

PMNCH Board Response to the External Evaluation (2009-2013)

October, 2014

I. Introduction

The Board of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH; Partnership) is pleased to have received the report of the external evaluation of the Partnership conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The evaluation report will be available on the PMNCH website (www.pmnch.org).

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the Partnership's overall performance and achievement of its goals and strategic objectives for the period 2009 to 2013. The evaluation focused on four core areas: (1) vision, mission and strategy; (2) governance; (3) operations, monitoring and delivery; and (4) performance and impact. The Board welcomes the very positive conclusions and constructive recommendations, which it has carefully reviewed. The Board also notes, with appreciation, that the report acknowledges the key and widely recognized role PMNCH has played in the area of women's and children's health. The Board recognizes that there are many challenges going forward, and that there are several areas in which operations can be improved and made more efficient. In so doing, the Board notes the importance of remaining flexible to the changing environment within which the Partnership operates, for example related to the recent Ebola crisis that has gravely affected many women and children in the afflicted regions, as well as many of the Partnership's stakeholders.

The remainder of this document presents the Board's response to the evaluation's recommendations, including decisions on next steps and timelines.

2. Board response on the evaluation findings and recommendations

The Board welcomes the overall findings of the external evaluation of PMNCH. In particular, the Board is pleased to note the evaluation's overall conclusion that the results achieved by PMNCH in delivering on its three Strategic Objectives (SO) are particularly impressive given its unique partner-centric model – which includes over 600 partners from seven different constituencies, a large Board (25 members) and only twelve secretariat staff positions. The evaluation has also highlighted a number of operational, managerial and strategic challenges faced by PMNCH, which the Partnership will seek to address through a series of targeted actions, as outlined below.

Vision, mission and strategy: The Board is pleased to note the evaluation's findings that the strategic positioning, strategic objectives and role of the Partnership are valid, appropriate and add value. In particular, the Board acknowledges the following key issues identified: (a) the need to further sharpen and clarify the strategic focus of the Partnership, (b) the need to define the role of PMNCH at the country level; and (c) the need to strengthen strategic and meaningful member engagement in the Partnership's work. The Board will consider these issues in detail in the development of the PMNCH post-2015 strategic framework and in the context of the evolving Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) landscape. In particular, the new strategic framework will lead towards the

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development of a business plan describing the Partnership stakeholders' roles and responsibilities. It will also lead towards an updated performance management system and accountability framework for the Secretariat and the Partnership as a whole. The new strategic framework will also seek to clarify PMNCH's role at the regional and country level, in alignment with a tailored partner engagement strategy.

Governance: As identified by the evaluation, the importance of the diversity of the Board is acknowledged, as well as the successful leveraging of Board meetings for advocacy purposes, and the Partner's Forum as a flagship project. The Board agrees with the evaluation recommendations to review the composition of the Board and its decision-making processes, including a review of the Board committees, and the Executive Committee in particular. The Board also acknowledges the advantages of the WHO hosting arrangement, although recognizes the need to periodically review this and notes that WHO is also reviewing the hosting arrangements of partnerships more generally.

Operations, monitoring and delivery: The Board supports the evaluation findings that the Secretariat is motivated to deliver a high quality service, that the leadership and advocacy efforts of the previous and current Executive Director (ED) are positively regarded and that as a result of its efforts the Secretariat has been effective in increasing the Partnership's funding. The Board would, however, like to note that this evaluation is concerned with PMNCH as a partnership and not just the Secretariat; this is a point that needs to be stressed going forward. All partners share in the success and strengths, as well as have a responsibility for the weaknesses and challenges of the Partnership. In relation to the identified issues with work planning, PMNCH will endeavor to ensure these processes are strengthened and the Secretariat has sufficient staff capacity to develop and fulfill the post-2015 strategic framework. PMNCH will also develop a performance management system to more adequately monitor the results achieved by Partners and the Secretariat, as well as to hold all stakeholders accountable for the PMNCH initiatives in which they are respectively involved.

