

In the spotlight

Communication Task Force at work

This month, the Secretariat established a Communications Task Force as an initial step in developing the strategies and tools for branding and communicating the Coalition's work. The members include Cecile Petit-Robert, Communications Officer for the RHSC Secretariat, Caroline Jane Kent (DSW), Carolyn Vogel (PAI), Mimi Whitehouse (JSI), and Beatriz de la Mora (UNFPA).

In the coming months, we will be establishing and developing several communication mechanisms for the RHSC. Please send your ideas and comments to cpetit@path.org.

Website

DSW and the Secretariat have completed the process of transitioning the former Supply Initiative website into an interim site for the RHSC. The Task Force will now assess the Coalition's long-term communication needs so that it can start developing, in January, an entirely new, more interactive web site.

Logo

In October, the Secretariat commissioned two graphic artists to develop designs for a new RHSC logo. The Task Force has reviewed these designs and will soon be recommending one that most effectively captures the sentiments expressed in a questionnaire distributed to RHSC members: the notions of the supply chain, interconnection, global images, working together... We look forward to unveiling the new logo next month.

RHSC on the scene

Green Light and Maputo

RHSC has given the green light to the SS and MDA WGs to proceed with 3 pieces of work proposed at the general membership meeting in Bonn:

- To take to the next step the pledge/minimum volume guarantee model
- To develop the MDA country typology
- To encourage suppliers to participate in the WHO/UN pre-qualification program.

Consensus was also reached on the wording of a joint Coalition statement regarding the recent African Union Ministers of Health meeting. The statement, addressed to Dr. Kamel Esseghairi of the African Union, welcomed the steps recently taken by the Ministers to single out the importance of commodity security for RH & FP programmes and to identify key commodity-related indicators of progress.

Global Programme under way

RHSC Director John Skibiak attended the initial meeting of the Consultative Review Board (CRB) of the Global Programme at UNFPA headquarters. The teleconference included 10 participants, all of whom were members of the RHSC. Key decision points included the following:

- Terms of reference (TOR) will be modified to reflect the CRB's policy/consultative role.

Technical activities included in the original TOR will be handled separately, either in-house at UNFPA or contracted externally.

- Ethiopia and Cambodia were selected as Global Programme "Initial Countries". The selection was based on multiple factors: diversity of economic-social conditions; the role as focus countries for other health partnerships; commitment to reproductive health commodity security; and interest in becoming Initial Countries as expressed at the RHSC Bonn meeting.

The minutes of the CRB meeting are now being finalized and will soon be available through UNFPA.

In The Hague

At the invitation of RHSC Co-Chair Margret Verwijk, John Skibiak visited the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he met with Paul Bekkers, Director of the Social and Institutional Development Department. Following their discussion, John gave a presentation to the Department's Divisions of Health, and Gender/Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Those attending were extremely well-informed about the Coalition; supportive of its work; and, with the Secretariat now in place, very optimistic that it would soon be yielding tangible impacts. The discussion covered a wide range of topics including the need for broader-based involvement in the Coalition by developing countries, the private/commercial sector, and European donors/agencies. There was also discussion about recent reports over counterfeit health supplies, the role of UNFPA in global supplies security, and the prospects for greater collaboration with other global health initiatives.

RH Supplies on the agenda in Helsinki

John Skibiak spoke at a one-day seminar for Nordic and Baltic States parliamentarians, entitled "Investing in People by Improving Global Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights". John described key factors undermining access to quality reproductive health supplies, the role of the RHSC in addressing them, and the opportunities for active engagement by parliamentarians, civil society, and development specialists. Many in attendance asked to be kept informed of RHSC activities. Held at Helsinki's new Parliament house, *Pikkuparlamenti*, the seminar was hosted by Finland's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development and organized by the Finland's national family planning association, *Väestöliitto*.

Highlights from the Working Groups

Systems Strengthening (SS) WG

Work is underway to re-invigorate the Countries at Risk (CAR) group which, according to a recent evaluation of its work, has seen declining participation in the past few months. In November, the Secretariat reformatted the minutes of the group's last meeting, making it now easier to assess over time the performance of individual countries. The future of the CAR group will figure prominently on the agenda of the SS WG's upcoming Copenhagen meeting, where members plan to discuss the establishment of an extended data-base so that countries with recurrent short-term crises may tracked, addressed, and then followed-up more effectively.

Market Development Approaches (MDA) WG

A lively e-discussion is taking place among some MDA WG members over the appropriate role of demand generation within a market development approach and the implications of that role for the WG, its membership, and the RHSC more generally. Within the Coalition much is said about supply, especially at a global level; but far less is heard about demand at country level. Is this appropriate? The consensus seems to be that it is not; but some say the imbalance has been deliberate – that the RHSC was created to focus on supply issues and that demand creation was, from the beginning, outside its purview.

Market development and demand generation are inextricably linked. This point was emphasised in the recent HLSP scoping exercise and in the Mercer report, which saw demand as a critical component of the supplies package. So what does one make of this imbalance? To some, the low profile of demand generation speaks to absence within the MDA WG of RHSC members (and others) with experience in demand creation. Others see demand generation as a cross-cutting issue – one to be addressed across working groups and/or the RHSC generally. If you have a view on this matter, please share it with us at skinzett@path.org or jskibiak@path.org.

Resource Mobilization Awareness (RMA) WG

At the RHSC membership meeting in Bonn, the RMA WG announced that IPPF, PAI and DSW had received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to conduct resource mobilization and awareness activities outlined in the RMA workplan. Activities will focus on awareness and advocacy at the global level via a civil society network, and at the regional level through interventions in-country and via regional structures. At the Bonn meeting, the WG also conducted a target audience identification process and then, afterwards, an all-day workshop on message development. The RMA WG is continuing its work to develop an advocacy toolkit.

Finally, reflecting the view that the SS WG "More Money" Workstream involves a strong advocacy and resource mobilization component, the two working groups are exploring opportunities for collaboration. To that end, Carolyn Vogel of the RMA WG will be attending next month's SS WG meeting in Copenhagen.

There is a feeling among members of both WGs that future collaboration will be facilitated by greater coordination in identifying focus countries. The RMA WG maintains a "country database" that can assist in that process. It includes, by country, a variety of variables such as the presence of major bi- or multilateral donors, policy environment, existence of a SPARHCS assessment, CSI index score, demographic indicators, etc.

Upcoming events

7 December 2006:

MDA WG teleconference call

12-14 December 2006:

SS WG meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Hosted by UNFPA, this meeting will address following issues: Countries at Risk; Better Use of Money; More Money; Links with LCS/Procurement systems; Reproductive Health Interchange; Forecasting; Action plans.

15 December 2006:

Executive Committee teleconference call (tentative)

15-16 December 2006:

Strategic planning meeting in Brussels

To be held at RHSC Secretariat offices, meeting will serve as an initial consultation on the formulation of 3 to 5 year RHSC Strategy Plan.

Please contact gjaskula@path.org for the details concerning those events.

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