



BRUSSELS, ONE YEAR ON

Presentation to the Tenth Membership Meeting of the
Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, London
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John P. Skibiak
Director, Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition

It gives me tremendous pleasure and indeed pride to welcome you here this morning to the launch of the Tenth Membership Meeting of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. And I am especially happy to see so many new faces: one because it testifies to the growing level of interest and support for our work; but also because it represents such an important source of new ideas and energy in the years to come.

The aim of my presentation this morning is to reflect back on the Coalition's work and accomplishments since our last gathering in Brussels and to touch on a number of our priorities that will guide our work in the Secretariat and Coalition over the coming year.

To do these things, I would like to frame my discussion – at least initially - around our Strategic Plan. That Plan, now available online as an interactive flash presentation, frames the Coalition's vision, goals and objectives over the period 2007–2015. It consists of three broad goals. These are first, an adequate and diverse financing to meet countries' supply needs; second, strong harmonized supply systems; and third, a sustained global partnership to ensure effective knowledge-sharing and coordinated action.

With regards to meeting countries' supply needs, I am happy to say that despite last year's downturn in the global economy, we saw major increases, both in financing for supplies and in donor willingness to include supplies within their current scope of activities. Between 2007 and 2009, international donor funding for contraceptives increased globally by an impressive 22 percent. And among the 14 "focus" countries currently receiving technical and financial support from Coalition partners, funding increased by an even more impressive 55 percent.

We also saw, last year, movement on the part of the Global Fund to support the purchase of RH commodities, including commodities other than just condoms. In October, for example, USAID | DELIVER reported that Rwanda had become the first country to include contraceptives in its efforts to fight HIV/AIDS, by committing more than US\$2.4 million of Round 7 funds for that purpose. But others are following suit. Thanks to the work of PAI, IPPF, Interact Worldwide and other Coalition partners involved in the *Mobilizing for RH/HIV Integration Project*, Global Fund proposals from Burundi, Ghana, Madagascar and Zambia have been approved for funding –

proposals which will leverage tens of millions of dollars for RH/HIV integrated programs.

The past twelve months have also seen dramatic increases in multilateral support for commodity security. According to figures just released, UNFPA saw increases of more than \$450 million in core support, and a doubling in its contributions to the Global Programme, which specifically targets improvements in RH commodity security. Of UNFPA's 10 largest contributors, 8 are Coalition members, and together, they contributed over \$53 million just to the Global Programme alone.

But the donor community has been equally supportive of the Coalition, itself - particularly the workstreams of our three working groups and especially the new procurement and financing mechanisms, AccessRH and the Pledge Guarantee. At the same time, a generous grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation allowed the Coalition to launch an Innovation Fund that that is already supporting new initiatives by our three Working Groups, and will continue to do so over the coming three years. To say that donor generosity towards these new initiatives has been phenomenal would be a gross understatement. The fact is, since we met last year in Brussels, financial support for ideas and activities nurtured through the framework of the Coalition (and this excludes the operating costs of the Secretariat), has increased nearly seven-fold - from about US\$1.3 million in 2007 to over US\$8 million in the past year alone.

Such levels of donor support have surpassed anything I could have imaged one year ago. But having said that, I do believe this general growth in support for commodity security is part of a trend – a trend that can be directly traced to *our* work and to that of our colleagues who first drew attention to the challenges facing RHCS nearly a decade ago. In 2001 on the eve of the Istanbul conference, the *Interim Working Group on Reproductive Health Commodity Security*, a forerunner of today's Supplies Coalition, published what would arguably become one of the most powerful and effective tools for galvanizing international support on behalf of reproductive health commodity security. Entitled *Contraceptive Projections and the Donor Gap*, the report envisioned increasing shortfalls in the availability of donor resources required to satisfy the growing unmet need for contraceptive supplies.

This year, the Coalition published, along with USAID | Deliver and the RMA WG, an update of the donor gap. Later in this meeting we will hear more about the update. But what I see as especially significant in the report is the success with which the donor community did heed the calls for support, issued in 2001. Among the 88 countries comprising that study, donor support *has* in fact roughly kept pace with increasing demand. Now acknowledging this success may seem to some as undermining the rhetoric of our own cause. But I do believe it is critical we acknowledge our achievements if only to demonstrate that success does lie within our grasp - whether we are reaching out as donors or as advocates or as technical specialists.

