

From globalization to greater regionalization of supply chains



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.

The Roadmap authors call attention to the drawbacks of globalization, as they may affect RH supply chains and markets. Many RH supplies have historically been manufactured in countries far from the regions of product use. This is true not only for RH finished products, but also for vital components such as active pharmaceutical ingredients and product packaging. The supply chains for such products are frequently established and directed to primarily meet global objectives, and they may not make optimal use of regional capacity for supply chain functions such as warehousing and distribution.

The Coalition recognizes the timeliness of this topic, and we are aware that it significantly pre-dates the pandemic. Calls for greater devolution of functions such as manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution have been heard off and on for many years. But they have all too often been downplayed due to the desire to maximize total supply chain efficiency and achieve lower prices through tightly managed, consolidated, global supply chains.

Now, however, the pandemic has caused many across the globe to see things differently, and the sourcing and supply chains for products ranging from semiconductors to

pharmaceuticals are being reconsidered. [Calls for greater regional ownership have grown more urgent](#) and have been amplified by the media during the pandemic. In the global health arena, while this has been [most urgently expressed for COVID-19 vaccines](#), it applies to, and has been heard in reference to, other health products, as well. Making supply chains more responsive to local conditions aligns well with the drive toward greater national self-reliance and towards achieving more equity in the structures of global health.

In the coming months, the scope of this priority area for the Coalition will be broad. We intend to assess the potential for increasing regional inputs/ownership for various elements of RH supply chains.

We welcome a diversity of approaches and thinking. We might explore questions such as:

- What types of broad changes to global RH supply chains would foster greater country/regional ownership? What would this look like? Where geographically is it most needed?
- Which elements of the supply chain would benefit most from greater country/regional ownership or control and how might this be implemented?
- How could such modifications of the supply chain impact access and equity?
- How might private sector actors be effectively engaged?
- How can all this be achieved while maintaining acceptable levels of efficiency and quality assurance?

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.