Performance and impact: The Board is pleased to note the evaluation's findings that a key added value of PMNCH for Partners comes from their ability to access knowledge and information through the Partnership (related to SO1); the Partnership has been successful in the area of global advocacy which has contributed to securing financial commitments (related to SO2); and PMNCH's role in tracking commitments made to the Global Strategy and producing its annual accountability reports constitutes a pillar of the iERG's report on commitments to the UNSG (related to SO3). In response to the issues raised in the evaluation, but subject to the nature of the new strategic framework, PMNCH will consider continuing its work towards being a 'one stop shop' for RMNCH knowledge and will seek to make such information more easily accessible to Partners, and develop a mechanism to review its use. The Board acknowledges the recommendation to review and decide on PMNCH's future relationship with the RMNCH Steering Committee and Trust Fund, and emphasizes the need to stay engaged in these discussions given the rapid pace of evolution within the RMNCH architecture. The Board will also review PMNCH's role and value-add in tracking accountabilities to RMNCH, including the role in analyzing commitments to the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, as part of the post-2015 strategic framework development process.

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3. Board Response to the Evaluation Recommendations

The following table provides a summary of all of the report's recommendations. The consultants' recommendations are in the left hand side of the table, with the Board's response and the agreed timeline for the implementation of each recommendation on the right hand side. A summary of the implementation schedule is then provided in a Gantt chart after this table.

| Consultant recommendations | PMNCH Board response and agreed timelines |
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| Evaluation area I: Vision, Mission and Strategy | |
| General feedback: PMNCH is pleased to note the evaluation's findings that the strategic positioning, strategic objectives and role of the Partnership are valid, appropriate and add value. Issues with the clarity of strategic focus, country engagement and strategic membership engagement are noted, and specific actions to address these are provided below. | |
| PMNCH board to define their role in the context of an evolving RMNCH landscape prior to the new Strategic Framework. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board will organize a strategy retreat where, among other issues, discussions will consider the evolving RMNCH landscape and the Partnership's role in the efforts to harmonize and simplify the global RMNCH architecture in the post-2015 era. Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate discussions: October 2014 Board retreat discussions: December 2014 Ongoing review of Partnership's role in RMNCH landscape: December 2015 |
| The board to clarify the role of PMNCH's regional and country engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature and extent of country and regional engagement will be core a considerations in the development of the PMNCH post-2015 strategic framework. It is expected that the strategic framework will outline the most suitable approaches for PMNCH to contribute to the alignment of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, whilst ensuring that they are accountable for their actions. Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate discussions: October 2014 High level guidelines included in strategic framework: April 2015 Implement strategic framework: January 2016 |
| The board to adopt a business plan to ensure that the secretariat works towards implementing the 2016-2020 strategic targets. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PMNCH Board, supported by the Secretariat, will oversee the development of the Partnership's post-2015 strategic framework, which will include a business plan that, among other things: (i) clearly states the objectives of the Partnership; (ii) describes the agreed roles and responsibilities of the Partnership stakeholders; (iii) sets out the Partnership's expected budget; (iv) puts in place suitable mechanisms for effective performance management and results monitoring; etc. Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate discussions: January 2015 Finalize business plan: April 2015 Review and update: April to December 2015 Implement business plan: January 2016 |

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| Consultant recommendations | PMNCH Board response and agreed timelines |
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| PMNCH secretariat to prepare and board to approve a performance and accountability framework for the PMNCH secretariat and its partners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PMNCH post-2015 strategic framework will include a business plan and performance management system for the Partnership. This will include specific measures to ensure all stakeholders are held accountable for their commitments and results as related to the work of the Partnership. • Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiate development of performance management system once business plan is finalized: April 2015 ○ Finalize performance management system: December 2015 ○ Implement performance management system: January 2016 |
| The secretariat to prepare and board to approve a tailored partner engagement strategy and approach. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Secretariat will develop a partner engagement strategy and approach to strengthen the depth and breadth of the membership base, with a particular focus on the level of engagement of members from a range of constituencies, including partner countries. • Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiate development of partner engagement strategy: June 2015 ○ Finalize partner engagement strategy: December 2015 ○ Implement under new strategic framework: January 2016 |
| Evaluation area 2: Governance General feedback: As identified by the evaluation, PMNCH acknowledges the importance of the rich diversity of the Board, the successful leveraging of Board meetings for advocacy purposes, and the Partner's Forum as a flagship project. PMNCH also acknowledges the advantages of the WHO hosting arrangement, although recognizes the need to periodically review this. WHO is also reviewing hosting arrangements of partnerships. Approaches to deal with the identified challenges of strategic direction by the Board and leveraging the Executive Committee are discussed below. | |
| The board should revisit its own composition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board's composition will ultimately reflect the functional needs of the Partnership as it works towards fulfilling the objectives stated in its eventual post-2015 strategic framework and business plan. Following any revisions to the Board's decision-making processes and/ or committee functions (see below), the Board will commission studies, possibly including an independent review, on the most appropriate Board composition to fulfill its mandate and ensure adequate representation across the seven constituencies. • Any subsequent changes to the structure of the Board will be reflected in the Board Manual (see below). • This process will be conducted alongside the development of a partner engagement strategy and approach, and any resulting actions will be coordinated to ensure consistency. • Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiate discussions on Board composition: May 2015 ○ Finalize proposal to be presented at Board meeting: November 2015 ○ Board approval of any revised structure, if relevant: December 2015 ○ Board meets with any new structure (if relevant): March 2016 |

