

Four years of scientific conferences in South Sudan: Reflections from the former Secretary-General of the Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians of South Sudan (AGOSS)

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Figure 1. Members of the Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians of South Sudan (AGOSS) in Juba following the successful completion of a Training of Trainers programme aimed at strengthening postgraduate medical education in Obstetrics and Gynecology. This initiative underscores AGOSS's commitment to advancing specialist training and improving maternal health services across South Sudan. (Credit: AGOSS photo gallery)

Over the past four years, the Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians of South Sudan (AGOSS) has made significant progress in strengthening medical education, professional collaboration, and clinical practice through its annual scientific conferences. These conferences have become a cornerstone of our efforts to improve maternal and reproductive health services in a country where the health system continues to face enormous challenges.

When AGOSS first initiated these scientific meetings, our primary objective was clear: to create a platform where practitioners, trainees, policymakers, and partners could come together to share knowledge, discuss evidence, and collectively shape solutions to improve women's health. Today, looking back at four consecutive conferences, it is evident that this vision has taken root and is yielding meaningful impact.

First, the conferences have enhanced continuous professional development for clinicians across South Sudan. Through expert presentations, case discussions, and hands-on workshops, hundreds of doctors, midwives, and nurses have gained new skills in emergency obstetric care, safe surgery, foetal monitoring, and reproductive health. These capacity-building efforts are contributing directly to improved quality of care in both public and private facilities.

Second, the conferences have strengthened the culture of research and evidence-based practice. Despite limited resources, we have witnessed increased interest among young doctors, residents, public health specialists, and midwives in presenting research abstracts, clinical audits, and case reports relevant to the South Sudan context. This has encouraged more institutions to begin documenting



Figure 2. A panel of experts deliberating on key challenges and advancements in maternal health services during the 3rd Annual Scientific Conference of the Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians of South Sudan (AGOSS). The session highlighted evidence-based strategies, capacity building, and collaborative efforts aimed at improving women's health outcomes across South Sudan. (Credit: AGOSS photo gallery)

their experiences and generating local data to inform policy and clinical guidelines.

Third, AGOSS conferences have expanded professional networks and partnerships, both nationally and regionally. Through collaboration with the national Ministry of Health (MOH), East, Central and Southern Africa College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ECSACOG), South Sudan General Medical Council (SSGMC), national universities, and international partners (including UNFPA, WHO, AMREF), we have created pathways for specialist training, mentorship, and joint projects - ECSACOG Membership Training Programme in South Sudan is born out of discussions during the 1st Scientific Conference. These networks are essential for building a resilient and competent health workforce.

Finally, the conferences have provided a platform for advocacy. By bringing together clinicians and policymakers, AGOSS has successfully highlighted major gaps in maternal health services, workforce shortages, and the need for investment in training and infrastructure. Some of these discussions have already

influenced national strategies and institutional priorities. The Nurses and Midwives Bill was recently approved by the Council of Ministers, led by the president, following a recommendation from the 4th Scientific Conference. See Figures 1 and 2.

As a former Secretary-General of AGOSS who served for two consecutive terms (total of 4 years), I am proud of what we have achieved in a short period. Yet, much more remains to be done. South Sudan continues to face some of the highest maternal mortality rates globally. Strengthening scientific engagement and promoting continuous learning will remain critical as we work toward safer pregnancies, safer deliveries, and healthier communities.

AGOSS remains committed to fostering a vibrant scientific community, building strong professional networks, and advancing maternal health through knowledge, collaboration, and evidence. The progress of the last four years gives us confidence that together, we can transform not only the future of sexual and reproductive health care, but the general health care system in South Sudan.