



## Report from SAFOG Secretary General (2011-2013)

From 22nd to 25th April 2011, Colombo, Sri Lanka hosted the SAFOG conference in collaboration with Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The new SAFOG council was elected at the same time with Professor Harshalal Seneviratne as President, Dr Shyam Desai and Dr Malik Goonewardene as the two Vice Presidents and Dr Rubina Sohail as the Secretary General. It was a well organized and a successful conference.

Activities were planned for the coming 2 years. The activities included, conduct of workshop on maternal health in collaboration with UNFPA and WHO, conduct of SAFOG session at the annual National Ob/Gyn Society Conferences increased international collaboration, building of linkages and regular issues of the SAFOG journal.



### Activities in 2011

The planned, UNFPA workshops were postponed because of the floods in Thailand and were rescheduled for 3rd week of April 2012. This workshop would have given SAFOG an opportunity to discuss with UNFPA, the role that they can play to improve maternal health.

Despite efforts, the scheduled formal council meeting at Bangkok, COGI (24th-27th November, 2011) and Taipei at AOFOG (23rd-27th September 2011) could not take place. However, side meetings and discussions were held with various members to take their input on the role that the new SAFOG council will play in terms of establishing SAFOG further and its role in maternal health.

It was decided to liaise and collaborate with COGI, AOFOG and FIGO. In this regard, at the COGI-BCIP at Bangkok, had a meeting with Dr Zeev Shohan and discussed the role that COGI and SAFOG could play together and the ways that we could collaborate. Professor Farrukh Zaman perused the matter further, through an e-mail communication and then by President SAFOG—Professor Harsha Seneviratne. Dr Zeev Shohan wrote 'it would be a pleasure to start a journey together trying to promote education through congresses we are organizing. If you wish, we would be happy to give a substantial discount to the members of the SAFOG for the COGI-BCGIP congresses. We can do so, if people will register through the society.' Further, work is needed in this regard.

The payment for website hosting came through after hectic efforts and the issue of website hosting was resolved.

It was proposed, by the Secretary General, that SAFOG should collaborate with FIGO in order to achieve recognition at an international forum. It was discussed and decided to begin the proceedings by requesting for a SAFOG session at FIGO. As a first step President SAFOG, Professor Harshalal Seneviratne wrote a letter to Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, whose response was very encouraging. A letter was then sent to Prof William Dunlop, the Chairman of International Scientific Committee who again was supportive to the idea of hosting a SAFOG session at FIGO. The topic decided for the session was 'maternal health and its economics in South Asia region'.

### Activities in 2012

The SAFOG sessions at national society meetings have been interactive and directed toward SAFOG policies and activities. The year started with the SAFOG session at the 55th AICOG of FOGSI organized by the Varanasi Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, from 27th to 30th January 2012, at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. There was a panel discussion on maternal health in South Asia in relation to attainment of the millennium development goals. The session was conducted under the expert command of Prof Alokendu Chatterjee, moderated by him as well.

The areas covered in MDG5 at this session by the panelists included improving infrastructural facilities, more public funding and efforts being made by each South Asian country to achieve MDG5 on time. Improving infrastructural facilities included more SBA, more health care facilities, EmOC training, quick and easy available transport, using modern communications for services and training, health insurance issues and public private partnership. The President SAFOG, President FOGSI and the immediate Past President of SAFOG chaired this session.

SAFOG council meeting was held at Varanasi, during the conference, in which the activities of 2011 were discussed and plans were made for the year 2012.

The NESOG annual conference was held from 30th to 31st March 2012. The SAFOG session for the conference was on 'Strengthening Linkage between Periphery and Tertiary Care in Promoting Women's Health.' President SAFOG gave the inaugural speech. The SAFOG session was on 'Reproductive Health'. This was a well-attended session and had contributors from the South Asian countries.

The SOGP biennial conference was held in 13th to 15th April 2012 in Islamabad, where President SAFOG, Professor Harshalal Seneviratne, Ex-presidents of SAFOG from Pakistan, Dr Hemantha Perera, Professor Latifa Shamshuddin, Dr PK Shah, Professor Ashma Rana and a sizable delegation from Bangladesh attended the session. The SAFOG session was based on something very important for the region; the subject was 'subspecialties and areas of special interest for the region'. Subspecialty development in the field of obstetrics and gynecology is very important and is the need for the South Asian region. President SAFOG and President SOGP chaired the SAFOG session. In the conference, Prof Harshalal made a thought provoking presentation on this important issue. His talk was well researched and a comprehensive account of the situation, which was greatly admired and appreciated by a full capacity plenary session audience.

Prof Harshalal, President, South Asia Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology in collaboration with UNFPA—Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO), WHO and Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, organized a workshop on 'Quality Enhancement to achieve MDG5 by training of nonspecialist doctors in obstetric anesthesia, eclampsia and PPH' from April 27th to April 29th, 2012, at Taj Samudra Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka and the SLCOG auditorium. Originally, the workshop was planned for November 2011 in Bangkok. Unfortunately due to floods in Bangkok, the meeting had to be postponed and reallocated to Colombo and was held from 27th to 29th April 2012.

