

# Managing the competition for scarce resources in a COVID-centric world

**In early 2021, John Snow, Inc. (JSI) and Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) issued a new [Roadmap](#) to promote more resilient supply chains and markets for reproductive health (RH) products in the face of COVID-19. The Roadmap contains a series of broad, far-reaching recommendations in the areas of market dynamics, financing, supply chain strategies, policies and stewardship, and data visibility and access.**

One primary message communicated in the Roadmap was the increased competition for scarce resources. A common concern in the RH community since early 2020 has been that funding for RH supplies would become deprioritized due to diversion of funds towards COVID-19 response efforts, and to cover significantly higher supply chain expenses (e.g., inventory storage, freight). Some in the community have voiced concern for domestic and donor funding levels primarily for the near term, while others are more concerned about longer-term trends. Still other concerns emerged within the private sector, particularly with respect to the opportunity costs of procuring and distributing contraceptives in a potentially shrinking RH market, when other COVID-related supplies offered a comparatively greater return on investment.

Recent analyses have suggested that the initial fears of a declining resource base may have been misplaced. The Roadmap authors found that most funding for 2020 RH procurement had been committed in 2019 or by early 2020. This combined with some flexibility in donor funding and the productivity, adaptations, and data-driven decision-making of supply chain actors seems to have resulted in a relatively healthy pipeline of supplies throughout 2020.

The 2021 Family Planning Report—jointly produced by the Clinton Health Access Initiative and the RHSC—backs up this assessment. The report features 2020 RH shipment data gathered from 17 suppliers for the 69 FP2020 focus countries. Analysis from the report shows that the value of the public-sector contraceptive market in these countries reached a five-year high in 2020, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic.

The Coalition recognizes the need to remain vigilant and informed about the resource base for RH supplies. We realize that significant funding reductions drive stockouts and reduce access for women and girls in low- and middle-income countries. Also, in the longer term, we are aware that severe financial disruptions could harm the viability of some private sector markets.

In the coming months, the scope of this priority area for the Coalition will be to examine and assess the state of COVID-19 impacts on the financial resource base for RH supplies. Illustrative activities we might support include the following:

- Move from ad hoc assessments of select countries to a more global assessment of trends in national RH budgets
- Consider the need for any market interventions, given the findings on trends in national RH budgets
- Hold discussions on the knowledge gathered on the financing and procurement of contraceptives in the pandemic

## What comes next?

The Coalition will provide the resources and, where necessary, technical assistance required to explore questions such as these. The range of potential activities is broad and includes landscape assessments, country-level or regional studies, and the promotion of promising strategies.

### OUR MEANS OF ACTION FOR ACTIVITIES MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Collaborating with one or more of the Coalition's Implementing Mechanisms, many of which can serve as key thought partners on a recommendation or activity
- Issuing subawards to member organizations
- Hosting webinars, discussions, and blogs

**We welcome your creativity and engagement, helping our community better understand the current challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us.**