



international
stillbirth alliance

ISA Conferences Protocol 2025-2028

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1. Introduction

According to the ISA By-laws, ISA holds annual conferences (see table below) to further our objectives as defined in our [Strategic Plan](#). This protocol has been prepared to ensure that all ISA conferences:

- are conducted in a manner consistent with ISA’s vision, mission, and strategic plan, and in accordance with our By-laws and branding;
- further the collaborative work of ISA by ensuring that conference-related work with our members and external agencies occurs within a framework of true partnership;
- bring together science and personal experience, including the experience of bereavement;
- generate sufficient funds to cover all costs incurred.

	Location	Host organization(s)
ISA2005 (first annual)	Arlington, VA, USA	First Candle
ISA-ISPID 2006	Japan	SIDS Family Association Japan
ISA2007	Birmingham, UK	Perinatal Institute, SANDS UK
ISA-ISPID 2008	Oslo, Norway	WHO, Norwegian Society of Perinatal Medicine, Norwegian SIDS and Stillbirth Society, Perinatal Research Center
ISA2009	South Africa	Priorities in Perinatal Care
ISA-ISPID 2010	Sydney, Australia	ANZSA, SIDS and Kids
ISA2011	Antigua	American University of Antigua
ISA-ISPID 2012	Baltimore, MD, USA	First Candle
ISA2013	Hanoi, Vietnam	Institute for Reproductive and Family Health
ISA-ISPID 2014 (10th annual)	Amsterdam, Netherlands	Royal Tropical Institute
ISA2015	Vancouver, Canada	Still Life Canada
ISA-ISPID 2016	Uruguay	Uruguayan Society of Pediatrics, the Argentine Society of Pediatrics, Era en Abril
ISA2017	Cork, Ireland	University College Cork
ISA-ISPID 2018	Glasgow, Scotland	The Scottish Cot Death Trust
ISA2019 (15th annual)	Madrid, Spain	Umamanita
ISA-ISPID 2021 (postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19)	Brisbane, Australia	Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth
ISA 2022	Salt Lake City, Utah, USA	University of Utah
ISA 2023	Sheffield, UK	University of Sheffield
ISA 2024	Colombo, Sri Lanka	College of Community Physicians Sri Lanka

The objectives of this protocol are to:

1. clarify the principles of ISA conferences;
2. clarify roles and responsibilities;
3. provide guidelines to host organizations to ensure a successful conference;
4. help to capture learning from each conference as a way of building our institutional memory.

2. Principles of ISA conferences

In order to ensure conferences are conducted in a manner consistent with ISA’s vision, mission, and strategic plan, we lay out the following principles which should be adhered to for each conference:

1. The process of conference planning should be open and transparent;
2. The call for bids should ideally be made three years prior to the conference date, with a decision on the host organization made two years prior to the conference date;
3. The call for bids should take into consideration ISA priority areas as identified by our Strategic Plan;
4. Only ISA organizational members are eligible to submit a bid;
5. Conferences should be held in varying locations to achieve a wide geographic coverage over time;
6. Conference programs must accommodate the themes relevant for bereaved parents, health practitioners and researchers;
7. Conference programs must have a substantial focus on perinatal death, including prevention, awareness, education and bereavement.
8. All conference committees, programs and activities must ensure equal and respectful parent/parent organization involvement.

3. Roles and responsibilities

In order to ensure that conference-related work with our members and external agencies occurs within a framework of true partnership, we have described roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders as follows:

3.1 Host organization

The host organization must be an ISA member. The organization is responsible for setting up a Conference Organizing Committee with some of its key staff as members, and for ensuring these staff have sufficient time, resources and space to work effectively. The host organization is also ultimately responsible for conference financing.

3.2 Conference Organizing Committee

Each ISA Conference shall be overseen by a local Conference Organizing Committee (COC) which is established and managed by the host organization. The COC reports regularly to the ISA Board via ISA Board representatives who are COC members. The COC will be established at the outset of planning and maintained until the final Conference report is submitted to the Board after the conference.

Membership

COC membership includes representatives of the host organization and the board as well as other individuals chosen on the basis of their particular skills. The COC is established by the host organization and must include:

- Representatives of the host organization;
- The Chair of the immediate past Conference's COC or his/her delegate, if possible;
- At least one member from the Scientific Committee;
- At least 2 ISA board members, one of whom should be an office bearer (ISA Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary or Treasurer);
- Bereaved parents;
- Individuals with experience in organising conferences, marketing and fundraising.

All COC members must commit to undertake the work required to ensure the success of the conference. The ISA Board approves COC membership. COC members elect the COC chair.