The workshop was significant as countries in Asia and the Pacific region are unlikely to achieve the target of MDG 5 by 2015. While the proportion of deliveries by skilled birth attendants has increased in all countries, many still lack supportive policies to enable them to practice lifesaving skills. The three day workshop during its sessions focused on management of obstetric complications, development of minimum standards for training of midwifery staff and nonspecialist doctors in the provision of basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric care and anesthesia, obstetric anesthesia, quality assurance in EmONC, adoption of clinical guidelines and development of goals for quality enhancement in obstetrical practice.

From 15th to 17th September 2012, the OGSB (Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh) held an International Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The topic of the SAFOG session was 'Cervical Cancer Screening' during the session country reports by constituent societies of SAFOG was presented. Professor Alokendu Chatterjee moderated the session. This is a very important topic as mortality of cancer of the cervix is approaching maternal mortality in underdeveloped countries. The women do not get screened for cervical cancer and present late resulting in high mortality rates. It is self-evident that the current services are not in a position to meet the substantial demand for prevention, treatment, cure and care. Experts believe that at least one-third of cancer can be prevented by early detection and effective treatment. So, all our ability and efforts to be combined to make people aware and make available cancer-related services with a planned approach. This session was a timely reminder and a wake up call for all concerned to take cognizance of this gynecological problem of considerable proportion. The following recommendations were made at the end of the session.

## Recommendations

- Establish cervical screening as a part of the general health check.
- Disseminate accurate public education and establish compliance.
- Introduce system of cancer registry.
- Develop national policy, strategy, guideline in respective country by establishing multitesting team lead by ministry of health.
- Develop networking with other professional organization with SAFOG, SAFOM, FIGO, etc. for general and regional support.
- Involve the development partners for technical and financial support.
- Include vaccination against HPV in national immunization program: liaise with GABI.

WHO organized a 'Regional Meeting on Preventing Unsafe Abortion'. The venue of the meeting was Crowne Plaza, Kathmandu-Soaltee Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal, from 17th to 20th September 2012. Representatives of SAFOG were invited to attend this meeting. SAFOG delegates who attended this meeting were Professor Ananda Ranatunga and Professor Rubina Sohail.

The objectives of the meeting were to disseminate the WHO updated safe abortion, technical and policy guidelines for health systems and facilitate country level actions for promoting safe abortion services. The processes adopted for achieving the objectives were review of global, regional and country level situation, ways and means to implement guidelines and implementing the guidelines in restrictive environment either due to social circumstances, religion or political environment. The conclusions and recommendations that came out of the meeting is as follows:

- Identified that unsafe abortion happens in countries with good CPR as well, therefore need for safe abortion service still exists.
- Role of communities, governments and health professionals according to the unique situation in each country.
- Laws in all the South Asian countries allow abortion in some form or the other; however, the areas of help and collaboration need to be identified.

- Medical abortion and MVA needs promotion.
- SAFOG countries can assist in developing action plans for countries with poor access.
- Goals for countries with poor access to be written down and finalized.

For the first time since, inception of SAFOG (1996) in its 15 years of existence SAFOG managed to have a dedicated session in the XX FIGO World Congress, Rome, Italy, October 7th to 12th 2012.

In this regard, a special mention needs to be made of President FIGO, Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran. The support and encouragement provided by him has been invaluable and it is because of his help and guidance that SAFOG found a place niche in the FIGO conference proceedings.

The SAFOG session was a panel discussion on 'Maternal Health and its Economics in South Asia' region exclusively organized by SAFOG. The issues discussed were the present scenario of overall maternal health in each country, reasons for the dismal situation, role played by maternal health economics of the country, strategies employed to improve the maternal health scenario and the role of the national Ob/Gyn societies, particularly, in the supportive corporate capacity for each country.

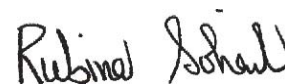
During the FIGO congress in Rome, the first newsletter of SAFOG was published. We are hopeful that it will become a regular feature. The next newsletter will be available at the time of the IXth SAFOG Congress at Hotel, ITC, Mughal, Agra.

The last SAFOG Council meeting was held at Rome, during the conference in which the activities of 2012, were discussed and the plans and logistics of the upcoming SAFOG congress were deliberated upon.

The SAFOG journal has been coming up with regular publications, thanks to our editor, Dr Narendra Malhotra, with contributions from various countries. The issue of payment for the SAFOG journal needs stream lining and ironing out.

The secretary general's report will not be complete without the mention of the senior members of SAFOG. The senior SAFOG members are now members of the executive of AOFOG and FIGO. They are very active in developing nexuses and also help to maintain linkages and strengthen them to give a platform, to jump start in an active fashion in the organization.

In 2012, SAFOG lost a sitting council member, Dr Behram Anklesaria, leaving behind a sense of loss and profound grief. Dr Behram was a man of exceptional talent and abilities. He was tirelessly progressive and always up to date in academics. He had the special ability to win hearts and make friends wherever he went. With his loss, SAFOG lost a friend who will always be remembered with fondness especially because of his endearing mannerism and unique style of communication. May his soul rest in peace.



**Rubina Sohail**

Secretary General, SAFOG, 2013