And of course admitting success does not mean the challenges before us will be any less severe. On the contrary, increases in the number of contraceptive users—especially younger users—coupled with the growing demand for condoms for HIV/AIDS prevention means that by the year 2020, an estimated US\$424 million will

be required in commodity support to satisfy all demand for contraceptives in donor-dependent countries. Even if donor funding were to remain at or near current levels, the shortfall would be almost US\$200 million annually, with a cumulative shortfall of about US\$1.4 billion over the 2008–2020 period. So let us not get too comfortable - or rest on our laurels – however well deserved they may be.

As impressive as the growth in the *resource base* for supplies has been, the past year has also seen notable success in addressing the Coalition’s second strategic goal, which is all about strengthening the systems needed to ensure effective supply chain management- be they functional systems in stable contexts, short-term fixes to systems that have temporarily broken down, or coordinated responses to long term-crises. In 2008, the UNFPA and the UN Foundation took ownership of the AccessRH and the Pledge Guarantee, both of which, once operational, promise to change the face of commodity procurement and financing. Equally impressive is the recent commitment of more than US\$5 million by Coalition stakeholders to launch and sustain these efforts over the next three years.

When we think of the initiatives most commonly associated with systems strengthening, we often think of the RH Interchange or the Countries at Risk Group or other higher level initiatives to generate or manage new knowledge on an international scale. But systems strengthening, under our strategic plan, also takes place at country-level. Since 2007, when we began tracking key indicators linked to our plan, the number of contraceptive security task forces established in our focus countries has grown by over 37 percent, while the number of countries with dedicated budget lines for RH supplies has actually doubled.

Finally, efforts at systems strengthening also took a great leap forward this year with the launch, by MSI, of the Coalition’s first effort to confront address commodity security in crisis settings. Thanks to seed money from the newly established Innovation Fund, MSI is conducting an assessment of logistics systems in crisis settings - with a view toward understanding better the challenges facing agencies that deliver emergency RH supplies.

The Coalition’s third strategic goal is to support the global architecture needed to address what we call the “supplies challenge”. That means forging new partnerships; expanding the knowledge base needed to make more informed decisions, and to ensure that the Coalition’s role within that global architecture remains relevant and sustainable.

Once again, the past year was marked by a host of impressive accomplishments. In July, the Secretariat posted on its website two new tools designed to expand our knowledge of the supplies field and help advocates to utilize that knowledge better in making their case for commodity security. The first tool to appear on line, the Supplies Information Database (SID), was developed by our colleagues at the RHInterchange to serve as online reference library with over 6,000, easily searchable records on the status of reproductive health supplies at country-level. Interestingly, the launch of the SID generated the highest number of hits in the history of our website and it continues to draw a large proportion of our visitors to this day. The launch of the Advocacy Toolkit, a collaborative effort among USAID’s Health Policy Initiative and the RMA Working Group is another major achievement of

the past year. Designed to serve as a practical, evidence-based vehicle for raising awareness and fostering policy change, the tool will soon be put to the test as supply champions from around the world gather here next week to train the trainers who will apply it in the field.

Earlier, I spoke of the impressive *financial* commitments of our key stakeholders – particularly on behalf of the work of our working groups. But that commitment has, to a certain degree, been equally matched by the dramatic *institutional* buy-in of the RH community as a whole. Since Brussels, our membership has grown by nearly 30 percent - and the impact of that growth is evident today in almost every aspect of the Coalition's work. The Coalition's Working Groups, once small gatherings, now average 20, sometimes 30 active participants each. The Executive Committee has also grown, both by its admission of the Working Group Heads and by the creation last November of two new seats for regional representatives, one held by Harry Joosery of Partners in Population and Development, and the other by Stanley Sonoiya of the East African Community. And finally, the growth in membership has seen a transformation in the size of the annual membership meetings. The Ninth Annual Membership Meeting, held in Brussels, was at the time, the largest of its kind ever. Here in London, our participant list is even longer.

Below the surface, however, increased membership is indeed having a more profound impact, particularly on the ability of the Coalition to achieve its strategic goals. New initiatives now underway to address supply-chain management in crisis settings, to expand access to underutilized methods, or to undertake total-market initiatives are all being led by institutions that, one year ago, had no seat at the table. The presence of new actors is also creating new opportunities for the Coalition to play roles it would not have played in the past. In September, for example, the international pharmaceutical manufacturer, Schering Plough (SP), turned to the Coalition for input in drafting a new distribution agreement with purchasers of their one-rod contraceptive implant. Through the intervention of the Secretariat, SP was able to bring together representatives of the international donor community, NGOs, and others to incorporate their input into a final distribution agreement that has proven acceptable to all and is now in use.

