

**Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition
Executive Committee Meeting
May 21, 2008, Brussels, Belgium**

Summary

Committee members: Wolfgang Bichmann (Co-Chair), German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development; Margret Verwijk (Co-Chair), Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Alan Bornbusch, US Agency for International Development (USAID); Lester Chinery, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF); Sadia Afroze Chowdhury, World Bank; Mercedes Mas de Xaxas, Population Action International (PAI) [*on behalf of Suzanne Ehlers who could not attend*]; Antoinette Gosses, European Commission; Ben Light, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Scott Radloff, USAID; Susan Rich, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; John Skibiak, Coalition Secretariat; Jagdish Upadhyay, UNFPA

Other participants: Cindy Rider (Recorder), PATH; Bo Stenson, Consultant

State of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition and review of the 2008 Secretariat workplan

John Skibiak, Director of the Coalition, provided an overview of where the Coalition is, where it has come since the last meeting in Washington DC, and where he sees it moving in the next six months and beyond. This discussion was framed within the context of the Coalition's three strategic goals (see below). John also reviewed the four priority areas of the Secretariat's draft three-year workplan..

Goal 1: Increase the availability, predictability, and sustainability of financing for reproductive health supplies.

- Created awareness of supply challenges to increase financing for supplies.
- Increased support by members of the Coalition.
- Coalition members PAI, IPPF, and Interact Worldwide launched a new initiative to better integrate RH and HIV/AIDS in proposals for submission to the Global Fund's Round 8 grant cycle.

Goal 2: Strengthen the capacity of health systems to deliver reproductive health supplies in a sustainable manner.

- The Secretariat assumed the role of coordinating and managing the Countries-At-Risk (CAR) subgroup of the SSWG.
- Major progress on the Minimum Volume Guarantee/Pledge Guarantee (MVG/PG) financing mechanisms.
- The Reproductive Health Interchange (RHI) has been expanded to include 12 additional funding sources.
- The SSWG commissioned a review of six software packages to support the management of RH supplies.

Goal 3: Assure the added value of the Coalition as a productive and sustainable global partnership through support for efficiency, advocacy, and innovation.

- There has been a major increase in new members who joined the Coalition since membership was opened in October 2007.
- We have also seen many new partnerships forged and communications enhanced among Coalition members and stakeholders.
- The website has been launched and is very good, providing a lot of information that is easily accessible.
- The Secretariat has taken a big step forward on the issue of financial sustainability of the Coalition.
- The Secretariat has drafted a monitoring and evaluation plan and submitted it to colleagues who will be doing the bulk of data collection and have the ability to collect data globally, including USAID | DELIVER, PSP-One, PAI, and UNFPA.

Review of the 2008 Secretariat Workplan

John Skibiak presented a draft three-year Secretariat work plan that builds on and extrapolates from the results of planning sessions carried out within the Secretariat earlier in the year. John identified four main challenges he saw guiding the workplan's contents.

The four main objectives identified in the workplan are to:

1. Fully operationalize the Coalition's Strategic Plan.
2. Engage a new and expanded membership.
3. Actively engage developing-country partners.
4. Ensuring the sustainability of the Coalition.

Additional activities include preparation of reports, communications activities, monitoring and evaluation, and increased support for and strengthening of the WGs.

Review of Coalition Membership Meeting Agenda

The primary focus of the meeting was identified as showcasing the role of Europe with respect to development assistance and reproductive health supplies. Other agenda highlights include the unveiling of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's new Reproductive Health Strategy; breakout sessions to introduce new members, discuss new ideas and challenges, and discuss how WGs anticipate working in the future with an expanded membership; WG updates; presentation by Dalberg consulting group on the Minimum Volume Guarantee/Pledge Guarantee (MVG/PG) work in the past six months; presentation on the sustainability of the Coalition; and breakout sessions to reflect on various strategies as a means to achieving sustainability, discussion of new ideas, and resources necessary to move forward.

Nomination Committee Recommendations

The nomination task force proposed recommendations on three major issues: the Chair; regional representation in the Coalition; and WG leadership. The task force includes Director John Skibiak, Executive Committee Representative Jagdish Upadhyay and the three WG leaders—Alan Bornbusch, Ben Light, and Suzanne Ehlers.

