The FIGO Initiative for the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion

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Bangkok, IWAC 2013
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.
Vision

FIGO has a vision that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives.
FIGO membership: an overview

FIGO was founded in Geneva in 1954 - 42 national societies were represented.

Today it is a truly global organisation, with 125 countries/territories in membership.

These member associations are a powerful, unifying voice for supporting women’s and maternal health and rights.
Background to the FIGO Prevention of Unsafe Abortion Initiative

- In 2007, the FIGO Executive Board approved the establishment of a FIGO Working Group on Unsafe Abortion
Aims of the FIGO Working Group on the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion ...

- To understand the extent to which unsafe abortion poses health risks to women in the 125 member countries/territories of FIGO, and the policy and service delivery factors that need to be addressed

- To build national and international consensus for overcoming the constraints to providing evidence-based methods for reducing the burden of unsafe abortion

- To develop situational analyses on unsafe abortion in FIGO’s member countries and territories
... Aims of the FIGO Working Group ...

• To increase awareness of ob/gyn professionals about their ethical obligations to increase women’s access to evidence-based methods and solutions for reducing the burden of unsafe abortion

• To organise national workshops to construct plans of action to reduce unsafe abortion, based on the results of the situational analyses

• To organise regional workshops to develop collaboration between countries and territories
... Aims of the FIGO Working Group ...

• To follow up on the implementation of national/regional plans for reducing the burden of unsafe abortion

• To identify potential areas of collaboration and engagement between ob/gyn professionals with other stakeholders in the civil society; to promote and advance women's access to safe abortion and post abortion services
... Aims of the FIGO Working Group ...

- To develop - in consultation with IPPF, ICM, WHO, UNFPA and IPAS - statements, position papers, guidelines and policy documents on:
  - Education and evidence-based information provided to women
  - Creating awareness on evidence-based methods of contraception (in collaboration with other professional associations)
  - The empowerment of women
  - Documenting and obtaining country-specific data on unsafe abortion, needed for specific actions within individual countries and territories
  - Advocacy by FIGO to national societies, and advocacy by national societies to their local policymakers and communities
... Aims of the FIGO Working Group ...

- Promotion of pre-service training on methods of managing safe abortion and the complications of unsafe abortion, and the decentralisation of these procedures to mid-level providers

- Exchange of experiences on abortion between FIGO member countries and territories
... Aims of the FIGO Working Group ...

- Membership should be multinational, multi-cultural, and possibly multi-disciplinary.

- Ideally, it should be drawn from countries with different experiences on abortion eg those who have always had liberal abortion laws, or who moved from a regime of restrictive laws to more liberal laws, or who have always had different forms of abortion restrictions.

- This will encourage exchange of information and views within; while the group should encourage diversity of opinion, extremists on both sides should be excluded in order not to derail the work.
... Aims of the FIGO Working Group

- The Group should include one or two non-FIGO members with long-standing experience working on unsafe abortion; good representation by women would also be critical

- The Working Group should work in collaboration with the FIGO Committee for Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Rights, but independent of the Committee, reporting directly to the FIGO Officers and Executive Board
What is the Goal of the Initiative?

- To contribute to the reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity associated with unsafe abortion
- To contribute to the reduction of the burden of induced abortion for women
What is the Role of the Initiative?

- To assist national member societies and governments in the preparation and implementation of plans of action for the prevention of unsafe abortion and its consequences
The most frequent problem is ‘misunderstanding’

There is a lack of recognition that, far from ‘promoting abortion’, the FIGO Initiative’s goal is to reduce the number of abortions
What are the FIGO strategies to reduce unsafe abortion and its consequences? ...

✓ **Primary Prevention**: Less unintended pregnancies and abortions

✓ **Secondary Prevention**: Non preventable abortions should be safe
... What are the FIGO strategies to reduce unsafe abortion and its consequences?

✓ **Tertiary Prevention**: Unsafe abortions do not complicate and kill the woman involved

✓ **Quaternary Prevention**: Post-abortion counselling and services to prevent repeated abortions
What are the phases of the project?