Responsibilities

The COC has overall responsibility for the Conference, including:

- Providing a report of the Conference plan and general program themes to the board twelve months prior to the Conference;
- If possible, announcing the Conference at the prior year's conference closing ceremony;
- Finding the conference venue;
- Find a venue for the conference dinner, organizing a remembrance ceremony, and all other program components besides the scientific program;
- Fundraising;
- The budget (management of which may be delegated to another party);
- Marketing, including announcements and website development and hosting;
- Post-conference evaluations;
- Producing a conference report and submitting it to the board no more than 6 months after the conference. This must include a brief review of this protocol including recommendations for updating it.

To facilitate access to a wider audience, where possible the COC should facilitate conference streaming and offer reduced prices or fee waivers for attendees from low- and middle-income countries, for instance by partnering with organizations able to fund these costs.

3.3 Conference Scientific Committee

The conference's scientific program shall be planned by a Scientific Committee (SC).

Membership

SC members shall be decided by the COC and should include representation from:

- High-, middle- and low-income countries;
- Parents;
- Immediate past ISA conference SC;
- Individuals from a wide range of disciplines covering continuum of care;
- A reasonable gender balance.

Responsibilities

The Scientific Committee has the overall responsibility for the scientific program including:

- Defining conference themes and proposing them to the Board;
- Planning the program and submitting it to the COC for approval;
- Identifying and inviting speakers;
- Facilitating International Accreditation;
- Putting out a call for abstracts at least 6 months before the conference;
- Reviewing submitted abstracts;
- Vetting researcher awards;
- Facilitating pre-conference workshops (where relevant).

Conference themes must ensure the program accommodates the needs of parents, health practitioners and researchers, and provides a substantial focus on perinatal death including prevention, awareness, education and bereavement.

Invited speakers should include both local and international experts, of whom at least 10% should be from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) when held in a high-income country and at least 70% when held in an LMIC, if possible; speakers should represent all disciplines pertinent to continuum of care in order to ensure a multidisciplinary program. It

is also important to ensure reasonable participation of representatives of the relevant local, state and national governments from the host country.

The invitees list should ideally be finalised 9 months prior to the Conference.

Reasonable expenses of keynote speakers should be covered by the conference budget, including: registration fees, roundtrip economy airfares, and accommodation and breakfasts during the Conference. However, in an effort to ensure that these costs can at least be fully covered for speakers from low- and middle-income countries, all speakers will be asked to cover all or part of their costs from other sources, if available.

3.4 Board

The ISA Board must:

- Put out a call for bids in a timely manner;
- Manage bids and select a host organization and venue for each conference in a timely manner;
- Ensure the protocol and call for bids are available on the website and sent to ISA members;
- Approve conference themes;
- Recommend speakers as requested by the COC;
- Attend each conference if possible;
- Ensure conference learning is captured (see Learning below);
- Carry out periodic mailings to promote the conference (email content must be provided by the COC).

The conference organizing committee will not be requested to cover the registration fees of ISA board members.

3.4.1 Conference location and timing

ISA aims to hold a conference every year, alternating between high-income countries and low- or middle-income countries each year. The ultimate goal is to achieve a wide geographic coverage over time.

In countries where perinatal death rates are high but it is not possible to hold a large conference, a smaller conference or working meeting may be held instead. Such meetings may be held every two years.

3.4.2 Choosing the venue and partner organization

The Board will put out the call for bids periodically for the conference to be held ideally 3 years hence, noting that this is not always feasible (see Appendix A for a sample call). Directions for preparing the bid are in Appendix B.

The Board will manage the call for bids and select the winning bid ideally at least two years prior to the conference date.

ISA conferences are hosted by member organizations. Hence, only ISA member organizations are eligible to submit a bid. In order to further global collaboration for the reduction of perinatal deaths, conferences in partnership with other organizations, particularly large global organizations, are encouraged.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) detailing the working relationship between ISA and the host organization (with other external agencies if any) should be drafted by the COC Chair as soon as possible after establishment of the Committee, and must be approved by the ISA Board (see Appendix C for an example).

3.4.3. ISA awards

Four awards are presented at each ISA conference:

- Best New Investigator Oral Presentation
- Best New Investigator Poster
- Parent award
- Researcher award

In addition, scholarship awards may be provided depending on the resources available. Details on the criteria for these and selection process will be made available to the host organizations once they are selected.

4. Organising the conference

4.1. Timeline summary

- 1 year prior: Finalize keynote speakers & launch website
- 10 months prior: Launch preliminary program
- 9 months prior: Invite abstracts and open registration
- 5 months prior: Close call for abstracts
- September-November each year: Conference (alternate months may be chosen if necessary)
- 6 months after: Conference report, protocol review, and abstracts made available online (if possible)

4.2 Marketing/branding

All ISA conferences must have a website at least 9 months prior to the conference managed by the host organization. ISA can provide the design of the website used for the immediate past conference. Said website can be modified to suit the upcoming conference. If the host organization wishes to design a new website, the design, development and management of said website is the responsibility of the host organization.

