

## State of the Coalition 2016

**13 October 2016, Seattle**

Good morning, friends and partners of the Coalition. And welcome to this 17<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting, which I understand is close to surpassing in size, if it hasn't already done so, every other membership meeting in the Coalition's history.

It always fills me with a huge sense of humility and gratitude to see so many familiar faces, to share in your energy, to be inspired by your commitment, and to hear your mandate. Every year, you gather here from the corners of the world, expecting to learn something, expecting to teach someone, and expecting to share your intentions with the Coalition.

This year has been, for us, an especially notable year. It marks the end of our last 4-year funding cycle, and the beginning of a road towards financial sustainability in the coming years. It was also a year in which we asked some hard questions about ourselves, our vision for the future, and our relationships with partners - with UNFPA, the GFF, the new PSM Project, and in particular, the critical lifesaving work of our partners at FP2020, whose Director, Beth Schlachter, I am especially delighted to share the stage with this morning.

And finally, it was a year in which we took bold steps, acting upon the directives we heard in Oslo: greater attention to the needs of young people; expanding our engagement in maternal health; and a subject that has been, for so long in the past, only whispered - and I am talking about safe abortion and post abortion care.

Each year, in my State of the Coalition message, I try to convey the breadth of our achievements across the wide spectrum of our guiding principles. And in the last two years, I have focused on what we call our strategic pillars - availability, quality, equity and choice. This year, I'd like to begin by looking back to Oslo, taking stock of the challenges and mandates you set for us at our last meeting, and reflecting on how far we have come. And I would like to start with the young people on whose shoulders the future of our movement rests, but also whose own lives will shape the future of generations to come.

Earlier this year, we commissioned a survey and literature review that dug deep into the barriers young people face in accessing RH services and, armed with this knowledge, we established a Youth Discussion Group, providing a platform for young members and youth experts to share knowledge and best practices. More than 85 members from 55 organizations meet monthly to exchange ideas on a dedicated listserv. Smaller consultations took place in Kampala and in Bali early this year, and yesterday, the full group had its first in-person meeting.

Earlier this summer, the findings from such rich discussions informed the development of a call for applications to a special, youth-targeted round of Innovation Fund grants.

Four wonderfully promising ideas have won support this year. These include ideas that aim to harness mobile technology in Argentina, change hospital practices in China, teach pharmacists how to be friendly and supportive of young people in Malawi, and strengthen the distribution of the new and innovative menstrual cup to communities in need in Uganda. As a bonus, the Coalition's Francophone regional network SECONAF has established its own Youth Subgroup, with growing research and other activities.

I am thrilled to let you know that today, thanks to financial support from Women Deliver, we are joined by more than 10 youth representatives, who will lead us through some soul-searching in plenary tomorrow—and then later in a special lunchtime exercise. Sometimes – and I say this in the least patronizing way possible – you can't really just *discuss* the energy of young people. You can't just *read* about it. You simply have to be caught up in the middle of it to feel the passion, the sheer audacious honesty of the life stories young people tell. We were treated to one such moment at the Women Deliver Conference earlier this year in Copenhagen, when just minutes before the closing ceremony, 50 young people from around the world came together in a rousing flashmob, wearing bright yellow T-shirts that demanded: "Which part of My Right to Contraception do you not understand?" It's a slogan that needs to be repeated and repeated, until we are sure that every young person, in every town and village, can boldly and unashamedly seek, and receive, the contraceptive method of their choice.

And as far as slogans go, we at the Coalition have another favourite saying, if not coined, then certainly immortalized by my colleague Milka Dinev: "Maternal Health Supplies *Are* Reproductive Health Supplies." For a long time now, the Coalition has supported mainstreaming maternal health supplies, and keeping them at the heart of our issues. In Oslo, our membership called upon us to reinforce this effort. This year we did so by welcoming on board the UN Commodities Commission's Maternal Health Supplies TRT or "Technical Resource Team", to enact a merger between the team and the Coalition's own Maternal Health Caucus. The group has new terms of reference and a joint leadership shared by Beth Yeager from Chemonics, Debbie Armbruster from USAID and Kabir Ahmed from UNFPA. It will continue working on the maternal health supplies agenda and build on the MHS TRT's focus on increasing access to oxytocin, misoprostol and magnesium sulphate.

