

THE  
PROFESSIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
STRENGTHENING  
PROJECT

# Introduction to the Professional Association Strengthening Manual

*survive*  *thrive*

professional associations, private sector and global health scholars  
saving mothers, newborns and children

## Acknowledgments

This module is part of a series of modules in the Professional Association Strengthening Project. The project has been completed under the auspices of the **Survive and Thrive** Global Development Alliance which includes a partnership of professional associations and the private sector with support from the United States Agency for International Development. The mandate of **Survive and Thrive** includes working to strengthen health professional associations in nations so they become vocal and effective advocates for professional education, clinical excellence, and evidenced-based practice in maternal, newborn and child health.

## Contributors

Overall project management and editing for the Professional Association Strengthening Project was provided by Kate McHugh, American College of Nurse-Midwives, Senior Technical Advisor.

Special thanks to the Contributors and Reviewers on this entire project which include professionals from the following health professional associations:



The American College of  
Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS



International  
Confederation  
of Midwives

Strengthening Midwifery Globally



Sigma Theta Tau International  
Honor Society of Nursing®

American Academy  
of Pediatrics



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## Sponsorship

The **Survive and Thrive** Global Development Alliance is a project supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



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Special funding for this project came from the Laerdal Foundation of Norway. For this we give thanks to Tore Laerdal for his commitment to strengthening professional associations and his leadership within the Survive and Thrive partners community.



**Laerdal Foundation**

helping save lives

## Where to find the complete the Professional Association Strengthening manual:

The complete set of Professional Association Strengthening modules can be downloaded for no fee at:  
[www.StrongProfAssoc.org](http://www.StrongProfAssoc.org).

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## Welcome and Background on the Project

Welcome to this suite of modules on strengthening professional associations (PAs)! These modules were developed to help health care professionals create, strengthen, and grow their professional membership associations.

The impetus for this project came from concerns of technical advisors in midwifery, obstetrics, and pediatrics who collaborated on the Survive and Thrive Global Development Alliance (GDA). The GDA is a partnership among PAs and the private sector with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The technical advisors were unhappy about the lack of high-quality and easy to access materials for use by PAs. Although there are many existing materials on clinical topics, there are few similar materials for association strengthening. Those that exist usually focus on a single profession and often require expensive planning and implementation using outside consultants. Therefore, in the past, efforts to provide consultation or support related to association strengthening were handled in many differing ways with no coherent framework.

Once the need was recognized, special support was obtained from the Laerdal Foundation. A special thanks is due to Tore Laerdal for his understanding of the importance of strong PAs and his advocacy for this funding. The project team decided to develop a suite of modules to specifically address the function and roles of PAs. Project goals included the development of inter-professional content based on simple and easy to understand concepts for use independently or with short-term, external consultation.

A team of contributors worked on the modules. Special thanks are due to Nester T. Moyo, Senior Midwifery Advisor, International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) for her incredible expertise and for providing access to many association experts at ICM. Thanks are also due to Vineeta

Gupta, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Technical Director, Global Women's Health, for her efforts during the entire project. Sigma Theta Tau International authored a module and provided support throughout. The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) provided project management; Kate McHugh, Senior Technical Advisor, managed the project and served as author/editor of selected modules. Suzanne Stalls, Director of the Department of Global Outreach at ACNM, was an early and continual champion of this project. Lily Kak, Senior Advisor for Global Partnerships and Newborn Health at USAID promoted the importance of strong PAs and continues to support efforts such as these modules.

The modules were reviewed in focus groups at 2 global meetings and by technical experts from a number of associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Nurse-Midwives, and the International Confederation of Midwives. Joyce Thompson, Global Midwifery Consultant, assisted with final content review and edits.

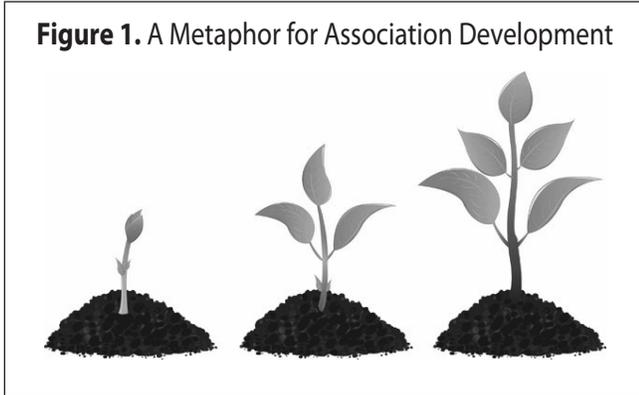
The complete set of Professional Association Strengthening modules can be downloaded for no fee at [www.StrongProfAssoc.org](http://www.StrongProfAssoc.org).

## The Model for the Project

Professional associations are in a continual state of development and need different support at different stages. Thinking of the stages of plant development is a helpful model for this. Some associations are barely started and, like a small seedling, could easily be destroyed if they fail to develop strong roots. Other associations are stronger but vulnerable to stunted growth from a lack of nurture. Still other associations are sturdy but could use some pruning to grow faster, or they may need extra support or nourishment to develop new branches. These modules will emphasize this developmental continuum and challenge all associations to

perform regular assessment of their strengths, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses. grow faster. Or they may need extra support or nourishment to develop some new branches. These modules will emphasize this developmental continuum and challenge all associations to perform regular assessment of their association's strengths, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses.

**Figure 1.** A Metaphor for Association Development



The modules in this project can be used by the leaders of an association without any outside consultation. Some associations may want to use the materials along with short-term consultation related to particular needs or projects. For example, an association may contract with a non-government organization or another PA to offer consultation on strategic planning or to create an effective communication plan.

Each module contains very specific advice, examples, and tools that a PA can use to create or strengthen its organization. Some of the modules focus on human issues that affect an association's well-being and some focus on structural issues.

## Strong Associations Create Change

A recognized and growing body of evidence suggests positive effect of health care professional associations. This effect can be due to their influence on their own members, on health care policy, or on governmental services.<sup>1</sup> Their role in advocacy is a powerful one.<sup>2</sup> When health care professional associations are challenged to work collaboratively with each other, their potential to influence change grows even greater.

### Module Titles

1. Diversity and Professional Association Strengthening
2. Creating and Nurturing an Organization
3. Strategic Planning
4. Functions of Professional Associations
5. Governance and Fiscal Management
6. The Effect of Successful Leadership by Professional Associations
7. Visibility and Communications
8. Resource Mobilization
9. The Health, Growth, and Development of a Professional Association

However, in order for change to occur, PAs must have strong internal capacities and sustainable presences within their countries.<sup>3</sup> The contributors to this project agree with the sentiments from the 2007 joint statement of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health.

*Strong professional organizations provide leadership. They set standards of education, practice and professional competency assessment and can work together with governments and other stakeholders in setting and implementing health policies to improve the health of women, newborns, children and adolescents. However, the ability of professional associations to make such contributions depends on individual organizational and institutional capacities at country level. This is especially true in those resource-poor settings, where the vast majority of maternal newborn and child deaths and morbidity occur.<sup>4</sup>*

This project focuses on the development of the capacity of health care professional associations. It is our firm belief that they will promote life-altering change in many countries of the world.

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