

News from the Project RMA

Regional Parliamentary Committees on Health Commit to Commodity Security

A regional meeting of Parliamentary Committees on Health in East and Southern Africa in Kampala, Uganda from September 16th to 18th 2008 gathered members of parliamentary committees responsible for health from twelve countries, with sixteen technical, government and civil society as well as regional partners to promote exchange and identify key areas of follow up action to advance health equity and sexual and reproductive health in the region.

At the meeting, Project RMA chaired a session on Reproductive Health (RH) Supplies, including a workshop on conducting advocacy for RH Supplies with the help of the [advocacy toolkit and guide](#). The session was met with great interest and commitment by the Members of Parliament from across the region. Women Parliamentarians from Uganda, who attended a national workshop in July (see story below) described their victory in obtaining more money for RH Supplies from the national budget.

One of the objectives of the meeting was to discuss options for fair and adequate health care financing and for promoting equitable resource allocation, particularly in relation to budget processes. In this context, it is noteworthy that the meeting resolution paper includes a commitment by the members of parliament to 'Prepare and make budget submissions that include necessary resource allocation for SRHR and RH supplies'.

The meeting workshop on RH Supplies is part of Project RMA's regional-level advocacy work, which is being led by [DSW](#).

Contact [Sabine Weber](#) of DSW for more information.

Uganda: Finance Minister Pledges More Funds for Reproductive Health Supplies

The Ugandan Minister of Finance, Dr. Ezra Suruma, has pledged an additional 100 million shillings (USD 62,500) for reproductive health (RH) and supplies. This would mean a 13 per cent increase on the current RH supplies budget line.

The pledge comes after Ugandan Members of Parliament (MPs) attended a Project RMA network retreat in July 2008, where they learnt about the challenges in Uganda in ensuring access to supplies and about how making sure that RH supplies are available can help reduce maternal mortality rates (currently 880 per 100 000 live births) and contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

After committing to support and work around increasing resources for RH supplies, attending members of parliament subsequently led a heated debate in parliament in which they tried to pass a vote to divert funds from public services to RH. In the process they raised awareness and garnered support among fellow MPs and Ministers about the importance of RH supplies in national development and in achieving MDGs.

Ugandan Parliamentarians Voice their Concerns

At the above mentioned Reproductive Health Project RMA network retreat in Uganda in July this year, the participating Members of Parliament voiced their concerns with respect to ensuring access to RH Supplies. A series of video clips from the meeting is available on [YouTube](#). Take a look at a three-minute interview with honourable Sylvia Ssennabulya, who explains what an overstock in commodities means for her district.

The meeting, organized by Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), was part of Project RMA's country-level advocacy work, which is being led by [IPPF](#).

Contact [Sarah Shaw](#) of IPPF for more information.



Upcoming Regional Meetings with Focus on Reproductive Health Supplies

In tandem with Partners in Population and Development (PPD), Project RMA is conducting a workshop utilizing the new RH Supplies Advocacy Toolkit. The session will be part of a meeting for African Partner Country Collaborators (PCC). These are technical staff from Ministries of Population, Health, etc. in 13 African countries who have been tasked with coordinating their country's South-South activities. The meeting will take place September 23rd to 26th in Kampala, Uganda.

And in conjunction with new RMA working group co-chair Sandra Jordan of USAID, Project RMA will be conducting an introduction to the new tool Kit for members and guests of the Asia Pacific Alliance (APA.) This training will take place on October 7th as part of the APA General Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand. APA is also a sub grantee and has been working on the RH Supply issue for the last three years.

The meeting workshops are part of Project RMA's regional-level advocacy work, which is being led by [DSW](#).

Contact [Sabine Weber](#) of DSW for more information.

Supplies news Advocacy Group Elects New Co-Chairs

Resource Mobilization and Awareness Working Group (RMA WG) members have elected Neil Datta and Sandra Jordan to serve as RMA WG Co-Chairs for the coming two years. Neil Datta is Secretary of the Brussels-based [European Parliamentary](#)

[Forum on Population and Development](#). Sandra Jordan serves as Director of Communications in USAID's Office of Population and Reproductive Health. The Resource Mobilization and Awareness Working Group works to secure political support and increase financial resources for enhancing the availability of RH supplies, both at country and global level. For more information about the working group and to become a member please visit the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition [web site](#).

