

**Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition
Executive Committee Meeting
October 23, 2007, Washington, DC**

Summary

Committee members: Wolfgang Bichmann (Co-Chair), German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development; Margret Verwijk (Co-Chair), Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Terri Bartlett, PAI; Sadia Afroze Chowdhury, World Bank; Antoinette Gosses, European Commission; Matthew Lindley, IPPF; Scott Radloff, USAID; Susan Rich, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; John Skibiak, Coalition Secretariat

Other participants: Alan Bornbusch, USAID; Jagdish Upadhyay, UNFPA; Ben Light, UNFPA; Marion Van Schaik, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Catherine Potter, Communications Officer, Coalition Secretariat; Kevin Pilz, USAID; Recorder: Cindy Rider, PATH

State of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition

John Skibiak, Director of the Coalition, summarized accomplishments in the last six months, particularly as they related to the Coalition's three strategic goals: increasing resources, strengthening supply systems, and leveraging partnerships for added value (see the October 2007 Coalition Membership Meeting Report for a detailed summary of accomplishments).

Four activities merited much of the Secretariat's time and attention: the Strategic Plan, communications, sustainability, and membership. John described work over the past six months and plans for the future.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan was approved by the Executive Committee on August 27, 2007. Next steps are to translate the Plan into action; and to use it to conceptualize and define our work. The Coalition plans to move forward by:

- Condensing the document into a simpler, more abridged format to be more easily understood and operationalized.
- Using the strategy to guide the formulation of communication activities as well as the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan.
- Working more closely with working groups (WGs) to link their work—current and future—with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.

Communications

Catherine Potter was hired in June as the new Communications Officer. Together with the Communications Task Force, she has overseen the development of a new website, which has actively incorporated key elements of the Strategic Plan—specifically, an emphasis on added-value; strategic goals; input from country level; and the more specialized activities of the WGs. In addition, Catherine and the Communications Task Force finalized an outline of the Coalition's communication strategy.

Sustainability

Bo Stenson, former director of GAVI Alliance, was hired to explore options relating to the financial sustainability of the Secretariat and RHInterchange; as well as to assess the utility, desirability, and feasibility of an “incubation fund” to support small-scale initiatives and/research ventures by WGs. Mr. Stenson, who has already begun work and met with selected Executive Committee members, plans to complete his report by early 2008.

Membership

Following the April 2007 membership meeting, the Secretariat formed a Task Force to address the issue of Coalition membership. A final set of recommendations was produced and submitted to the Executive Committee in advance of the present meeting.

Review of Coalition Meeting Agenda and Desired Outcomes

John Skibiak indicated that the focus of this membership meeting would be about linkages—finding the common thread that binds together our strategic objectives, the work of our partners, and well as two new areas of interest: the Dashboard and the new Female Condom Initiative. The Dashboard is a new tool that monitors country performance with respect to the key UNFPA indicators of reproductive health commodity security. The presentation on the new Dutch Female Condom Initiative provides an opportunity to use the female condom as a basis for addressing a range of issues common to many underutilized methods.

Overview of LAC sessions

Kevin Pilz (USAID), who played a key role in organizing the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) component of the meeting, provided an overview of the LAC sessions.

Coalition Membership Recommendations

Membership Report

The draft report on membership and governance was provided in advance to Committee members. John highlighted the excellent working relationship among the Membership Task Force and praised the work of the HLSP consultant, David Johnson, who had been hired to guide the review process. Inspired by the desire for openness, inclusiveness, and lean governance, John highlighted the following points to emerge from the report:

1. Membership should be open to any organization with a stake in reproductive health supplies.
2. Members must confirm in writing their commitment to the Vision, Mission, and Principles of the Coalition as recently articulated in the new Strategy.
3. Existing members need not re-apply for membership.
4. The Secretariat should be empowered to approve membership applications.
5. Affiliates of an umbrella organization should be eligible to apply for separate membership.
6. The Executive Committee should comprise 13 non-permanent, rotating seats.
7. As members of the Executive Committee, Heads of WGs represent their WG and its thematic interest, not the organisation to which they belong.
8. Attendance at Executive Committee meetings will be limited to Executive Committee members only or to their replacements in cases of absence.

