



NEW GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED TO TRANSFORM REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH MARKETS

SEMA Reproductive Health seeks to drive equitable, affordable, and predictable supply of high-quality sexual and reproductive health products, advance gender equality

PARIS, 1 July 2021 – Today, on the sidelines of the [Generation Equality Forum](#) – a major global inflection point for gender equality – country policymakers, donors, and global health organizations announced a new initiative to accelerate progress on ensuring access to a comprehensive range of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) products. Despite significant improvements in the last decade, essential SRH health tools remain out of reach for millions of people worldwide, and health system disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic threaten to widen the gap.

Shaping Equitable Market Access for Reproductive Health, known as [SEMA Reproductive Health](#) – will support countries in overcoming some of the biggest barriers in SRH markets to ensure people everywhere can access the products they want and need to control their health and futures. Donors have committed over USD\$50 million to SEMA to date, and the partnership aims to raise at least \$50 million for core funding over the next five years.

“When women and girls lack access to SRH products – like contraceptives and medicines to manage pregnancy-related complications – whole communities suffer,” said Dr. Kayode Afolabi, Director and Head of the Reproductive Health Division at Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Health. “Healthy SRH markets are essential to strong health systems, and we look forward to collaborating with SEMA Reproductive Health to make markets work better for women and girls.”

SEMA will bring together a diverse set of partners to:

- **Proactively monitor SRH market health** by aggregating datasets and building a holistic, unified view of user demand and current market supply across regions and sectors.
- **Identify market barriers across geographies and co-design strategic solutions**, tapping the unique strengths of existing networks and organizations in-country and globally.
- **Support countries and global partners to finance and implement interventions** by helping governments mobilize domestic funding, crowding in new players, and coordinating global investments to maximize impact.

Reproductive health supplies are critical to advancing gender equality

SRH products are instrumental to women’s and girls’ health and wellbeing, helping to avert unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions and prevent maternal deaths.

“Comprehensive SRH choices that match people’s preferences increase the likelihood that women and girls finish school and achieve their ambitions,” said Kate Hampton, CEO of the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation. “If we’re going to achieve a gender equal world, we need access to those choices to be based on their needs, rather than on what donors decide. I’m delighted for the launch of SEMA Reproductive Health as it’s an opportunity to rethink how we solve SRH market challenges, support countries & communities to take ownership, and enable women to make decisions about their own health and futures.”

Over the past decade, global institutions have worked alongside countries and local organizations to enable over [60 million](#) additional women and girls in 69 low- and middle-income countries to use modern contraception. Many countries have also increased the [diversity](#) of contraceptive options available, such as implants and self-injectable contraception, helping more women and girls find methods that work for them.

“It is necessary to guarantee for all of the world’s women and girls the respect for their right to freely control their own bodies, which includes improved access to modern contraceptives,” said Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs. “Echoing the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the human development goals we aim to achieve, this is an indispensable condition for true gender equality between women and men, and one that France has placed at the heart of its feminist diplomacy.”

SRH market challenges continue to limit access, new approaches critical

Unfortunately, persistent weaknesses in current markets still prevent many women and girls from being able to access high-quality, affordable, and diverse SRH options that fit their preferences. Systems and data for SRH products are highly fragmented with limited coordination across public and private healthcare delivery channels. This can lead to inefficiencies and unpredictability in the availability of supplies, and prices that keep products out of reach for many. Country and global partners also do not have adequate information to fully understand people’s preferences and choices around SRH products – critical insights for providing the right amounts of the right products to best serve populations.

Strategies to solve access challenges often happen on a product-by-product basis, with unintended consequences for the broader market. Additionally, these efforts have heavily relied on a few global institutions instead of being driven by country governments themselves, limiting how well or sustainably interventions actually address communities’ needs.

Tackling these challenges could have dramatic impact. [218 million women](#) in low- and middle-income countries who want to avoid or delay pregnancy are not using modern contraceptives and approximately [810 women](#) die every day from causes related to pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and childbirth. Currently, from development to launch, new contraceptives often take years longer to be introduced to low- and middle-income country markets than other global health products.

“To improve maternal and child health, we need to tailor solutions to local contexts and put countries in the lead of their own sexual and reproductive health markets,” said Professor Charlemagne Ouedraogo, Minister of Health of Burkina Faso. “By working with SEMA to place countries at the center of decision-making, we can shift away from business as usual, align global efforts with community priorities, and ensure women, girls, and all people always have equitable access to SRH products.”

