

3/20/2017

Systems Strengthening Working Group - Terms of Reference

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Terms of Reference

Last updated: March 2017

Article 1. Introduction

The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) is the largest network of reproductive health (RH) organizations in the world. Its membership spans the public, commercial, and not-for-profit sectors—all of which play vital roles in ensuring that high-quality RH supplies find their way into the hands of those who need them. The RHSC brings together a diversity of partners and mobilizes their collective strengths to increase access to a full range of affordable, quality reproductive health supplies in low- and middle-income countries.

As a membership organization, the RHSC adds value by promoting sustained, coordinated action amongst its members and other partners. One avenue for bringing members together is through the RHSC's Implementing Mechanisms (IM), which are communities of practice working toward a specified and agreed-upon objective¹. Subject to regular oversight from the Secretariat and periodic review by the RHSC's governing board - the Executive Committee (EC) - IM objectives and activities must relate and contribute to the achievement of the RHSC Strategy.

Participation in IMs is voluntary and open to all members who agree to support the IM's objective(s) and abide by the IM's TOR. Members should express their interest in participating in an IM by contacting the elected IM Chair(s) or the designated Secretariat Coordinator. IMs are responsible for having and adhering to their own TOR, which are linked and must specify adherence to the RHSC TOR, guiding principles, mission, vision, and strategy. Any sustained digressions or significant diversions from these may be brought to the attention of the EC for resolution.

This TOR specifically covers the objectives, functions, composition, leadership, and conditions for dissolution of the **Systems Strengthening Working Group (SSWG)**.

¹ As of January 2017, the RHSC IMs are the following: Working Groups - Advocacy & Accountability, Market Development Approaches and Systems Strengthening; Caucuses - Generic Manufacturers, New/Underutilized RH Technologies, Maternal Health Supplies; and Regional Forums - El Foro Latinoamericano y del Caribe para el Aseguramiento de Insumos de SR (ForoLAC), Sécurité Contraceptive en Afrique Francophone (SECONAF).

Article 2. Objectives

The SSWG will:

- 1) Learn: Raise awareness on role of systems and their impact on availability, equity, quality and choice of RH supplies
- 2) Share: Exchange ideas and knowledge about Systems Strengthening
- 3) Focus on efficiency of the supply chains
- 4) Draw from relevant trends and developments
- 5) Act: Neutral space to identify systematic challenges and gaps that cannot be resolved within any one organization and to work collaboratively to develop responsive solutions

Article 3. Functions

The form and function of the SSWG is determined by its own members to best accomplish its specified objectives. As a community of practice, the SSWG brings together RHSC Secretariat staff, official RHSC members, and other partners² of the RHSC to implement activities, advance work streams of the WG, share information and resources, and provide overall guidance to the RHSC's work related to market development at the global and national levels.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Working Group Members and Chair(s)

- i. **Selection of SSWG Chair(s):** The SSWG, under direction of the RHSC Secretariat Coordinator, participates in the recruitment and election of the SSWG Chair(s) through the process described in Section 5.2.
- ii. **Governance and decision-making:** The SSWG Chair(s) ensures that the SSWG's governance and related decisions are made on a consensus basis. If issues need to be resolved by a vote, the following rule governs: the position expressed by a majority of those present at in-person or virtual meetings, through voting, constitutes the decision. Decisions by the SSWG do not override SSWG members' respective governing bodies.
- iii. **Activities:** In accordance with these TOR, the SSWG is responsible for overseeing, organizing and strategically planning its workstreams and activities, which should be linked to the priorities and objectives set forth and described in Article 2 and explicitly support the RHSC Strategy. Members' project/program activities in their respective countries or context constitute an integral part of the SSWG's work.
- iv. **Reporting responsibility:** As an IM of the RHSC, the SSWG is responsible to the RHSC Executive Committee and reports back to the EC as requested via the Chair(s).
- v. **Membership engagement:** As a community of practice, the SSWG is expected to regularly convene its members through teleconferences, meetings (hosting, at a minimum, one in-person meeting during the RHSC General Membership Meeting), informational webinars, and other events. This allots WG members the opportunity to provide and hear updates on workstreams and activities; share and learn about new information, resources, and tools on market development; network; share intelligence and contribute to overall planning for and implementation of SSWG work.
- vi. **Communications:** Routine communications are facilitated by, but not limited to, an electronic distribution list, moderated by the Secretariat Coordinator, to which any WG member can