The initial notice for the upcoming Conference should be put on the ISA website and announced prior to the end of the current Conference. Further announcements, invitations and reminders should be distributed to ISA members, other relevant organizations and other individuals at regular intervals, at least every three months, and made available on the ISA and conference websites.

All promotional materials regarding the Conference must clearly identify ISA as the Conference sponsor. The conference brand name is ISA[year in question], for example "ISA2025".

Local media coverage is encouraged for all ISA conferences and is the responsibility of the COC in collaboration with ISA's Communications Committee as possible.

4.3 Financial management

The host organization must generate sufficient funds to cover all costs incurred. The COC is responsible for the Conference budget and for ensuring that all expenses incurred as a result of the Conference are met. The financial plans must be made available to the ISA Board at least 12 months before the conference.

ISA will make a modest financial contribution to Conference costs if deemed possible by the Board but may not be in a position to do so. On the other hand, any profits from the conference belong to the host organization, and the host organization may, at its own discretion, donate a portion of these profits to ISA.

All fundraising and sponsorship activity is the responsibility of the COC.

4.4 Conflicts of interest

All presenters at ISA Conferences and meetings must include a statement describing any conflicts of interest in their presentations. All abstracts must include a statement describing any conflicts of interest. No sponsor may promote their products during presentations in exchange for financial support.

5. Learning

This protocol will be approved by the Board and if necessary revised every three years. The next review is due March 2028

A conference report including lessons learned and recommendations for future conferences will be provided to the Board by the COC after each conference.

A permanent link to the conference website, including program and abstracts online (when available), will be added to the ISA website. Key conference documents will be added to the ISA Dropbox Conferences folder, including the program, abstracts, the MOU, the conference report, and minutes of COC and SC meetings. Basic details of the conference, including location, date, link to website, host organization name, and COC chair, will be added to a spreadsheet that lists all ISA conferences.

Where possible and relevant, the Board may consider writing a brief article on a particular aspect of the conference for publication.

CALL FOR BIDS TO HOST CONFERENCE

ISA 2027: Submissions close June 30, 2025

Where can the conference be held?

ISA aims to alternate our annual conferences between high-income (HIC) and low- or middle-income countries (LMIC). HIC conferences are generally larger (400+ delegates); LMIC conferences are smaller, often more regional than global in scope. We also aim for wide geographic representation of our conferences over time. Past conferences have been held in HIC including the USA, the UK, Norway, the Netherlands, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia and Japan, and LMIC including South Africa, Vietnam, Antigua, Uruguay and Sri Lanka.

- The ISA 2027 conference should be in a HIC, preferably one we have not yet been to.

What should the focus of the conference be?

Each conference has its own themes, but all conferences must:

- accommodate needs of bereaved parents, health practitioners and researchers;
- focus on perinatal death, including prevention, awareness, education and bereavement;
- align with ISA's [Strategic Plan](#).

What does hosting a conference entail?

The host organization is responsible for setting up a Conference Organizing Committee (COC) which has overall responsibility for the Conference. The COC sets up the Scientific Committee which is responsible for the scientific program. For more details on committee membership and responsibilities, see the ISA Conferences Protocol, available on the ISA website. The host organization is also responsible for conference financing and must generate sufficient funds to cover all costs incurred.

Who may submit a bid?

All ISA member organizations may submit a bid, and may do so in partnership with other relevant organizations. Organizations which are not members must join ISA in order to submit.

What must the bid include?

- A proposal that follows the "Bid for hosting an ISA conference" format (see Appendix B to the Protocol)
- A cover letter, including the organization's name, website link, and location; the name, title, and contact information of the contact person; and a description of why the organization wishes to host the conference. Please confirm in your cover letter that you are an ISA member.
- Bids must be in English and no longer than 15 pages

Where can I submit a bid?

Please send your submission in a single Word document to info@stillbirthalliance.org with the header "Bid for hosting ISA 2027 conference" (or ISA 2027). If you have not received an acknowledgement of submission within 7 days, please contact us to follow up.

What if I have more questions?

Refer to the Conferences Protocol or contact info@stillbirthalliance.org

We thank you for your interest!

Appendix B: Preparing a bid to host an ISA conference

Instructions: Please prepare your proposal in English, addressing all 12 of the areas listed below. Your proposal should be no longer than 15 pages.

