and regional perspective • Developing a bereavement care package in resource-poor settings • Perinatal autopsy
10.15am - 10.45am	Refreshments / Poster Walk
10.50am - 12.00pm	PARALLEL SYMPOSIA
	Symposium 7: Ending the silence on stillbirths in South Asia – Challenges and opportunities <i>Supported by UNICEF</i>
	Symposium 8: Artificial intelligence in stillbirth prevention <i>Supported by Al Sarosh, PHC Global</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Best practices in using AI in maternal & child Health • AI Initiatives in the South Asia region • AI-powered birth cohort study in Sri Lanka
	Symposium 9: Counting and Reviewing Perinatal deaths <i>Supported by WHO – TAG on MPDSR</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response (MPDSR) global report: What to learn from global experiences? • Best practice PDSR models in the region • Counting stillbirths & neonatal deaths – Sri Lanka’s success
12.05pm - 1.20pm	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 10: BEREAVEMENT AND COPING NEEDS I
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 11: TRAINING FOR SUPPORTING BEREAVED PARENTS & INNOVATIONS I
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 12: BEREAVEMENT AND COPING NEEDS II
1.20pm - 2.10pm	LUNCH

Time	Event
2.15pm - 3.15pm	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 13: PARENT PERSPECTIVES
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 14: TRAINING FOR SUPPORTING BEREAVED PARENTS & INNOVATIONS II
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 15: ANTENATAL CARE AND INTRAPARTUM CARE
	ORAL PRESENTATION SESSION 16: EPIDEMIOLOGY AND SERVICE DELIVERY
3.15pm - 3.30pm	Refreshments
3.30pm - 5.00pm	Closing Ceremony End of the conference

PRECONGRESS SESSION

IMPROVING PERINATAL MORTALITY REVIEW & OUTCOMES VIA EDUCATION (IMPROVE)



The conference opened with a pre-congress workshop titled “IMPROVE” (Improving Perinatal Mortality Review and Outcomes Via Education), a cornerstone of the ISA event. Held at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, this session trained healthcare providers on structured approaches to perinatal mortality review, emphasizing culturally sensitive and respectful care practices. Guided by the SCORPIO (Structured, Clinical, Objective Referenced, Problem-based, Integrated, and Organized) model, participants gained practical skills in critical areas such as autopsy communication, mortality audit classification, and placental examination.

This workshop was attended by 42 participants from a diverse range of healthcare professionals, including obstetricians, midwives, neonatal nurses, neonatologists, social workers, psychologists, and counselors involved in maternity care.



CONFERENCE INAUGURATION CEREMONY

The inauguration ceremony of the 19th Annual International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) Conference 2024 was held on November 3, 2024, at the Hilton Hotel in Colombo. The event began with a ceremonial procession, the lighting of the traditional oil lamp, and the national anthem, setting a respectful and celebratory tone. Dr. Kapila Jayaratne, Conference Chair, delivered the welcome address, followed by opening remarks from Dr. Paula Quigley, Dr. Mangala Dissanayake, and Prof. Vajira Dissanayake. Introductory remarks were shared by Dr. Anoma Jayathilaka (WHO SEARO), Mr. Christian Skoog (UNICEF Sri Lanka), and Mr. Kunle Adeniyi (UNFPA Sri Lanka), emphasizing collaborative efforts. The Chief Guest, Dr. Palitha Mahipala, Secretary of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Health, highlighted the importance of reducing stillbirths globally.





A highlight of the conference was the keynote address delivered by Prof. Katsufumi Otsuki from Japan. His presentation focused on Japan's success in reducing stillbirth and neonatal mortality through innovative clinical practices, research advancements, and robust perinatal care policies. Prof. Otsuki's insights into preventive care, including the use of lactoferrin to reduce infection-related preterm births, provided valuable lessons for global adaptation. His emphasis on collaborative strategies underscored the importance of shared knowledge in addressing stillbirths worldwide.



