



The Rosetta Stone, 2nd Century B.C., symbolizes the power of translation to unlock understanding © Tudor Antonel Adrian | Dreamstime.com

## PRISMA bridges the language divide

Asociación Benéfica PRISMA (PRISMA) is actively engaged in developing educational tools to improve the procurement of reproductive health supplies in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). With the support of the Innovation Fund, PRISMA translated into Spanish and adapted to the Latin American context the [Procurement Capacity Toolkit](#). This toolkit, originally developed by PATH, is designed to strengthen the skills of personnel involved in public sector procurement of reproductive health products.

### DEARTH OF TRAINED PROCUREMENT SPECIALISTS

Most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean do not have robust public sector procurement systems. Country teams either do not have experience or are not well-versed in the international market for reproductive health supplies. Personnel involved in procurement processes often do not know the procedures required for international tenders and in some cases are not aware of their own national policies and procedures. As a result, countries in the LAC region struggle to access high-quality and appropriate products and often end up paying too much for products that are not certified.

For many years, multilateral organizations like UNFPA and the Pan American Health Organization have been helping countries in their procurement processes, thus governments have not invested in upgrading their own systems and have failed to provide continuous training to their procurement teams. One of the major gaps identified in the region is the lack of appropriate and continuous ethics training for in-country procurement teams. PATH's Procurement Capacity Toolkit offered the potential for essential training and much more. The only problem was that it was in English and therefore virtually inaccessible to those in the LAC region who stood to benefit from it. Stepping in, the Innovation Fund made a difference.

### ADAPTING THE TOOLKIT TO THE LAC CONTEXT

In 2010, PRISMA concluded that the full potential of the PATH toolkit could be realized by translating it into Spanish and, even more importantly, adapting it to the LAC context. With different procedures, government structures, and players in the procurement process, the need was great for a toolkit able to convey the particular characteristics of logistics and procurement processes in the LAC region.

With financial support from the Innovation Fund, PRISMA was able to convert the toolkit into a structured and contextualized training curriculum and apply it during training courses aimed at strengthening the procurement

process for reproductive health supplies in the region. The most recent course took place in June 2013, when PRISMA assembled representatives from ministries of health and NGOs in Argentina, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Peru, and Mexico. As a course manual, the toolkit is freely accessible to all interested users.

## INNOVATION BRIDGING DIVIDES

Though still too early to determine the full impact of this Innovation Fund investment, one defective procurement process can result in the loss of millions of dollars and lead to stockouts, lack of confidence in products by the public, unwanted pregnancies, and STI/HIV infections. Confronting a major challenge to stronger procurement processes in the LAC region, the Innovation Fund took advantage of an important opportunity to engage with country partners to bridge cultural and language barriers that had inhibited capacity development of logistics personnel. By connecting PRISMA with established tools and supporting their work to adapt these tools appropriately, the Innovation Fund enabled PRISMA to expand opportunities for staff training in the region. Working with local partners to address critical needs that may go ignored or unfunded, the Innovation Fund serves as a catalyst for driving the type of innovation necessary to enhance reproductive health commodity security in developing countries.

The public health supplies community can now count on a proven and versatile training package for use in any Spanish-speaking country. Access to the training curriculum is free, and the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition hopes that a growing number of Coalition members working in the region use and apply the training in their regular activities.

## PRISMA

PRISMA is a Peruvian nongovernmental organization with over 25 years of experience promoting socially inclusive and sustainable development and with projects in fields such as health and sanitation, logistics, and environmental management. For more information, please see their website: <http://www.prisma.org.pe/>.

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## Award

**Recipient: Asociación Benéfica PRISMA**

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### What is the Innovation Fund?

The Innovation Fund was established in 2008, through a generous grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Managed by the Coalition Secretariat, the Innovation Fund has to date made available more than US\$2.2M in small grants (maximum US\$200,000 per grant) to Coalition partners. The grants – more than 20 altogether – have yielded new tools, supported advocacy and research, leveraged millions of dollars in subsequent program funding, and launched a host of new initiatives across the Global South.

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 needn’t mean a radical departure from previous practice. It could also include 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.

### The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition

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