Coalition Chair

The Executive Committee accepted the recommendation of the nomination task force that with Margret's term as Co-Chair coming to an end, the Executive Committee should revert back to its former policy of a single Chair.

Seat on Executive Committee for Global South Representative

The task force addressed the issue of how to establish more direct communications with regional organizations from the Global South. In addition to posting notifications of the vacancy in the Coalition newsletter and website, the Committee recommended that the Secretariat directly reach out to organizations. Applications for the vacant seat will be formally submitted to the Executive Committee for review by the nomination task force.

Selection of working group leaders

The nominating committee recommended that each WG take primary responsibility for selecting its leader, following general principles of transparency and democracy applicable to all. In addition, the WGs should be able to turn to the Secretariat for help in managing the election process.

Key recommendations:

- The Coalition should have only one Chair, instead of two Co-Chairs.
- To increase country participation in the Coalition, the Secretariat should invite regional representatives to become members. The nominating committee will contact these new members to discuss their potential role on the Executive Committee.

Sustainability Plan: Implications for Secretariat, RHI, Innovation Fund

Bo Stenson was contracted to address the issue of the Secretariat's financial sustainability. He was asked specifically to look at three issues: 1) sustainability of the Secretariat, 2) opportunities, advantages, and feasibility of linking the financing of the RHI and Secretariat, and 3) availability of funds to support new WG initiatives that would not otherwise be funded by donor agencies. Bo interviewed a number of different health partnerships, including many Executive Committee members. Copies of the Bo's report had already been sent to members of the Executive Committee.

Recommendations:

- 1. Sharpen the focus of the Coalition based on its convening function and ensure that the Strategic Plan reflects its added value.** Financing of the Coalition must be based on a clear purpose and on the goals stated in the strategic plan.
- 2. Seek collaboration and exploit synergies with other partnerships.**
- 3. Include developing country government representatives systematically in Coalition activities.** Many believe that the Coalition should continue as a global coordinating mechanism. The issue of involving developing-country representatives requires further thinking, development, and structure. This is essential to the success of the Coalition.
- 4. Keep the Coalition secretariat small and efficient.** Many interviewees clearly made the point that the Secretariat should remain small and efficient and should not expand too much.

- 5. Organize the main stakeholders in a meeting to agree on their joint and shared responsibility for sustainable financing of the core Coalition functions through non-earmarked contributions.** Stakeholders who are able to pay should take joint responsibility for core financing of the Secretariat. Many stakeholders have already provided funding for specific projects. The Coalition should seek as much non-earmarked core funding as possible (e.g., at least half of its general budget).
- 6. Consider a membership fee mainly as an instrument to enhance ownership.** Compulsory membership fees would not be feasible because some members would not be able to pay, particularly smaller organizations and developing-country organizations. However, a sliding scale payment system could be possible.
- 7. Include resources for innovative activities.** There was strong interest across the board in the establishment of a fund that could be used to support the development and implementation of new and innovative WG workstreams. If the Secretariat's budget remains the same, however, the amount available for such purposes would necessarily be limited. If such funds could be made available, not at the expense of Secretariat operating costs, then there is no reason why the level of such a fund should not be higher. The allocation process must be transparent.

Summary of recommendations:

1. Sharpen the focus of the Coalition based on its convening function and ensure that the Strategic Plan reflects the added value of the Coalition.
2. Seek collaboration and exploit synergies with other partnerships.
3. Include developing country government representatives systematically in Coalition activities.
4. Keep the Coalition secretariat small and efficient.
5. Organize the main stakeholders in a meeting to agree on their joint and shared responsibility for sustainable financing of the core Coalition functions through non-earmarked contributions.
6. Consider a membership fee mainly as an instrument to enhance ownership.
7. Seek out resources for innovative activities.

Closing

Wolfgang closed the meeting, highlighting that it was Margret's last Executive Committee meeting. On behalf of the committee, he bid her farewell and thanked her for all of her work. Margret thanked the Executive Committee and said that although she personally is moving on, the Dutch Government is as committed as ever to the Coalition's goals and objectives and will remain an active member.