The evening concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Ruwan Ferdinando, entertainment, and a welcome reception, fostering connections and setting the stage for the conference's objectives.



PLENARY SESSIONS

The conference featured five (05) plenary sessions that tackled critical aspects of stillbirth prevention and care. The opening plenary session set the stage by addressing the global burden of stillbirths and highlighting programmatic interventions and the economic implications of stillbirths. Subsequent plenaries focused on evidence-based antenatal care, intrapartum care for better neonatal outcomes, bereavement care, and the critical role of perinatal autopsies in understanding and reducing stillbirths. A particularly moving session was the parent roundtable, which allowed bereaved parents to share their experiences and advocacy efforts, emphasizing the importance of compassionate, family-centered care.

Opening Plenary Session

Date: 4th November 2024, 9:05 AM – 10:30 AM

Chairpersons: Dr. Paula Quigley, Dr. Ruwan Ferdinando

This session addressed the global challenge of 1.9 million stillbirths annually. Experts discussed evidence-based solutions, programmatic interventions, and socio-economic factors contributing to stillbirths. The financial impact of stillbirths on families and healthcare systems was highlighted, alongside Sri Lanka's local perspective on the emotional toll of stillbirths and the importance of community advocacy.

Topics and Speakers:

- *Addressing 1.9 million Stillbirths – What will it take?* (Dr. Gagan Gupta, UNICEF)
- *Programmatic Approaches in Reduction of Stillbirths* (Dr. Anoma Jayathilake, WHO SEARO)
- *Economics of Stillbirth* (Dr. Deepika Attygalle)
- *Parent Voice from Sri Lanka* (Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya Movement, Sri Lanka)



Plenary Session 2: Antenatal Care

Date: 4th November 2024, 4:05 PM – 5:30 PM

Supported by: WHO SEARO

This session emphasized the critical role of antenatal care in improving pregnancy outcomes and preventing stillbirths. Experts explored evidence-based strategies and the need for quality antenatal care, with a focus on Sri Lanka's successes.

Topics and Speakers:

- *Reducing Stillbirths through Evidence-Based Antenatal Care* (Dr. Manjula Danansuriya, WHO Sri Lanka)
- *Coverage of Quality Antenatal Care at Every Visit* (Prof. Rakhi Dandona, Public Health Foundation of India)
- *Quality Antenatal Care for Stillbirth Prevention – Sri Lanka's Experience* (Dr. Mangala Dissanayake, SLCOG)



Plenary Session 3: Intrapartum Care

Date: 5th November 2024, 8:45 AM – 10:00 AM

Supported by: Gates Foundation & WHO

This session highlighted the importance of quality care during labor and delivery in preventing stillbirths. Experts shared insights into best practices, regional strategies, and the role of respectful maternal and newborn care.

Topics and Speakers:

- *Intrapartum Care for Preventing Stillbirths* (Dr. Mohamed Rishard, University of Colombo)
- *Intrapartum Care for Better Neonatal Outcomes* (Prof. Adrienne Gordon, University of Sydney)
- *WHO Knowledge Translation Compendium for Respectful Maternal and Newborn Care* (Dr. Hedieh Mehrtaash, WHO)



Plenary Session 4: Parent Round Table

Date: 5th November 2024, 2:05 PM – 3:30 PM

Moderator: Theresa Shaver, USAID

This session provided a platform for parents to share personal experiences with stillbirth and pregnancy loss. Discussions focused on community-based support networks, advocacy, and improving resources for bereaved families.

Panelists:

- Ms. Nur Yanayirah (MotherHope Indonesia)
- Ms. Felicia Tan (Angel Hearts, Singapore)
- Ms. Yannie Yong (Angel Hearts, Singapore)
- Ms. Nonkululeko Shibula (Umzanyana Birth Services, South Africa)
- Ms. Stacey Fletcher (Utah Pregnancy After Loss Program, USA)
- Dr. Tamkin Khan (Stillbirth Society of India)



Plenary Session 5: Bereavement Care & Perinatal Autopsy

Date: 6th November 2024, 8:45 AM – 10:15 AM

Supported by: UNFPA

This session focused on the dual aspects of bereavement care and perinatal autopsy in stillbirth prevention. It highlighted the importance of emotional support and medical insight in addressing perinatal loss, especially in resource-poor settings.