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| Consultant recommendations | PMNCH Board response and agreed timelines |
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| The board should revisit its decision-making processes, including the appropriate level of seniority and skills of board and Committee members. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board will assess whether its decision-making processes and structures are appropriate, in light of the post-2015 strategic framework and related business plan. This will include a review of the Board's committees, including their function and composition. Timeline for implementation: This will be considered alongside any revisions to the Board composition between May and December 2015. |
| The board should revisit the appropriateness and number of board committees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the context of the work on the post-2015 strategic framework and related business plan, the Board will review the appropriateness and number of committees to ensure the Board continues to be furnished with appropriate evidence-based information for decision making. Timeline for implementation: This will be considered alongside any revisions to the Board composition between May and December 2015. |
| The board should revisit the need for including external independent board members to increase the effectiveness of governing bodies and provide oversight and guidance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the outcome of the studies reviewing the Board composition (see above), the Board will consider the need for including external independent Board members. Timeline for implementation (if action approved by Board): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions at Board meeting: March 2016 Decision actioned at following Board meeting (if appropriate): September 2016 |
| The board should revisit the possibility of increasing the role of the PMNCH board in the performance evaluation of the ED. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the hosting agreement, the ED is a WHO staff member and reports to the Assistant Director General (ADG). Performance of the ED is evaluated through the WHO official performance evaluation system. Within WHO rules and regulations, the Board may provide inputs directly to the ADG at the beginning and end of each performance appraisal period. Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate discussion with WHO Legal to agree upon a process to increase the Board's role in evaluating the performance of the ED: December 2014 Revision of process to evaluate the performance of the ED: January 2015 Implement process: Ongoing |
| The board should revisit the possibility of developing manuals for the committees and PMNCH working groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board will develop relevant manuals to align with the objectives set out in the post-2015 strategic framework. Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate development of Board manuals: January 2016 Finalize Board manuals: March 2016 Board approval of updated Board manuals: March 2016 |
| The board to assess the WHO hosting arrangements (including the hosting of initiatives, such as Countdown and IVG). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board will continue to keep the WHO hosting arrangement under review. It will do so by drawing on the ongoing partnership hosting review processes at WHO, consultations with Countdown to 2015 and the IVG, and on the emerging post-2015 strategic framework. Timeline for implementation: Ongoing |

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Evaluation area 3: Operations, Monitoring and Delivery

General feedback: PMNCH is pleased to note the evaluation's findings that the Secretariat is motivated to deliver a high quality service, the leadership and advocacy efforts of the previous and current ED are positively regarded and that as a result of its efforts the Secretariat has been effective in increasing its funding. However, the PMNCH Board would like to note that this evaluation is concerned with PMNCH as a partnership and not just the Secretariat. Therefore, all partners share in the success and strengths as well as having a responsibility for the weaknesses and challenges. Issues with limited partner engagement, work planning, Secretariat operating capacity and monitoring of results are noted, and specific actions to address these are provided below.