1. Key staff at the host organization responsible for the conference

At least two primary members from the host organization should be named in the bid. For these two members, a brief CV is requested for the ISA to assess thematic capacity of the host organization to accommodate the themes relevant for bereaved parents, health practitioners and researchers. The brief CV should include:

- Personal statement of interest
- Research/activities undertaken related to stillbirths and early neonatal deaths in the last 5 years
- Relevant publications in the last 5 years (for researchers only)

2. Themes:

- a. While the themes of the conference will not be decided until after a bid has been accepted, we would like to hear from you about 2-4 themes you feel might be of interest, and how they align with the ISA conference principles and strategy.

3. Timeframe:

- a. Proposed dates (considering other important dates, meetings and conferences related to stillbirth that may conflict)
- b. Please provide a template of activities from the awarding of the bid to the conference start.

4. Management:

- a. Proposed Conference Organizing Committee membership (including people with particular expertise both within and outside your organization)
- b. Proposed involvement of volunteers, e.g. for general organization, helping to involve bereaved parents, etc.

5. Fundraising and budget:

- a. Local sponsorship opportunities
- b. Other funding sources for the conference
- c. A statement verifying your understanding of responsibility for conference funding

6. Target audience:

Please indicate the number of potential participants by the type of target audience. This could include bereaved parents, researchers/academics, nurses, midwives, clinicians, students.

7. Linkages with other organizations:

Please list the organizations relevant in the area of perinatal loss that your organization has linkages with. This could include local, national, regional and or global organizations.

8. Parent involvement:

Please provide a plan for ensuring parent involvement in the conference. Please include how parent needs will be taken care of during the conference, including provision of emotional support, a private space, etc.

9. Memorial service:

A memorial service to remember and acknowledge the babies lost is an integral part of ISA conference. The service is to be respectfully designed within the local cultural context.

10. Logistics:

- a. Proposed meeting venues (including space for plenary and break-out sessions, pre-conference workshops, poster sessions, small meetings, and registration)
- b. Likely transportation and accommodation requirements and options for all participants (speakers and delegates)
- c. Any translation costs required if English is not the main language of the country

11. Social program:

- a. A description of social activities and entertainment that could be provided for delegates

12. Conclusion:

- a. Explain why your country is a good choice for this conference
- b. Explain why your organization is well-placed to host the conference, summarizing your resources and other advantages

Once ready with your proposal, please submit it as a Word document together with your cover letter at info@stillbirthalliance.org

The cover letter must include the organization's name, website link, and location; the name, title, and contact information of the contact person; and a description of why the organization wishes to host the conference. Please confirm in your cover letter that you are an ISA member.

If you have any questions, you may refer to the ISA Conferences Protocol or email info@stillbirthalliance.org

Many thanks for your interest!

Memorandum of Understanding
between
[name of host organization],
Host of the ISA[year] conference,
and
the International Stillbirth Alliance

Introduction and purpose of the Memorandum

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is between the International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) and [host], a member organization of ISA; the two organizations are hereafter called “the Parties”. The MOU describes the agreement between [host] and ISA for their collaboration in presenting the ISA[year] Conference (hereafter “the Conference”).

Responsibilities and obligations of the parties

[Host] and the ISA Board will work collaboratively through the ISA[year] Conference Organizing Committee (COC) and Scientific Committee to organize the conference and develop the conference program according to the ISA Conference Protocol available on the ISA website.

As per the ISA Conference Protocol, [host] will take responsibility for all aspects of the conference organization.

The COC will provide brief progress reports every 3 months to the ISA Board during the development of the conference until 6 months before the conference, and then will provide monthly updates as the countdown towards the conference. A final conference report is expected within 6 months of hosting the Conference.

ISA will undertake to support the Conference in the following ways:

- Advertising the Conference on the ISA website and through the ISA members email list as requested by [host];
- Assisting with identifying international speakers;
- Encouraging all ISA Board members to attend.

[Host] will cover accommodation and travel costs for all keynote speakers and as many speakers as possible from low- and middle-income countries unless these costs are otherwise covered.

ISA accepts no financial responsibilities for the conference. The management of all income and expenditures relating to the conference will be the responsibility of [host].

ISA and [host] will share ownership of any copyright or other rights to use abstracts or presentations submitted to the Conference.

Dispute Resolution

The ISA and [host] enter into this agreement, and interpret its paragraphs, in good will. Each party is responsible for notifying the other about any actual or potential conflict of interest. The Parties will negotiate and cooperate with each other in good faith to resolve any disputes or conflicts that arise in connection with this Memorandum. If the parties cannot resolve a dispute or conflict of interest between them, they will endeavour to have the matter mediated or arbitrated on mutually acceptable terms.

Signatures

This MOU will come into force once it is signed by both parties below.

For the International Stillbirth Alliance:		For [host organization]:	
Signed:		Signed:	
[name], Chair		[name], President [or similar title]	
Dated:		Dated:	