Topics and Speakers:

- *Bereavement Care – A Global and Regional Perspective* (Ms. Erin Cecilia Ryan, UNFPA)
- *Developing a Bereavement Care Package in Resource-Poor Settings* (Dr. Probodhana Ranaweera, University of Colombo)
- *Perinatal Autopsy* (Dr. Priyani Amaratunga, University of Colombo)



SYMPOSIA

Nine symposia were organized to explore diverse and specialized topics. These included the role of birth defects in stillbirths, regional efforts in South Asia, maternal mental health, artificial intelligence in stillbirth prevention, and improving relational care following stillbirths.

Symposium 1: Birth Defects and Stillbirths

This symposium focused on the relationship between birth defects and stillbirths, emphasizing the importance of genetic counseling, early detection, and advancements in fetal medicine. Experts shared insights into how these interventions can reduce adverse outcomes and improve neonatal health.

This was supported by the Expert Committee on Birth Defects of the Sri Lanka Medical Association.

Topics:

- Burden of Birth Defects and Stillbirths (Dr. Hannah Blencowe)
- Genetic Diseases and Birth Defects (Prof. Vajira Dissanayake)
- Role of Fetal Medicine in Birth Defects and Stillbirths (Dr. Achintha Dissanayake)

Symposium 2: Stillbirths in the SEARO Region

This symposium, supported by WHO SEARO, explored regional efforts to combat stillbirths, focusing on the challenges and successes in Southeast Asia. It highlighted regional efforts to combat stillbirths in Southeast Asia, addressing disparities and promoting evidence-based practices like antenatal and intrapartum care. Sri Lanka's success story was showcased as a model for reducing stillbirth rates through effective maternal health interventions.

Topics:

- Expanding Horizons in the Reduction of Stillbirths in the Region and Beyond (Dr. Anoma Jayatilake)
- Contributions from Professional Organizations in Reducing Stillbirths in Bangladesh (Dr. Fedrosi Begum)
- Sri Lanka's Success Story in Reducing Stillbirths (Dr. Chithramalee de Silva)



Symposium 3: Early Pregnancy Losses

This session explored the challenges associated with early pregnancy losses, addressing both emotional and medical aspects. Discussions focused on genetic factors, best practices, and effective strategies for prevention and management, with an emphasis on regional and global perspectives.

The session was organized by Asia & Oceania Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (AOFOG).

Topics:

- Global Best Practices of Early Pregnancy Losses and Challenges in the Region (Dr. U.D.P. Ratnasiri)
- Therapeutic Approaches for Early Pregnancy Loss (Dr. Charmila Ayyavoo)
- Genetic Causes of Miscarriage - Beyond the Chromosome (Dr. Karen Lim)

Symposium 4: Sick Newborns & Early Neonatal Deaths

Supported by the UNICEF Country Office in Sri Lanka, this symposium focused on the global and regional efforts to address the high rates of illness and mortality among newborns during the critical early neonatal period. It addressed the critical issue of neonatal mortality, emphasizing the importance of quality care during the early neonatal period. Experts discussed global and regional strategies, highlighting successful interventions in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Topics:

- A Global Perspective of Sick Newborns and Early Neonatal Deaths (Dr. Gagan Gupta)
- Implementing Best Practices in Pakistan (Dr. Samia Rizwan)
- Country Successes and Challenges in Managing Sick Newborns (Dr. Kapilani Withanaarachchi)

Symposium 5: Maternal Mental Health

The symposium, supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), brought a critical focus on the often-overlooked mental health needs of women during pregnancy and the postpartum period. The session shed light on the often-overlooked mental health needs of mothers during pregnancy and postpartum. The symposium addressed both the barriers and opportunities for improving mental health care during the perinatal period, emphasizing the role of community awareness, supportive healthcare frameworks, and the need for tailored interventions.