But the merger also heralds a new phase of work which could include new commodities such as anti-hypertensives, and blood pressure cuffs to address pre-eclampsia and eclampsia.

The Oslo meeting also proved noteworthy for another reason. For the first time, the spotlight slipped quietly onto an issue that we in the Coalition have treated historically with caution: safe abortion and post abortion care.

Now, it's important to remember that these themes have never been absent from our work or discourse. We have, for years, published technical briefs devoted to both MVA, and mifepristone and misoprostol for medical abortion. Our Maternal Health Supplies Caucus has always included misoprostol (albeit for obstetric care) among its list of priority commodities. And more recently, we were working with the only prequalified Chinese manufacturer of misoprostol to establish new marketing contacts in Africa and Latin America.

But for a Coalition that today represents nearly 400 organizations, governments, and institutions, it is not easy finding common ground on an issue as sensitive and potentially divisive as abortion. So we have proceeded cautiously, but always with the ultimate aim of 1) providing a neutral space for meaningful discussion and action; and 2) adding value to the work of our members.

The Oslo meeting dared to raise the specter of safe abortion, and by the close of the meeting, references to it had become frequent and routine. During the plenary wrap-up session, and in participant feedback, the connection between supplies and safe abortion was identified as an issue for the Coalition to pursue

This year, we were fortunate to have access to financial support from two donors, Norad and DFID, to ensure that the door opened in Oslo to safe abortion work didn't blow shut as quickly as it had opened. But it required framing the issue in a way that made sense for us - one that is addressed from a supplies angle; that aligns with the four pillars of our new strategic framework; and that maximizes our comparative advantages or what we refer to in our strategic framework as our "levers of change".

So we have, in the last year, addressed safe abortion through the health systems issues with which we are already familiar: more effective supply chain management; regulatory approval of critical commodities; and responsiveness to broader community needs. We hope that in our next funding cycle, we can continue providing the support so essential to addressing this critical but inevitably sensitive issue.

While Oslo was the catalyst for much of our work over the course of the past year, it was by no means the only inspiration. Another area that represents a continuous thread from our earliest years is the collection and analysis of critical data for supply chain management and decision making.

As we look back on the years since the London Family Planning Summit, it is clear that the political commitment to expanding access to family planning has never been so strong or so widespread. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, 93 governments, donors, civil society organizations, and other partners have made formal commitments to the FP2020 initiative

But without the supplies needed to deliver family planning, all this political commitment stands for little. And so it is critical that we can estimate what

commodity needs will be, both to motivate our manufacturers to invest in the production of quality supplies, but also to encourage donors and governments to allocate the resources needed to procure them.

So this year, we took up the challenge of projecting and quantifying the growing demand for contraceptive supplies. Tomorrow, we will present the results of that work, which brings together Avenir Health's innovative approach to measuring the number of contraceptive users, contraceptive prevalence projections from the United Nations Population Division; public sector product price research by the Guttmacher Institute; donor spending data collected by UNFPA and NIDI; Avenir's approach to measuring total spending on contraceptive supplies; and insights from an analysis of country-produced quantification reports provided by CHAI and JSI.

Another new tool that offers increased insights into new markets is what we call the RHTargetMarket. Faced with costly and complicated health product registration processes, many manufacturers shy away from countries perceived as being difficult to break into. The web-based RHTargetMarket tool allows the user to select criteria such as the relative ease of registration processes, market size and a range of demographic factors—and a specially-designed algorithm identifies potential markets. The tool is free and accessible for public use, and includes data from partners such as the World Bank, Population Reference Bureau, and Track20.

While Target Market and the Commodity Gap Analysis are recent examples of our efforts to leverage data, for more than a decade, we've championed the role of data in improving supply chains and ensuring commodity security. In fact, virtually all today's tools tracking and monitoring supply chain performance in the RH space trace their roots to Coalition-inspired initiatives: the RH Interchange; the PPMR, the Coordinated Supply Planning forecasting tool, the Global Markets Visibility Initiative and more recently the Target Market Tool. In the past, I've described some of these tools as being like the Concorde - still slick and shiny on the outside, but underneath, a lot of old wiring. Well, today we stand on the threshold of an exciting new initiative to align the data behind all these tools; to make the processes for collecting data more efficient; to connect the wide array of data sources out there and make them more accessible; and finally, to ensure the sustainability of data collection efforts well into the future.

