

Secretariat Hosted by the World Health Organization and Board Chaired by Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, Former Prime Minister of New Zealand

Final Appraisal of the PMNCH External Evaluation Report

1. Background and Introduction

The PMNCH External Evaluation was overseen by the External Evaluation Reference Group (EERG) reporting to the PMNCH Executive Committee. The EERG members are listed below, and the group was chaired by Dr. Flavia Bustreo, Chair of the Board's Governance and Nominations Committee. The mandate of the EERG included insuring that the external evaluation was delivered through a rigorous and fair process and that its recommendations were objective, of high quality, and evidence based. The EERG members were selected for their in-depth knowledge of the Partnership, their history of involvement, and their professional expertise in evaluation. Such members met eight times over the course of this evaluation, while the Evaluation TORs were rolled out via the WHO procurement process.

Given that the EERG found value in methods proposed by two unrelated firms, the selected entity carrying out the external evaluation was a coalition comprising CEPA and HERA. It is important to note that the EERG's oversight is complete once revisions to this Appraisal Report have been incorporated following the Strategy Retreat and will be disbanded.

With respect to conducting this Appraisal itself, the EERG members scored five elements of the final report covering: evaluation questions used, appropriateness of methods, validity of findings, substantiation of recommendations, and feasibility of implementing recommendations. Scores, together with additional insights and observations, were debated by the EERG and consensus developed, while any points of disagreement were noted. The Appraisal, and the evaluation itself, have emphasized forward planning and applying findings and recommendations to the new strategy.

2. Current Status

Despite two minor delays (in December and January) the evaluation has been completed, and the final report and appendices have been distributed across the Partnership and posted to the Partnership's website. The main findings and recommendations were presented to the PMNCH Strategy Retreat on February 17, 2020 by the evaluation team leader.

3. Overall Conclusion

The external evaluation final report is detailed and comprehensive, and contains adequate descriptions of background, terms of reference, methods used, as well as rationale applied to deal with challenges experienced during the core evaluation phase. The structure of the report – which clusters key findings and recommendations under four thematic topic areas – helps to lend both clarity and practicality. The final report provides a large number of credible findings and insights that will be valuable during the development of PMNCH's new Strategy 2021 – 25.

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The EERG was pleased with the responsiveness of the evaluation team and the level of attention they accorded detailed comments on the draft report in the final writing. However, the report does not provide a prioritization of key findings and recommendations. The report leaves unanswered questions concerning what the critical and necessary next steps should be to move the Partnership into a next phase. A sense of what the highest priorities are, what might be tackled first, what can be set aside until resources materialize, is missing. Further, the report raises, but does not resolve, questions surrounding *how* to implement course corrections and desirable change.

4. Strengths

A number of strengths were attributed to the final report. As set out in the TORs, the evaluation is forward facing in that it spends effort translating findings into recommendations that are relevant to PMNCH's new strategy development. On the whole, the design and methods reflect an understanding of PMNCH's formation and history of contribution to the field, as well as how the Partnership continues to build on its strengths and respond to new challenges.

Moreover, although the mix of methods used points to an evaluation approach that is generally fit for purpose, especially due to an emphasis on triangulation and the rating of robustness of evidence, findings are largely driven by perceptions and opinions. This can be considered both a strength and a weakness.

Evaluation questions, as set out in the TORs and inception report, are generally well covered by the evaluation. Grouping the evaluation questions under four main topics made for sensible organization of the data collected and report writing. Furthermore, Linkages across key findings, supporting evidence and recommendations are fairly clear. This will facilitate discussion around important topics. Whereas the draft report showed linkages explicitly across findings, conclusions and recommendations this horizontal structure was removed in the final writing.

Finally, the report provides a wealth of descriptive information on activities conducted by partners and Secretariat and serves to remind members who may be less engaged of the quality and diversity of products and events undertaken. It is heavily referenced reflecting a very large number of documents reviewed in-depth and in detail. Full referencing of this large body of material will assist readers in locating additional or supplementary documentation.

5. Limitations

A number of limitations of the report were also highlighted by the EERG. First, the executive summary comprises text excerpted from the main report without further synthesis. Key findings are not presented – or aligned – with recommendations and the latter are not prioritized. Hence, the summary is not articulated well for a CEO-level readership.

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Regarding methods used, there are instances where questions in the interview guide (as reflected in an Appendix) either do not align with an evaluation question or appear to lean towards obtaining a specific response. This, for example, was reflected in the use of the terms transparent and transparency. Moreover, it is disappointing that a main recommendation is to conduct a landscape review “urgently and in parallel with” the preparation of the new strategy. The planned SWOT analysis did not yield expected insights, which in turn, contributed to an over-reliance on opinion and perception.

Furthermore, there is a lack of benchmarking which means that some findings are not adequately substantiated and may not garner the attention they would deserve. Importantly, there are instances where results are not assessed against the measurable objectives set out in the Business Plan. Even though two types of social network analysis were conducted, the contribution of this method appears to be minimal in terms of deriving new insights or key findings. Neither does the SNA help to draw linkages across key findings and recommendations

Additionally, some of the key findings are presented in terms of concepts that are not defined and for which there is no established theoretical framework to determine the best way PMNCH would measure them. Examples include the use of concepts of ‘added value’, and ‘unfinished business’. This is supported by the fact that the strategic assets built by PMNCH -- civil society engagement, adolescent constituency finding their voice, creation of a highly-effective advocacy platform – could have been more clearly set out in the report, and connections explored. It is left to the reader to discern the unique value of these assets and how they can be leveraged going forward.

Lastly, the final report does not look concretely at what the Partnership might become 5-10 years from now that the strategy group might consider in their upcoming work. Insights into how to move forward are largely missing.

Members of the EERG

- Flavia Bustreo (Chair)
- Anshu Banerjee
- Kaosar Afsana
- Carles Pericas Escalé
- Dorothy Shaw
- Kate Somers
- Mesfin Teklu Tessema
- Supported by: S. Rabeneck (Consultant)