

PATH improves the health of people around the world by advancing technologies, strengthening systems, and encouraging healthy behaviors. We pursue deliberate and measurable outcomes in six critical components of health systems: service management, policy, financing, supply systems, human resources, and information and monitoring systems.



CASE PROFILE: HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

Ensuring the availability of reproductive health supplies

Poor reproductive health is a significant problem in the developing world. Early or unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy-related complications all contribute to unacceptably high rates of illness and death. Moreover, attaining the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals is inextricably linked to improving reproductive health.

Access to good-quality reproductive health supplies is essential to a population's health. But the limited availability, affordability, and quality of supplies can create immense challenges in low-resource countries. Even as funding for reproductive health programs has waned, demand for supplies such as birth control pills and condoms has rapidly increased, and countries have been challenged to take on new responsibilities in funding and purchasing supplies. With more than 30 years of experience in working to ensure access to reproductive health supplies, PATH is using a variety of different strategies to help countries provide affordable, good-quality supplies to improve reproductive health.



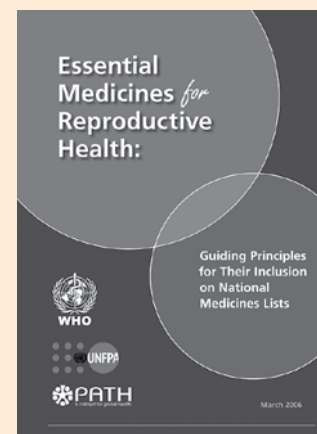
Richard Franco

Our reproductive health supply work at PATH starts with people and their needs. What supplies do women, men, families, and communities need to be healthy?

Informing policy: access to essential reproductive health medicines

The World Health Organization (WHO) Model Lists of Essential Medicines is a vital element of medicines and health policy and an important guide for public expenditures. It serves as a resource for countries to develop their own national lists. WHO selects essential medicines according to their public health relevance, evidence of efficacy and safety, and comparative cost-effectiveness. In 2002, research revealed that even though reproductive health medicines were included on the global list, in many countries they were not included on the national list.

To address this, PATH joined with WHO, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and other stakeholders to develop *Essential Medicines for Reproductive Health: Guiding Principles for Their Inclusion on National Medicines Lists* (www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/essential_medicines/guidingprinciples.html). This guide helps advocates, policymakers, and decision-makers ensure reproductive health medicines are included on national essential medicines lists—and thus are available to people who need them.





Health systems cannot function if needed supplies are not available. Our work helps ensure availability and access to good-quality, essential medicines for those who need them most.

PATH is helping countries strengthen their capacity to provide affordable, high-quality supplies to improve reproductive health.



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Building capacity: prequalification workshops

To help countries procure safe, good-quality supplies, WHO prequalifies essential medicines (www.who.int/topics/prequalification/en/), helping identify those that meet global standards of quality, safety, and efficacy. Participation in WHO prequalification is increasingly important both for manufacturers and buyers, as more and more countries and agencies only purchase products that are prequalified.

PATH carried out regional- and country-level workshops to help manufacturers learn about the prequalification process (www.path.org/projects/rh-supplies-workshops.php). The workshops helped developing country condom manufacturers—who can often produce products with lowest costs—to understand how they might seek prequalification for their products and thus be able to sell those products to countries that require WHO prequalification. PATH also collaborated with WHO and UNFPA to develop and deliver prequalification workshops for national and regional public buyers to encourage their use of the prequalification program. These workshops represented the first time country-level buyers convened to discuss how to effectively use the WHO prequalification program to ensure they purchase good-quality products.

Strengthening supply systems: the procurement toolkit

Country-level health systems must purchase products according to good procurement practices. These practices are designed to ensure good-quality, technically appropriate, and cost-effective products.

In collaboration with WHO, PATH has developed a comprehensive procurement toolkit intended to guide intensive in-country training and strengthen support for public-sector procurement personnel. The toolkit brings existing and new resources together in a manageable framework and fills information gaps. It addresses each element of the procurement supply process: definition of requirements, specifications, assessment of procurement options, budgets and funding, procurement planning, development of bidding documents, selection of suppliers, contracts, contract monitoring, and delivery. The toolkit will help procurers as they ensure good-quality reproductive health products are always available.

Partnering globally: a coalition for greater impact

At the global level, PATH is the secretariat for the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (www.rhsupplies.org), which brings together more than 65 agencies and groups with critical roles in providing reproductive health supplies to countries that need them. The Coalition is a global partnership of public, private, and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to ensuring that all people in low- and middle-income countries can access and use affordable, good-quality supplies to ensure their better reproductive health. Together, these organizations increase the flow of resources to developing countries, strengthen supply chain systems, and build effective partnerships with key public- and private-sector supply stakeholders.



Reproductive Health
Supplies Coalition

If reproductive health supplies are available, affordable, of good-quality, and properly used, reproductive health programs can support men and women in need. PATH's work to ensure the availability of these products is helping to improve the quality, purchasing, distribution, and use of reproductive health supplies—and the health of people around the world.