- Phase One started with an invitation to FIGO member societies to participate in the Initiative, giving priority to countries with an induced abortion rate of 30 per 1,000 women 15-44 or an unsafe abortion rate of 10/1000

- Those who agreed to participate were required to name a focal point and to carry out a situational analysis of the unsafe abortion situation in their respective countries
Phase One …

• After analysis completion, each country was to hold a national workshop with the participation of the government and other interested parties to discuss the results and set the bases for the development of an action plan that responded to the deficiencies identified by the analysis.

• Those plans of action were to be adopted as a country commitment by the government and the civil society.
... Phase One

• The next step was to organise a regional workshop in each of seven regions, where the different problems and actions to solve them were presented, and the representatives of the governments would be asked to commit themselves to implementing the plan of action during the ensuing two years
Phase Two

- **Phase Two** consists of the implementation of an action plan by each country; this phase originally extended from the launching of the action plan until November of 2009.

- Later on, it was extended for an unlimited period, in the understanding that the problem of unsafe abortion and its consequences was not going to be completely solved in a relatively short period of time.

- All these activities were carried out in collaboration with a number of other international organisations and governmental agencies that have similar objectives.
How is the Initiative managed?

• A Project Co-ordinator was named (Dr Anibal Faúndes; also the Chair of the Working Group), avoiding duplications and overlapping of functions

• The Project Co-ordinator reports directly to the FIGO President and Chief Executive

• He identified and contracted six Regional Co-ordinators, one for each of the six regions of the world included in the project

• The focal points from each participating member society complete the management structure of the project
Scope of the FIGO Initiative

- Currently, 44 member societies are part of the FIGO Initiative for the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion

- During 2012 we lost contact with Syria, but two new countries were incorporated: Cambodia and Ecuador
What countries are taking part?

- Eight from Central America and Caribbean
- Eight from South America
- Five from Western Central Africa
- Seven from Eastern Central Southern Africa
- Five from North Africa/Eastern Mediterranean
- Six from South-Southeast Asia
- Four from Central and Eastern Europe
Scope of the FIGO Initiative
Scope of the FIGO Initiative
Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia
How are the strategies implemented?

• From November 2009 to 2012, the member societies have continued - together with the Initiative’s Regional Co-ordinators and Focal Points - with the implementation of their plans of action, with different levels of achievement.

• Most societies do not have the capacity of providing services, but many are actively involved in training, influencing their governments and providing political support to international and national agencies for the implementation of the activities included in the plans of action.

• The plans of action include all or some of the four levels of prevention.
Who is collaborating with the Initiative?

- A number of international and national agencies and NGOs are working in all or some of these four prevention strategies, contributing to the implementation of the plans of action in the different countries.

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How the Initiative has evolved

• The plans of action are dynamic and change over time

• As some of the objectives are accomplished, new ones are added to the plan, or the same objective is expanded to serve larger populations or geographical areas

• Most countries have achieved great progress, but mostly have understood and adopted the concept that:

A: abortion is a problem that exists
B: it cannot be ignored for its public health significance and its meaning to women’s lives
C: action needs to be taken to reduce its number and its consequences
Progress during the last three years ...
There have been contributions to FIGO statements and recommendations on:

✓ Replacement of sharp curettage for MVA or misoprostol

✓ Use of mifepristone for legal pregnancy termination

✓ Misoprostol indications in obstetrics and gynecology

✓ Post-abortion contraception
... Progress during the last three years

✓ Every participating country has made progress in the implementation of the Plans of Action

✓ There has been increasing commitment from colleagues to be ‘part of the solution’

✓ Evidence of the success of the four levels of prevention in different countries was presented at the 2012 XX FIGO World Congress in Rome (October 2012)
The future of the Initiative

• The task of reducing unsafe abortion and its consequences is not an easy one and cannot be achieved in a short period of time

• The FIGO Officers believe that the Working Group and the Initiative for the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion should continue its work for the foreseeable future

• The Working Group will continue until 2015 and beyond, supporting the continuous renewal and the implementation of the plans of action and evaluating the results
Thank you for your attention