Topics:

- Maternal Mental Health – A Regional Perspective (Ms. Erin Cecilia Ryan)
- Unseen Struggles: Addressing Women’s Mental Health Needs – Insights from the *What Women Want* Campaign (Dr. Aparajita Gogoi)
- Addressing Perinatal Mental Health Issues in Local Settings (Dr. Chathuri Suraweera)

Symposium 6: Improving Relational Care Following Stillbirth

This symposium focused on providing respectful and culturally sensitive care to grieving families. Topics included bereavement care packages, community engagement, and the development of dignified care frameworks in resource-limited settings. This session was organized by Centre for Childbirth, Women's and Newborn Health (CWNH), Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

Topics:

- Introduction to Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Programme (Prof. Dame Tina Lavender)
- Development and Evaluation of a Respectful Maternal and Newborn Care Bundle in Malawi and Tanzania (Livuka Nsemwa)
- Bereavement Care Packages in India, Pakistan, Uganda, and Kenya (Dr. Tracey Mills)
- Community Engagement and Involvement in Stillbirth Research (Milcah Mwamadi)

Symposium 7: Ending the Silence on Stillbirths in South Asia

This session explored the barriers and opportunities in reducing stillbirths in South Asia. Panelists emphasized the importance of accurate data collection, regional collaboration, and evidence-based healthcare interventions to address disparities. The session was supported by UNICEF.

Panellists:

- Dr. Gagan Gupta, Senior Advisor MNCH – UNICEF Health PD MNCAH
- Lucia Hug, Statistics Specialist, Data and Analytics Section, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, UNICEF HQ
- Dr Chandani Anoma Jayathilaka, Actg. Director, Department of UHC/ Family Health (FGL) and Medical Officer/MRH, World Health Organization, SE/RGO/FGL (To be confirmed)
- Dr. Paula Quigley, Chairperson, ISA, Technical Lead, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition at DAI Global Health
- Prof. Rakhi Dandona, Professor of Public Health and Health Metrics Sciences – Public Health Foundation of India
- Dr. Asheber Gaym, Health Specialist, UNICEF ROSA – Regional Program Perspectives
- Dr. Samia Rizwan, Health Specialist, UNICEF Pakistan – Country Program Perspectives

Symposium 8: Artificial Intelligence in Stillbirth Prevention

This symposium showcased the transformative potential of AI in maternal and child health. Experts presented global best practices, regional AI initiatives, and Sri Lanka's pioneering use of AI in identifying stillbirth risk factors.

The session was supported by AI-Sarosh initiative of PHC Global.

Topics:

- Global Best Practices in Using AI in Maternal and Child Health (Prof. Krish Nirantharakumar)
- AI Initiatives in the South Asia Region (Dr. M. Imran Khan)
- AI-Powered Birth Cohort Study in Sri Lanka (Prof. Pandula Siribaddana)

Symposium 9: Counting and Reviewing Perinatal Deaths

Supported by WHO's Technical Advisory Group on MPDSR (Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response), this symposium emphasized the critical role of accurate data collection and review in reducing perinatal mortality. Best practices from global and regional contexts were shared, with a focus on Sri Lanka's success in improving public health outcomes through precise surveillance. It provided insights into best practices for implementing effective surveillance systems that shape policy and drive targeted interventions, with perspectives from both global and regional contexts.