Thanks to the confidence of partners, including both suppliers and donors, the Supplies Coalition is poised to host a new global initiative called the Visibility Analytics Network, or VAN for short, that promises to revolutionize the way our community collects and uses data. This quarter we take the first steps in that direction by working with UNFPA to digitize the data they collect each year under UNFPA Supplies. It is a first step - but it is a critical step that promises to shed light on the road ahead, teach us valuable lessons, and ensure that the data we need to better understand and manage our world is robust and accessible.

When I was preparing this presentation, I couldn't help but be struck by the amount of activity and change our landscape has undergone in the last 12 months. If change is the only constant, as they say, then the Coalition is well-prepared, being nimble and always ready to react intuitively to emerging priorities.

Throughout our existence, we have achieved critical results. We have attracted tens of millions of dollars in both monetary and in-kind contributions to reproductive health commodity security. We have averted stockouts and driven millions of dollars in new procurement. The Coalition has been a driver of groundbreaking innovation—catalyzing new commercial platforms and facilitating product entry in new markets. More recently, it has galvanized the community around a quest to make RH supply stockouts a thing of the past, creating a dynamic platform - Take Stock - where vested interests are set aside in favor of the common good.

Our new Strategy provides a clear and forward-looking roadmap for achieving results. It helps us ensure that supplies are reaching those who need them; that they are affordable; that they are trusted, effective, and safe; and that there is a sufficient range of products to meet users' needs. At the same time, our broad donor base provides us with the flexibility to respond effectively to the evolving RH landscape, while remaining focused on the longer-term vision of advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. As key steps along that path, we are committed to supporting the new strategic vision of FP2020; the broader post-2015 agenda for development financing; new leadership and strategic re-visioning at UNFPA Supplies, and finally the launch of USAID's new PSM initiative to support global health supply chains.

As we all embark on the home stretch of bringing family planning to an additional 120M women and girls, the need to leverage the power of partnership becomes even more critical than ever. And this has meant some fundamental changes in the way we work—starting from the top.

As many of you may have heard, I myself moved just over a month ago from Brussels to lead our work from Washington, DC. It has been, as you can imagine, an adjustment after more than 25 years outside the US; but it is an important and strategic step - one that will allow critical decisions to be taken when needed and ensure a more sustained engagement with a broader range of partners. An expanded DC-based team will also allow us to engage more actively with those shaping the new RH landscape - many, if not most of whom are headquartered along the “international development industrial complex” from North Carolina to Boston.

Our Brussels Secretariat, under the leadership of our Deputy Director Brian, will remain a robust anchor for the Coalition's activities, both in Europe and further afield. And needless to say, we are extraordinarily fortunate this year to have welcomed to our extraordinary team, two new staff, Julia White, our Market Development Technical Officer, and Aminatou Sar who took on the reins of the SECONAF regional forum in Dakar.

All of these changes, both external and internal, will shape the Coalition's work in the next funding cycle.

So I'd like to close my remarks this morning by citing a passage from a recent op ed, written by a member of our Executive Committee, Ellen Starbird. In it, Ellen writes that "...our community's work over the coming decade will require new and continued partnerships. Despite recent increases in donor and country-level attention to family planning and the potential contribution of family planning to the SDGs, family planning services continue to fall short of need in all developing regions."<sup>1</sup>

Looking around me at this moment, I can't help but be impressed by this tremendous turnout. A turnout of familiar faces, who have supported the Coalition year in and out, since the early days. And likewise, a turnout of people who are perhaps at their first Coalition family gathering. You can rest assured that we are ready with sleeves rolled up to do our part - to deliver on the goals of FP2020 and pave the way to achieving the SDGs.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://blogs.cfr.org/women-around-the-world/2016/04/08/family-planning-and-the-sdgs/>