Accessing Data on Supplies Orders

The RHInterchange web site consolidates data on USD 1 billion worth of shipments of contraceptive supplies to countries around the world. It is a useful resource for advocates working on access to RH supplies. The RHInterchange presently provides accurate information on past, present, and future supply orders for over 144 countries. Now the RHInterchange also captures procurement information from the British Department for International Development (DfID). This additional information accounts for over USD 21 million of supplies for five countries (Cambodia, Kenya, Nigeria, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe). You can [access](#) the RHInterchange and [register](#) for a user name and password.

Contact [Mimi Whitehouse](#) for more information.

In Brief

Global Fund: Round 9 Call for Proposals

The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) is launching its Round 9 call for proposals on October 1st 2008. It is important to note that the GFATM encourages the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into its focal areas.

Closing date for proposals is January 2009.

More information is available on the [GFATM's](#) web site.

Focus on ...

Financing and Procurement Mechanisms for Reproductive Health Supplies

The Minimum Volume and Pledge Guarantees (MVG/PG) are two mechanisms which address two of the biggest hurdles confronting efforts to achieving Reproductive Health (RH) commodity security. One is developing countries' challenge to access supply financing at a time when they actually need it; the second is their inability to secure favourable pricing and purchasing terms due to low or limited volume procurement.

The Minimum Volume Guarantee (MVG) is a global procurement mechanism that helps countries and other buyers get the lowest possible price for supplies by allowing them to buy through a global bulk-purchasing agency. Increasing the number of potential buyers means lower unit prices which the agency can then pass along to their customers. A functioning MVG benefits everyone - but particularly

smaller-scale buyers, which have to date borne the brunt of high prices and unfavourable purchasing terms. It also benefits the manufacturing sector where low production volumes can squeeze profit margins to the point where they are no longer commercially viable. With annual operating costs of between USD 0.5 and 1 million, the MVG is expected to save anywhere from USD 3 to 11 million in subscale and suboptimal supply orders during the first three years of operation.

The Pledge Guarantee (PG) is a global financing mechanism that will allow recipients of international donor assistance to obtain short-term commercial credit by essentially using their pending donor 'pledges' as collateral. Recipients then use that credit to purchase RH supplies when they are needed - rather than wait for donor disbursements to materialize. When disbursements do finally come through, the loan amount and associated costs are then simply deducted at the source, with the donor, in effect, paying off the loan. This innovative aspect of the Pledge Guarantee reduces risk, eliminates the need to tie up money in costly revolving funds, and makes possible more reliable and predictable funding flows. With annual operating costs of between USD 1 and 2.5 million, the PG is expected to yield savings of USD 5 to 10 million during the first three years by reducing the cost of capital and the number of emergency supply shipments.

This month saw the publication of 'Designing a Global Financing and Procurement Mechanism for Reproductive Health Supplies'. The [report](#) documents the development of the new Minimum Volume Guarantee/Pledge Guarantee (MVG/PG) mechanisms; outlines how each will work in practice; details their anticipated costs and benefits; and sets forth a preliminary implementation plan.

Find out more about the Minimum Volume and Pledge Guarantee mechanisms [here](#).



Look out for ... World Contraception Day

World Contraception Day is a worldwide campaign aiming to raise awareness of contraception and the need to reduce the high levels of unplanned pregnancy and to improve the level of education regarding sexual and reproductive health on September 26th each year. This year's motto is 'Your life, your body, your choice' focussing on sexual education of young couples. Both men and women should have the essential access to sexual education to be encouraged to make a conscious decision for a responsible parenthood.

Find out more about the World Contraception Day [here](#).

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Project RMA is a joint effort of Population Action International (PAI), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the German Foundation for World Population (DSW) to increase political and financial support for reproductive health supplies at the global, regional and national levels. Project RMA works closely with the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition and its' Resource Mobilization and Awareness Working Group.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the editors [Caroline Jane Kent](#) and [Sabine Weber](#) at DSW.