Topics:

- MPDSR Global Report – Lessons from International Experiences (Ms. Francesca Palestra)
- Best Practice PDSR Models in the Region (Dr. Saroja Karki Pande)
- Counting Stillbirths and Neonatal Deaths – Sri Lanka's Success (Dr. Gayani Gunawardhane)

The Bereavement Training Session

This session was conducted by Professor Francine deMontigny, Director of the Centre for Studies and Research on Family Intervention (CERIF) at Université du Québec en Outaouais (Quebec, Canada). The speaker was a distinguished expert in family and nursing sciences, with extensive experience in perinatal loss and bereavement care and brought a wealth of knowledge in supporting families through grief. This session focused on providing healthcare professionals with the tools to offer compassionate and effective care for families experiencing loss, ensuring culturally sensitive and respectful interventions.



MEMORIAL SERVICE

This solemn event provided a poignant and reflective space to honour babies lost to stillbirths and neonatal deaths. Set against the serene backdrop of Independence Square in Colombo, the event emphasized remembrance, healing, and hope for bereaved families and the global community.

The event commenced with an introduction by Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, who emphasized the importance of collective healing and support. Religious rituals followed, with blessings, prayers, and ceremonies conducted by leading priests of Sri Lanka's major religions. Religious leaders representing Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, and Islam guided the rituals, reflecting Sri Lanka's diverse cultural and spiritual heritage.



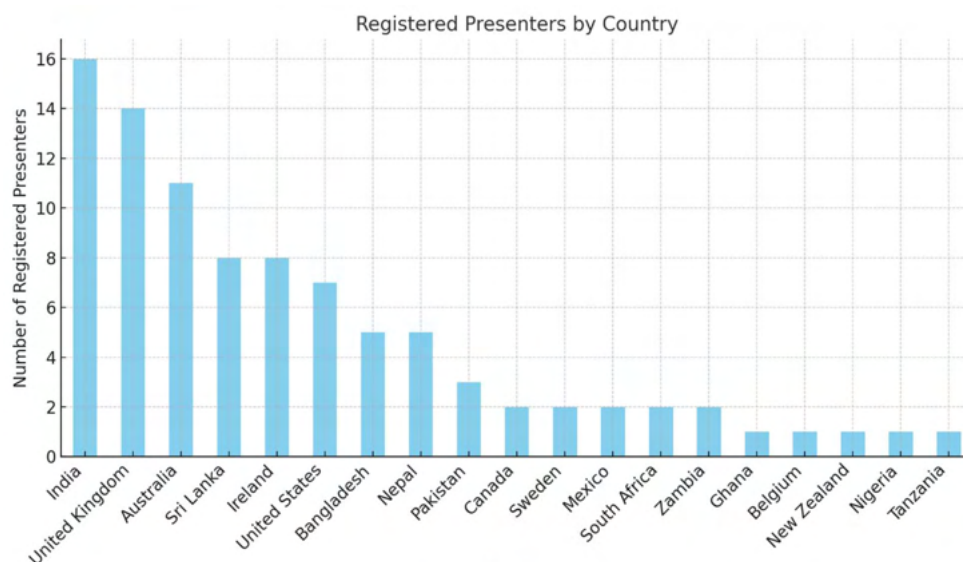
The service featured a heartfelt moment as a bereaved parent shared their personal experience, providing a voice to the shared grief and resilience of the community. The service concluded with the symbolic lighting of candles by all participants, symbolizing hope and remembrance.

ABSTRACT PRESENTATIONS

ISA2024 received 143 abstracts submitted in total. There were 78 abstracts accepted and registered for Oral Presentations and 31 for Poster Presentations.

Oral Presentations

Parallel oral presentation sessions provided a platform for researchers to share groundbreaking findings. Topics included antenatal care, data systems, epidemiology, perinatal autopsy, and bereavement care. Oral presentations were included in 16 parallel sessions.



Poster Presentations

There were a total of 16 posters registered for presentations. They were presented in 04 digital columns. Each conference day, poster sessions were conducted.



CLOSING CEREMONY

The 19th ISA Conference concluded with a renewed commitment to addressing the global stillbirth crisis. The closing ceremony, held on November 6, 2024, provided a reflective and inspiring conclusion to the conference. Dr. Paula Quigley, Co-Chair and President of ISA, opened the ceremony with a heartfelt welcome address, emphasizing the achievements and collaborations forged during the event. Parent and community voices shared personal experiences, underscoring the human impact of the work being done.