Finally, the growth in membership is clearly becoming an effective advocacy tool in itself. In November, the Government of France timed its admission to the Coalition to coincide with its six-month presidency of the European Union—an event that succeeded in drawing the attention of the press and many in the development community. And I am especially proud that the past year saw the admission to our ranks of our first two African bilaterals: the Government of Uganda, represented here today by Dr. Anthony Mbonye of the Ministry of Health; and the Government of Ghana, represented by Dr. Gloria Asare of Ghana Medical services.

But there is yet another critical component of the Coalition's third strategic goal – and it is one that I have left for last – even though it has consumed perhaps the bulk of the Secretariat's energies this year and remained the primary source of my own sleepless nights. Three years ago, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation made it possible for what was then still a fledgling partnership of perhaps 15 organizations to shift gears. It put forth the seed money to launch a full-time Secretariat with the mandate of putting in place the systems and frameworks that would enable the

Coalition to grow; make a difference in the world; and ultimately, by demonstrating it *can* make a difference, garner the support needed to allow this new seed to take root. Last year in Brussels, I noted in my annual address to the membership that over the coming year, we would be embarking on program to secure the financial resources needed to ensure our medium- to long-term sustainability. I put on a brave face – but the reality is, I had no assurances of anything. Today, I am happy to announce that we have achieved our aim. Multi-year financial commitments from key members of the Executive Committee and pledges of additional support from other Coalition members means that we are, once again, in a position to shift gears – but this time from higher-up the learning curve, able to build on the systems and structures in place, but also on the many remarkable successes we will be discussing in the days to come. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who played a part in making this moment a reality: those who contributed to last summer’s independent evaluation of the Secretariat’s performance; those who provided input into the design of the concept paper that framed the Secretariat’s vision for the coming three to five years; and those who have committed financially to supporting our work.

Our sights, therefore, are very much set on the future – and building on our workplan submitted last year to the Executive Committee, we have identified four broad areas that we see guiding our work in the coming year.

With regards to the role of the Secretariat, we look forward to working with our new Chair, Julia Bunting, and to continue providing both the support you have come to expect of us. This includes the planning and hosting of meetings, the management of communications, the provision of technical and logistical support to Working Groups, and the documentation and communication of key policy and executive decisions. We will also pursue efforts to ensure that member organizations remain familiar with the Coalition’s Strategic Plan, understand how it can guide them, and know what indicators are required to measure progress.

A second priority new area of activity will be to assist members to look beyond the Coalition’s traditional focus on contraceptives and begin addressing the challenges facing other RH commodities, such as those relating to safe motherhood, sexually transmitted infection detection and treatment, and HIV/AIDS. In the coming year, we will increase our support to the Coalition’s Working Groups, other RH partners, and more specialized initiatives within the Coalition, such as the New and Underused RH Technologies Caucus.

A third area of activity will be the management of our new Innovation Fund which, as I noted previously, provides Coalition members with the means to translate into action new ideas and approaches for advancing global RHCS. The Secretariat, with support from a subgroup of Executive Committee members, will play a central role in encouraging and facilitating proposal development, hosting independent review panels, and financially administering the grants themselves. During the coming year, we anticipate disbursing approximately \$1.2 million in small grants to Working Group members.

Finally, a fourth area of renewed vigor will be to engage with representatives of countries outside Europe and north America and involve them more directly in the

work of the Coalition. We have already noted the increased Regional participation on our governing body. In the coming years, we intend to expand that effort through more effective outreach, collaboration, and greater participation in Working Groups. Similarly, if we are ever to succeed at getting national decision-makers to allocate public resources, take advantage of new funding and procurement mechanisms, capitalize on the full potential of the total market, or strengthen systems for effective supply-chain management, then country involvement must remain a priority.

Looking out at this audience – its size and diversity; seeing the breadth of topics and issues to be discussed over the next two days - there is no question that we in the Coalition have put down very deep roots in the past three years. To me that is indeed a reassuring sign that the days are indeed numbered when women or men should suffer or die because the supplies they need to prevent an unwanted pregnancy, or ensure a safe delivery, or treat an infection are simply not there.

On that note, and on behalf of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat, I wish you the best of success for a productive and exciting two days.