² Many non-member organizations and individuals, referred to in these TOR as "Partners," are actively and often routinely involved in RHSC affairs and/or those of its IMs. Partners often play critical roles within the RHSC, may bring needed technical expertise, and may open up new avenues for cooperative learning and collaboration.

contribute. The purpose of this distribution list is to schedule meetings and events, share news, and generate discussions amongst members.

- vii. **Representation:** The SSWG acknowledges that it does not speak for the RHSC, but for its members, and it agrees not to present itself as the voice of the RHSC. If the SSWG is interested in pursuing this option for specific cases, RHSC EC approval is required.
- viii. **RHSC engagement:** Fostering collaboration across the RHSC's diverse membership, the SSWG is expected to engage and share information/updates with other RHSC Members and IMs through SSWG representation at other IM meetings, sharing of SSWG resources and updates, and participation in joint-IM initiatives that are relevant to SSWG priorities. The SSWG Chair(s) represent(s) the SSWG on the RHSC Council of Chairs (Article 5.4.1.iv).

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Secretariat:

- i. Secretariat support to implementing mechanisms is described in the RHSC Terms of Reference (specifically sections 4.6.1.1 and 4.6.1.2).

Article 4. Composition

4.1 Criteria for Membership

To be eligible for membership of the SSWG, individuals must adhere to the following criteria:

- i. Membership is open to any individual from a member organization of the RHSC.
- ii. Members of the SSWG should have a significant programmatic and/or financial stake in meeting family planning and reproductive health supply needs, including demonstrating a vested interest in market development.
- iii. Members of the SSWG should be proactive in sharing and building the knowledge base on market development for RH supplies to further strengthen the community of practice.
- iv. Members of the SSWG should be ready to volunteer in the WG's activities with a view to strengthening the overall RH coalition.

4.2 Process

- i. Prospective SSWG members request inclusion in the SSWG by communicating directly with the SSWG Chair(s) and/or RHSC Secretariat Coordinator all relevant contact information for the prospective member.
- ii. The Secretariat Coordinator will confirm SSWG membership status with the prospective SSWG member and include his/her contact information in all group membership lists (i.e. mailing list).
- iii. The Secretariat Coordinator and Chair(s) should provide the new SSWG member with a brief orientation to the SSWG, as well as make any necessary introductions to other SSWG members that may be deemed appropriate or beneficial to current SSWG activities.
- iv. After onboarding, new SSWG members are expected to actively participate and engage in SSWG activities, meetings, *and workstreams*.

Article 5. Leadership

The SSWG is led by one or two Chairpersons. A Chair of the SSWG is a person who is an active member of the SSWG and whose organization is an institutional member of the Coalition. The Chair has the vision, collaborative spirit, commitment, and support to effectively guide the group in its work to further the mission of the RHSC.

Through the Secretariat Coordinators, the Coalition Secretariat collaborates closely with the SSWG Chair(s) on anything related to the strategic functioning, coordination, and communication of the SSWG and its workstreams. Furthermore, the Secretariat Coordinator helps to ensure linkages are established with other RHSC IMs. Roles and tasks of the Chair(s) and Coordinator will be determined based on mutual agreement.

5.1 Eligibility

Any active member of the SSWG can put forward a candidacy for the position of Chair. Candidates must:

- i. Be willing and able to fulfill the responsibilities of the Chair, including its representative role inside and outside the RHSC;
- ii. Devote adequate time and effort to effectively lead the SSWG; and
- iii. Have good oral and written communication skills, including fluency in English.

If a co-leader arrangement is deemed appropriate for the SSWG, co-leaders must belong to different organizations and have personal and institutional strengths that complement and reinforce each other. In addition, the co-leadership arrangement aims, as much as possible, to be gender, geographic and thematically balanced.