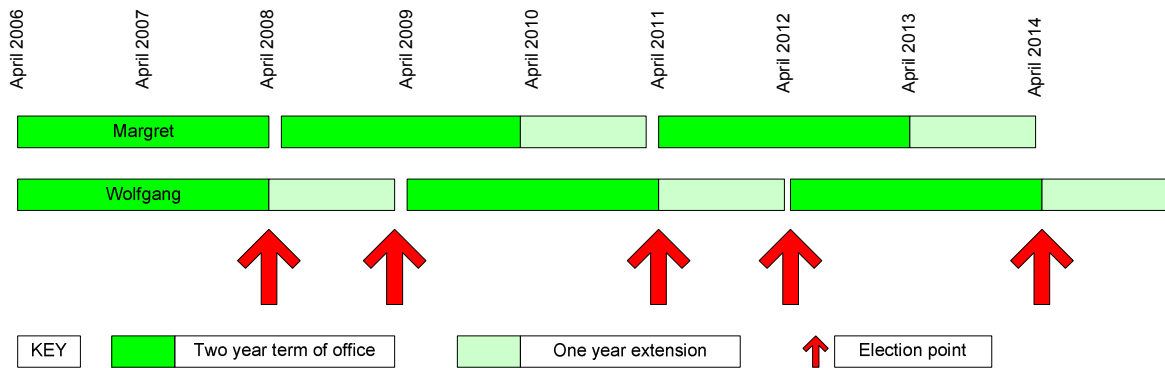
John noted that the sustainability consultancy currently underway will look at the role of membership dues and fees.

Executive Decisions:

- Adoption of membership and governance recommendations as contained in Membership Task Force Report.
- Executive Committee seat, reserved for a foundation to be open to any foundation meeting criteria.
- Greater precision in the terminology used to define eligibility criteria for institutional representation on the Executive Committee.

Policy on Chairs and Chair Selection for 2008–2010

John Skibiak noted that at the London meeting of the Executive Committee, the idea of a staggered chairmanship was proposed—one where chairs would be elected in alternating periods to ensure overlap and continuity. He then summarized the challenges of a staggered Co-Chair arrangement. If terms are set at two years, and each incumbent accepts a two-year extension, then the total tenure of each Co-Chair would be four years, with elections taking place every two years. If, however, the two-year initial term were followed by a more realistic one-year extension, the effect would be an election every year with a break in the third year (see below).



As noted in their report, the Membership Task Force recommended that key decisions over the structure and timing of the posts of Chair and/or Co-Chair be made by the Executive Committee.

Executive Decisions:

- Establishment of a dual Chair arrangement, with each Co-Chair filling an overlapping, two-year term with the possibility of a third-year extension.
- Formation of a Nominating Committee to outline the Chair election process; and to manage the recruitment, nomination, and selection of Co-Chairs. The Committee will be made up of the Heads of each of the WGs; a representative of the Executive Committee (Jagdish Upadhyay); and the Coalition Director.

Spring 2008 Membership Meeting

Antoinette Gosses announced that the European Commission would host the next membership meeting, to be held in the Spring of 2008.

Role of Semi-Annual Meetings within an Expanded Coalition

The size and scope of the Coalition's semiannual membership meetings have grown significantly in recent years—as have the time, effort, and resources required to stage them. Originally, the meetings served as venues for members to assemble and handle business. Today, they serve as fora for networking and the exchange of new ideas—although they are not the only means for sharing new ideas. The MDA WG manufacturers' forum, for example, showed how new ideas and new people can come together, meet, and yield results.

Executive Decisions:

- Following the Spring 2008 meeting, general membership meetings will be held annually.
- Secretariat will guard against scheduling the meeting to coincide with competing events

Communications: Progress to Date

In June 2007, Catherine Potter was hired as the Secretariat's new Communications Officer. Her main deliverables this year have included developing a new website and communications strategy. She has also been charged with coordinating and managing the Communications Task Force which includes Beatriz de la Mora (UNFPA), Mimi Whitehouse (JSI), Caroline Jane Kent (DSW), Chris Wells (IPPF), and Carolyn Vogel (PAI) in an advisory capacity.

Communications Strategy

The Secretariat began laying the groundwork for a new communications strategy by holding a two-day meeting in July of the Communications Task Force. The aim of the meeting was to compile a first draft of the strategy, which could then be refined to bring it in line with the yet-to-be-approved Strategic Plan of the Coalition. The Task Force brainstormed about goals relating to internal communications among partners; and external communications to increase understanding of supplies at global level. On the second day, the group focused on the website.

Catherine Potter described the contents of the draft strategic framework. The framework includes four major goals in which communications are expected to play an important role:

1. Maximize the synergies that derive from collaboration and partnership.
2. Ensure that the work of the Coalition is informed by country needs and benefits from the active engagement of key decision-makers at country level.
3. Contribute to RH dialogue at the global level.
4. Enhance efforts by the Secretariat to ensure the financial sustainability of the Coalition.

A second major communications activity will be the launch of the Coalition's new website. The focus of the website is about value added—about specifying what the Coalition brings to the rest of the world. It is also about bringing into the fold our new member and partners—allowing them to share with us what they are doing, but also assisting them to access our

existing knowledge and resources. John also highlighted the role Catherine had played in constructing the site—soliciting proposals from a host of web development agencies, preparing an overall navigational scheme, outlining the principal components of the site, and designating responsibilities for their completion. Plans are to launch the new site early in 2008.

Conclusion

Margret Verwijk, Co-Chair, closed the meeting, highlighting the Committee's discussions and decisions relating to the Strategic Plan and Membership Plan.

Henceforth, Jagdish Upadhyay will replace Rogelio Fernandez-Castilla on the Executive Committee.