

# The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition

The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (the Coalition) is the world's largest network of reproductive health (RH) supplies organizations. Formed in 2004, the Coalition is a global partnership of some 400 public entities, private corporations, and non-governmental organizations dedicated to ensuring that all people in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) can access and use affordable, high-quality supplies to improve their reproductive health. Over the last four years, the Coalition has helped channel approximately US\$105M annually to the cause of RH supplies. In 2015 alone, we leveraged more than US\$122M to support our own work and the cause of RH commodity security more broadly.

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## Structured Informality

Created as a non-formal alliance, the Coalition is able to work flexibly and intuitively, reacting sensitively — and in a timely way — to community and market needs. Its bold, envisioned work has left lasting impacts on the RH supplies landscape.

In 2011, for example, the Coalition successfully leveraged the purchasing power of its global membership to help reduce the price of Merck's one-rod contraceptive implant. The Implanon Access Initiative — as this landmark development came to be known — was the pioneering precedent that helped pave the way to more recent reductions in the price of implants.

## Shifted Paradigms

By leveraging trust, instilling a sense of common purpose, and forging consensus, the Coalition has been successful in shifting key development paradigms. For example, Take Stock, the Coalition's flagship campaign to end empty shelves has changed the way our community now measures supply stockouts. It has also demonstrated the importance of looking beyond technical fixes and changing the views of communities that see stockouts as an inevitable fact of life.

**TAKE STOCK**  
An empty shelf is everyone's problem.

[www.NoEmptyShelves.org](http://www.NoEmptyShelves.org)

## The Innovation Fund: Support for Visionary Ideas

The Coalition's Innovation Fund picks up and supports dreams and ideas that might be deemed too risky or audacious by other agencies. Launched in 2009, the fund has, to date, provided US\$5.3M in 58 small grants to member organizations. The grants have yielded new tools, supported advocacy and research, leveraged millions of dollars in subsequent programme funding, and launched a host of new initiatives across the Global South. The Innovation Fund's willingness to support new ideas has reaped stunning results among which the following are but a few:

- › In **Maharashtra, India**, more than 1,000 doctors use Doctorstore, a pioneering online portal, to order contraceptives directly from suppliers. Doctorstore has removed the guesswork about the quality of contraceptives, making new and underutilized commodities more accessible. The Doctorstore staff and a network of doctors have provided more than 100,000 products to remote populations across India.
- › In **Sierra Leone**, imported health supplies were being held up in warehouses — sometimes up to six months, making stockouts worse, and driving up crippling storage costs. Using experiences of neighbouring countries, an action group convinced the government to eliminate import duties on family planning supplies. This historic change now saves more than US\$200,000 each year for UNFPA and for many NGOs. Shelves are being stocked more promptly, and more regularly.



*PSI Burundi received a grant of US\$40,000 for research on social franchising, which attracted an additional US\$6M for scale-up.*

- › In **Afghanistan**, award-winning work has brought parliamentarians together from all over the country. Men and women, including those from religious parties, put their differences aside to form the country's first Sexual and Reproductive Health Caucus, which approved the introduction of Bayer's two-rod contraceptive implant into Afghanistan. In 2014, the government received an award for this pioneering work.
- › Member organization PSI **Burundi** received a grant of US\$40,000 for research on social franchising, which attracted an additional US\$6M for scale-up of the project results.
- › Every year, more than 7,000 people visit **LAPTOP**, an online database with more than 275 supply chain management courses. LAPTOP is an Innovation Fund-supported product helping to strengthen supply chains all over the world. The success of LAPTOP encouraged Bayer Healthcare to sponsor seven scholarships to students from developing countries.
- › More than 2,000 individuals have helped pay for almost 1,000 safe deliveries in developing countries, in a pioneering example of crowdfunding managed by Fund recipient **Kangu**.

## Shaping the Market

A fundamental premise underlying the Coalition's work is that no single institution can, on its own, confront the obstacles that constrain the ability of women and men to obtain and use the contraceptive methods of their choice. In today's environment, the Coalition has emerged as a critical forum for promoting collaboration and coordination. In its daily work, the Coalition seeks to improve global market dynamics that lead to improved availability, affordability, information, and quality of contraceptive methods. The Coalition's recent market shaping tools and developments include the following:

- › The Coalition has led the implementation of a costed commodity gap analysis to assess the volume, cost, and funding levels of contraceptives required to meet the growing global demand for family planning across 135 LMICs, including the 69 FP2020 focus countries.
- › RHTargetMarket is an interactive web-based tool that provides manufacturers with critical country-specific information needed to prioritize countries for product introduction, thereby reducing the business risk. The tool is free and accessible for public use, with the data being sourced from partners such as the World Bank, Population Reference Bureau, and Avenir Health's Track20 initiative.
- › The Coalition hosts the Coordinated Supply Planning Group (CSP) which aims to eliminate redundancy in global procurement and tailor supply shipment to better meet country needs. In 2015, we financed a new data management platform to help the CSP group improve forecasting, coordinate procurement decisions, and allow for international donors and in-country partners to work together to prevent stockouts.

## Power of Partnership

By means of its three Working Groups, three Caucuses, and two Regional Forums, Coalition members mobilize resources, heighten awareness, strengthen health systems, and maximize the total market for RH supplies. Through its monthly newsletter, multilingual website, and annual membership meetings, the Coalition keeps members informed and, where appropriate, allows them to speak with one voice.

Membership has grown exponentially, from 15 organizational members at the Coalition's founding in 2004 to 428 as of November 2017, roughly half of which are from LMICs.

Membership is free and comes with access to all the above resources.

Application forms are available at <http://www.rhsupplies.org/about-us/become-a-member/>.