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| <p>The secretariat to professionalize its work planning processes and strengthen its work plans for greater accountability.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PMNCH Secretariat, working with the Executive Committee and the Board, has in place established annual work planning processes which provide annual guidance and budgets for the work of the entire Partnership. These processes will continue to be reviewed and strengthened, particularly in line with the work on the post-2015 strategic framework, the overall Partnership business plan to be developed for the duration of the new strategic framework (annual workplans may still continue to be relevant in this overall context), and the performance management system. • The Board acknowledges the need for annual workplans to be realistic in terms of activities, costs and results, and in the delivery of strategic and technical, as well as the management and resource mobilization aspects of PMNCH's activities. • The Board also acknowledges the value of opportunistic engagement of the Partnership in instigating and/ or supporting important aspects of the RMNCH continuum of care and in response to the changing environment within which the Partnership operates. At the same time, there needs to be a transparent policy which will govern the incorporation of unplanned activities into annual workplans, including information about resourcing and other implications. • Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiate 2015 workplan development: October 2014 ○ Finalize 2015 workplan: January 2015 ○ Initiate 2016 workplan development: May 2015 ○ Finalize 2016 workplan: December 2015 |
| <p>The board to consider an independent Secretariat HR review to ensure appropriate capacity.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board will conduct a review of the Secretariat's capacity and develop an HR plan detailing specific staffing needs based on the post-2015 strategic framework and business plan. • In the meantime, the Board recognizes the ongoing Secretariat staffing constraints raised by the evaluation, particularly with regards to governance and membership management. It asks the Secretariat to act as soon as possible to strengthen this area of work. • The Board also notes a few corrections in staffing levels in Figure 14, page 38. The positions should be (i) Executive Officer/ Secretary to ED (P2) Temporary; (ii) Economics Senior Technical Officer (P4) Temporary; and (iii) Communications Technical Officer (P2) Temporary. • Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthen governance and membership management: December 2014 ○ Initiate HR review: June 2015 ○ Finalize HR plan: December 2015 ○ Implement HR plan: January 2016 |

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| <p>The secretariat to define the appropriate monitoring framework to oversee the results achieved by the secretariat and the partners.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As noted above, PMNCH will develop a business plan and performance management system for the period of the new post-2015 strategic framework. This will have an objective to measure the results achieved by the Secretariat and Partners in conducting work plan activities. Timeline for implementation: This will be considered alongside the development of a business plan and performance management system between January and April 2015, and implemented in January 2016. |
| <p>The secretariat establishes a reporting system and clear reporting guidelines to hold partners accountable when they are engaged in PMNCH initiatives.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alongside the development of a business plan and performance management system, the Secretariat will develop specific measures, including reporting guidelines, to ensure Partners are able to report back on their actions and results, as relating to their commitments and work under the auspices of the Partnership. Timeline for implementation: This will be considered alongside the development of a business plan and performance management system between January and April 2015, and implemented in January 2016. |
| <p>Evaluation area 4: Performance and impact</p> | |
| <p>General feedback: PMNCH is pleased to note the evaluation's findings that a key added value of PMNCH for Partners comes from their ability to access knowledge and information through the partnership (SO1); that the Partnership has been successful in the area of global advocacy which has contributed to securing financial commitments (SO2); and that PMNCH's role in tracking commitments made to the Global Strategy and producing its annual accountability reports constitutes a pillar of the iERG's report on commitments to the UNSG (SO3). Issues with the actual use of PMNCH's knowledge tools, the relationship with the RMNCH Trust Fund and the added value of tracking accountabilities are noted, and specific actions to address these are provided below.</p> | |
| <p>The secretariat to define a mechanism to review the use of its knowledge tools and summaries and for the board to regularly assess their impact.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions on the appropriateness of developing knowledge tools and summaries will depend on the outcome of the strategic framework and business plan. Timeline for implementation (subject to inclusion in the post-2015 strategic framework): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate mechanism to review tools: January 2016 Finalize evaluation and implementation of new tools: June 2016 |
| <p>The board to review and decide on its future relationship with the RMNCH Steering Committee and Trust Fund.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the rapid pace of evolution within the RMNCH architecture, including PMNCH's involvement in discussions on the Global Financing Facility (GFF), it will be important for PMNCH to stay actively engaged in these processes. The Board will review the Partnership's engagement with ongoing processes, in light of the development associated with the GFF. Timeline for implementation: PMNCH's role and the timeline for PMNCH's engagement will be dependent on the development of the GFF. |
| <p>The board to reconsider the role of PMNCH in tracking accountabilities to RMNCH focusing on the added value and role that PMNCH can provide.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the post-2015 strategic framework development process, the Board will review PMNCH's role and value-add in tracking accountabilities to RMNCH, including the role in analyzing the progress of implementing commitments to the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health and commitments to any post-2015 development agenda. Timeline for implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and discuss PMNCH's role in tracking accountability: December 2014 Subject to the finalization of the post-2015 strategic framework, initiate process to define approach: June 2015 Finalize approach: December 2015 |

A summary of the implementation schedule is presented in the Gantt chart below.

Figure 1: Implementation schedule for recommendations