5.2 Leadership Selection Process

Members of the SSWG elect their Chair(s) through a formal election process. In case of a precipitate departure of the Chair, the Secretariat will promptly initiate the process of a new election to replace the departing Chair.

To ensure transparency and minimize any potential conflicts of interest, the election will be led by the Secretariat Coordinator and overseen by a Nomination Committee.

5.2.1 Nomination Committee

- i. The Nomination Committee comprises no more than four persons, including an SSWG member from the Global South.
- ii. The Nomination Committee will be convened by the Secretariat Coordinator.
- iii. Member organizations of the Nomination Committee may still cast a vote in the election.
- iv. Members of the Nomination Committee may not be nominated to the ballot.

5.2.2 Election Procedures

In conjunction with the current Chair(s) and no later than three months before the term of the Chair(s) is to expire, the Secretariat Coordinator reviews and updates the Chair TOR and disseminates this TOR to all members of the SSWG. The Secretariat Coordinator solicits four SSWG member volunteers to serve on the Nomination Committee, which oversees the nomination of candidates for the Chair position.

No later than two months before the term of the Chair is to expire, the Nomination Committee will invite SSWG members to put forward candidacies for the Chair position. One month prior to the end of the Chair's term, the Nomination Committee will forward to the SSWG members the names of all eligible candidates. In the event of more than one candidate, the Nomination Committee will announce an election.

Only one vote per RHSC Member organization will be allowed. It is the responsibility of the member organization to internally determine who votes on behalf of the organization. The vote will be conducted by secret ballot (either via online, email or in-person if it coincides with an SSWG meeting). All votes are confidential from SSWG members and from the current SSWG Chair(s). The RHSC Secretariat Coordinator will monitor the responses to ensure that only one response per RHSC member organization is provided. In the event that multiple differing responses are received from a single organization, participants will all be contacted to nominate a single voter.

In the case of an in-person election, SSWG member organizations unable to attend the election may notify the Nomination Committee of their vote in writing (or through a proxy). The vote must be received in advance of the election. The Secretariat will coordinate the voting process.

In order to reduce the likelihood of ties and/or re-elections, the SSWG election process will be determined by the nomination committee depending on the number of candidates and likely voters. In the event of no simple majority there will be a run-off between the top two candidates. In the event of a tie, members of the Nomination Committee, (except the Secretariat Coordinator) along with the current Chair(s), will have three business days to select the new Chair and inform the Secretariat from amongst the top two candidates.

5.3 Terms of Service

5.3.1 Term Duration

The Chair(s) serve(s) a two-year term with the option to be extended for an additional two years, with approval of SSWG members. All WG members have the option to stand for elections every two years.³ In the event that one or more WG members express interest in running for Chair, the incumbent will have to put him/herself up for re-election.

³ With approval of the AAWG Nomination Committee.

5.3.2 Term Termination

The Chair(s) may terminate his or her term at will. In cases of termination, the Chair should inform the RHSC Director and the RHSC IM Coordinator at their earliest convenience of their wish to discontinue their role, to allow him or her to organize a new election.

The Secretariat, under the direction of the Executive Committee, reserves the right to oppose or terminate leadership positions, prior to their expiring.

5.4 Roles and Responsibilities

5.4.1 Scope of Work

The Chair(s) must commit to allocating adequate time to fulfill the responsibilities of the position, which requires an average of 20 working days per year. Additional human resources from the Chair's organization may be used to assist him/her to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. The time and human resource costs of the Chair position are borne directly by the organization of which the Chair(s) is employed.

The Secretariat may allocate modest financial support to the SSWG Chair(s) to cover core expenses (travel costs and communication expenses) as needed.

In no case will the SSWG Chair(s) or his/her organization be responsible for covering the financial expenses of any SSWG meetings or activities. In principle, SSWG "activities are supported by participating SSWG organizations or through funds raised by the SSWG."