Building healthy markets will require collaboration across sectors

Initial partners behind SEMA include the governments of Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Uganda, with financial support from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE). SEMA is also working closely with other critical partners, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC), and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom (FCDO).

"Far too many women around the world are denied the fundamental right to make decisions over their bodies and futures. Realizing gender equality demands that we pool our talents and resources to stand up for sexual and reproductive health and rights," said Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA, the UN's sexual and reproductive health agency. "The SEMA initiative will play an important role in fostering innovation and improving access to reproductive health products for women and girls who need them."

In the coming months, SEMA will be recruiting an inaugural CEO and working to welcome new donors, technical partners, and Ministries of Health in low- and middle-income countries to the partnership. SEMA will officially launch activities by the end of year, with operations based in Africa.

About SEMA Reproductive Health

[SEMA Reproductive Health](#), is a new, innovative partnership designed to build healthier, more equitable, and more resilient markets for sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Working with countries, donors and global health institutions, SEMA will focus on overcoming some of the biggest challenges in SRH markets to ensure people everywhere have reliable access to comprehensive, quality, and affordable SRH products.

Additional Stakeholder Remarks

- **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom (FCDO):** "The UK welcomes the launch of this crucial initiative which will help improve the availability, quality and affordability of sexual and reproductive health supplies for women and girls around the world," said Wendy Morton, FCDO Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas. "I am proud we have played a role in its design. This is about giving women and girls greater choice and control to decide their own futures, and make their lives more prosperous and healthier as a result."
- **The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC):** "We at the RHSC applaud SEMA for taking on today's fragmented market for reproductive health supplies – a critical issue identified in our recent assessment of the supplies ecosystem. We look forward to working with SEMA to ensure health markets expand product entry and increase equitable access to needed reproductive health supplies," said John P. Skibiak, Director, The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition
- **Alliance Droits et Santé; Association des Femmes Juristes de Côte-d'Ivoire:** "For the Alliance Droits et Santé (Rights and Health Alliance), integrating civil society into the SEMA initiative will make it possible to meet the goal of developing a holistic and systemic global and national market approach with regard to SRH products, relying on the competencies, expertise, and needs of the women and girls in West Africa," said Agathe Blanc-Kamissoko, Adjunct Secretary General / Program Officer of the Association des Femmes Juristes de Côte-d'Ivoire (Association of Women Jurists of Ivory Coast)
- **Kaduna State, Nigeria:** "Data is critical to building healthy systems that support SRH markets. As a platform to create a holistic view of market health and gaps, the Kaduna State Government will work with SEMA to ensure that we understand what kinds of products work for women in our communities, and where there are barriers to access - so that products get to where they are

needed,” said Dr. Amina Mohammed Baloni, Honorable Commissioner of Health, Kaduna State Ministry of Health, Nigeria

- **Osun State, Nigeria:** “SRH markets are complex and require collaboration to meet the needs of users in mixed public and private health systems,” said Dr. Rafiyu Isamotu, Honorable Commissioner of Health, Osun State Ministry of Health, Nigeria. “We are excited to support SEMA in designing unified market approaches with private sector partners, entrepreneurs, and civil society groups.”
- **Ekiti State, Nigeria:** “Although significant progress has been made in recent years, a gap remains in access to sexual and reproductive health products,” said Dr. Oyebanji Filani, Honorable Commissioner of Health, Ekiti State Ministry of Health, Nigeria. “SEMA can usher in a new era of market solutions that will bring us closer to making universal access to SRH products a reality.”
- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:** “Women and girls know best about the contraceptive options that work for them,” said Chris Elias, President of the Global Development Division at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “The SEMA partnership will help improve data so that countries can offer products that really respond to women’s and girls’ needs. This has been a long-standing hurdle, one exacerbated even further by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we’re excited to be a part of this collaborative, country-led initiative that will undoubtedly build stronger and more resilient contraceptive markets.”
- **Family Planning 2030:** “The right to family planning cannot be realized without access to services and supplies,” said Mande Limbu, FP2030 Director of Global Initiatives. “FP2030 recognizes the importance of partnership in increasing family planning use. SEMA Reproductive Health demonstrates the power of partnerships between national and global actors to make rights-based family planning a reality for even more women.”

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