

**WHAT WE DO**

# INNOVATION FUND: CATALYST AND VISIONARY

The Innovation Fund is the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition's flagship initiative for inspiring and financing new activities that further the Coalition's strategic goals and those of its Working Groups. Established in 2008, it has granted more than \$6M in 67 small awards, and has leveraged more than \$20.4M – a return of more than 3 to 1.

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The Innovation Fund provides crucial support for the work of the Coalition's nine working groups. The Fund is a critical catalyst for bridging all the sectors—advocacy, technical, commercial—that make up the Coalition's large and diverse membership. A flexible resource reacting sensitively to shifting priorities, the Fund issues awards competitively during scheduled rounds, but also on an exceptional basis to address urgent or time-bound needs.

Traditionally, the Coalition has defined the concept of “innovation” broadly to include any promising new idea with the potential to bring about positive change. Innovation need not mean a radical departure from previous practice. It could also consist of new approaches to existing processes or the implementation of an existing strategy in a new context, especially if this adaptation leads to replication or scaling-up at country level.

Successful Innovation Fund recipients will be focused on applying the “supplies lens” to their approach, in order to help get the right product to the right place at the right time. They will address the systemic factors that make product choice, flow and availability possible.

## Recent Fund Recipients

### ARGENTINA



In Argentina, Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad designed and launched an open-source platform to help young people locate RH and contraceptive distribution outlets, as well as safe and legal abortion counseling. The #Dónde web-based app provides geo-referenced information on over 12,600 RH distribution outlets and answers frequently asked questions on contraceptives.

### UGANDA



In Uganda, WoMena tested six novel distribution models for the Ruby Cup® menstrual cup, which offers ecologically sound menstrual health management to women with limited access to affordable sanitary products. Additionally, WoMena also successfully advocated for the removal of import duties, laying the foundation for greater product affordability.

## MALAWI



In Malawi, a \$50,000 grant enabled Coalition partner VillageReach to tackle three key barriers obstructing young people's access to RH supplies: contraceptive stockouts, provider attitudes, and clinical standards and procedures. Pharmacy assistants, trained as mentors, coached local health facility staff to improve commodity availability and implement good supply chain practices. The work has leveraged \$6 million in new funding to expand the project's scope and impact.

## KAZAKHSTAN



In Kazakhstan, Coalition member Gynuity increased awareness of a multilevel pregnancy test (MLPT) that allows women to monitor the successful completion of early medical abortion without having to return to a health care facility. MLPTs provide rapid results and can detect pregnancy much earlier than regular pregnancy tests. Despite its registration in-country, providers and women were not aware of its use for medical abortion care.

## CHINA



In China, Marie Stopes International China (MSI-China) expanded contraceptive choice for young people to include long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) by developing and introducing into six hospitals the country's first youth access guidelines for service providers. They trained 50 health providers on LARC services and counseling; and provided 3,800 young people with relevant information. They also secured US\$85,000 in additional funding to conduct operations research on acceptance of LARCs in the participating hospitals.

## INDIA



In India, Pregna International Ltd. received support from the Innovation Fund to launch Doctorstore, a pioneering e-commerce portal that has allowed more than 1,800 doctors from across Maharashtra State to purchase a range of quality-assured RH commodities directly from suppliers for delivery within two to seven days. Within the first two years of operation, Doctorstore generated sales of 170,000 products, generating more than 150,000 couple years of protection.

## SIX LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES



The Latin American Consortium against Unsafe Abortion (CLACAI), undertook a systematic analysis of factors that affect—positively or negatively—the success of efforts to secure national regulatory approval of misoprostol and mifepristone for medical abortion. Focusing on six countries, CLACAI found that registration success was positively associated with professional health association support, prior registration for obstetric use, and supportive advocacy by civil society.

## ETHIOPIA



Concept Foundation raised Ethiopia's profile as a priority market for product registration and paved the way for the introduction of five WHO prequalified maternal health (MH) products. An initial situational analysis on drug registration and procurement prompted Ethiopia's Ministry of Health, its drug regulatory authority, and manufacturers to forge a set of recommendations relating to quantification, pricing, manufacturing, regulatory policies, and quality.

## Donor support is key to success

The Innovation Fund has benefitted from the contributions of both our core donors and those providing more targeted support. This has allowed the Coalition to pursue specific objectives—be it in the area of safe abortion, youth access, regional needs or maternal health supplies, as well as general support to broader Coalition objectives.



For more information on our specific Innovation Fund projects and opportunities for collaboration, please visit <https://www.rhsupplies.org/activities-resources/innovation-fund/>