The Chair(s) of the SSWG also holds the following roles/responsibilities:

- i. SSWG Activities and Monitoring:
 - a. Oversee and strategically plan SSWG workstreams and activities which should be linked to the priorities and objectives set forth and described in Article 2 and explicitly support the RHSC Strategy.
 - b. Responsible for ensuring workstreams function as intended and that activities are implemented as planned.
 - c. Clarify SSWG roles and responsibilities and ensure that quality is achieved, activities are implemented, and regular communication is maintained.
 - d. Liaise with workstream leaders.
- ii. SSWG Partnerships and Visibility:
 - a. Ensure the visibility of the SSWG's work both internally and externally of the RHSC.
 - b. Act as a conduit between the RHSC Executive Committee and the SSWG and between the latter and other IMs (including but not limited to WGs, caucuses, forums) of the RHSC.

- c. Proactively create opportunities for northern and southern SSWG members to collaborate and coordinate.
 - d. Convene and chair SSWG meetings, including regular and/or ad-hoc conference calls, and facilitate the adoption of consensus-based, action-oriented decisions.
 - e. Convene regular learning events to increase visibility and information sharing between SSWG members and other IMs.
- iii. SSWG Fundraising and Funding Mechanisms:
- a. Identify and respond to both internal and external fundraising opportunities.
 - b. Review and select proposals from SSWG members for submission to RHSC funding mechanisms, including the Innovation Fund.
 - c. To avoid conflict of interest, the organization to which the Chair belongs is not eligible to submit proposals to the Innovation Fund through the SSWG. The organization is however, eligible to submit through any other IM.
 - d. Review grant deliverables/reports and provide critical feedback on all RHSC-funded projects sponsored by the SSWG.
- iv. Represent SSWG on RHSC Council of Chairs
- a. Represent the interests, technical and financial, of the SSWG on the RHSC Council of Chairs.
 - b. Collaborate with Chairs of other RHSC Implementing Mechanisms on Council of Chairs to coordinate regular reporting to RHSC Executive Committee.
 - c. Communicate to SSWG members, as necessary, messages from RHSC EC and/or Council of Chairs.
- v. Neutrality
- a. As per the Coalition’s strategy and identified levers of change, the Chair is expected to leave his or her “institutional hat” at the door while acting in the position in order to candidly address sensitive issues, think outside the box and respect differences of opinion while remaining focused on what is shared in common.
 - b. The Chair is responsible for actively engaging his/her own institution on the question of upholding neutrality recognizing that this may at times run counter to institutional or client priorities.

Article 6. Conditions for Dissolution

The SSWG exists in perpetuity and as part of the formal governance structure of the RHSC until such a time when either: 1) it's Chair and members deem the group's existence no longer necessary; and/or 2) the RHSC Executive Committee decides to restructure or dissolve it.⁴

In order to vote for dissolution of the SSWG, one or more of the following conditions should be met:

- i. The group's mandate/goal has been achieved.
- ii. Any activities, workstreams, or subgroups associated with the SSWG have been completed or transferred to the leadership of another IM of the RHSC, Member organization, RHSC Partner.
- iii. All projects supported and funded through resources made available to the SSWG (i.e., Innovation Fund projects and other) have been terminated and results disseminated.
- iv. A shift in the external environment has occurred such that the existence of the SSWG is deemed counterproductive to current or existing initiatives; duplicative of other efforts or bodies; or no longer appropriate given current trends within the reproductive health supplies space.
- v. An alternative structure for the group (e.g., caucus, taskforce, online community of practice, etc.) is considered better suited to advance the objectives of the group and meet members' needs.

In the event that SSWG members determine that at least one of these conditions apply, the Chair(s) should draft a Statement of Dissolution providing evidence supporting the proposed dissolution of the WG. The Secretariat Coordinator will share this Statement with the entire membership of the SSWG and organize a vote amongst SSWG members to either approve or reject the group's dissolution. A simple majority vote by participating members is required to approve dissolution status.

If a majority vote in favor of dissolution is received, the Chair will present the election results and Statement to the RHSC Executive Committee at one of its biannual meetings. A vote will be called of the RHSC Executive Committee to approve the SSWG dissolution, of which a majority vote in favor is required to formally dissolve the group.

⁴ As the governing body of the RHSC, the RHSC Executive Committee retains the right to restructure or dissolve any of the IMs of the RHSC to meet RHSC Strategy as it sees fit.