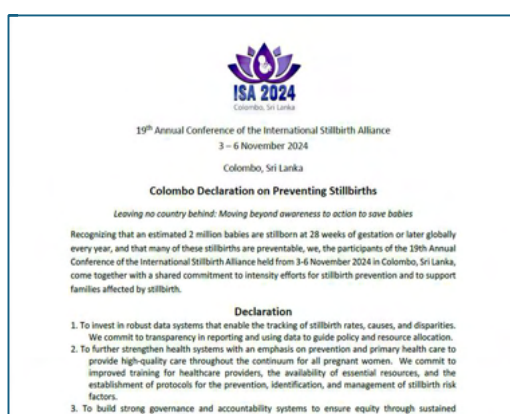
A highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of awards to recognize outstanding contributions in research, advocacy, and community engagement. The Chief Guest, Dr. Palitha Mahipala, Secretary of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Health, delivered an inspiring address, reinforcing the importance of collective efforts to combat stillbirths globally.



Colombo Declaration on Stillbirths

The launch of the Colombo Declaration on Stillbirths marked a significant milestone. This declaration outlines actionable strategies and commitments, urging governments and global stakeholders to:

1. Strengthen health systems to provide integrated, quality care without financial burdens.
2. Implement evidence-based, high-quality care during childbirth.
3. Improve culturally sensitive, patient-centered bereavement care for families.
4. Ensure access to fully equipped emergency obstetric care.
5. Promote a life-course approach addressing social determinants of health.
6. Reduce stigma and misconceptions around stillbirths through public awareness campaigns.
7. Set national and local targets for reducing stillbirths aligned with global goals.
8. Enhance surveillance and measurement of stillbirths for informed action.
9. Build governance and accountability systems to ensure equity and sustained investments.
10. Actively engage civil society and parent organizations in advocacy efforts.



The declaration reflects the collective commitment of nearly 265 participants from 24 countries, uniting healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders to reduce stillbirths and support affected families.

A video montage, “Memories of a Conference,” captured the event’s highlights and moments of connection, providing a fitting tribute to the conference’s spirit. Dr. Kapila Jayaratne, Conference Chair, delivered closing remarks, expressing gratitude to all participants and collaborators while reiterating the shared vision of a world free of preventable stillbirths.

The conference’s cultural and networking events added depth to the academic discussions. The Memorial Service held at Independence Square was a poignant tribute to babies lost to stillbirth and neonatal deaths. This solemn event brought together families, healthcare providers, and the community, emphasizing collective healing and the importance of addressing stillbirths. The gala dinner, on the other hand, provided a platform for informal networking and cultural exchange, fostering connections among attendees from diverse backgrounds.



Partnerships with global organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, the Gates Foundation and FCDO played a pivotal role in the conference's success. These collaborations ensured a multidisciplinary approach and a platform for sharing best practices and policies. Support from the Stillbirth Centre of Research Excellence (CRE), ARPAN and PUSH, ensured that parents from the region and Africa could attend. The support of local organizations, including the Family Health Bureau – Ministry of Health, Faculty of Medicine - University of Colombo, Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists and the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka, underscored the importance of regional collaboration in addressing stillbirths.

Key takeaways from the conference emphasized the need for accurate data collection, respectful bereavement care, and community involvement. Tailored interventions based on regional challenges and resources were highlighted as essential for meaningful progress. The integration of technology, such as AI, and the focus on maternal mental health were identified as critical areas for innovation and investment.

By uniting stakeholders from various disciplines and regions, the conference underscored the importance of collaborative efforts in ensuring that no baby's death goes uncounted or unacknowledged. The insights and strategies shared during this event will undoubtedly inform global practices and policies, paving the way for a future where every baby thrives, and every family receives the care and support they deserve.