



Women's,
Children's and
Adolescents'
Health

20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
T: +41 22 791 259 Fax: +41 22 791 5854
E: pmnch@who.int
www.pmnch.org

Draft

PMNCH AFRICA REGIONAL ADVOCACY STRATEGY (2023 and 2024)

1. INTRODUCTION

PMNCH brings together over 1,400 partner organizations across 10 constituencies working collaboratively to deliver the shared vision of a world in which every woman, child and adolescent is able to realize their right to health and well-being, leaving no one behind. The collaborative efforts of PMNCH partners towards achievement of Sustainable Development targets relating to women children and adolescent health outcomes are currently coordinated by the [2021-2025 PMNCH Strategy](#). The strategy centers around three inter-linked objectives; further driving down preventable maternal, newborn deaths and stillbirths; upholding and ensuring provision of essential sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services and advancing the health and wellbeing of adolescents. These efforts have been severely challenged by the recent combined, mutually reinforcing impacts of the 4Cs (COVID-19; climate change, conflict and economic related crises). SDG targets relating to women, children and adolescents health are now at risk of not being attained.

In response, in 2022 PMNCH developed a revised approach to its commitment mobilization and follow up efforts. The revised approach aims to ensure alignment across all PMNCH constituencies and structures through Collaborative Advocacy Action Plans (CAAPs) as PMNCH accelerates its work towards improving WCAH commitments and outcomes in 30 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), as proposed in its [Results Framework](#) for 2021 – 2025. Core to the PMNCH Results Framework and its revised approach is recognition that, large inequities persist in health coverage and outcomes, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa which accounted for around 70% of maternal deaths (202 000) in 2020¹. As result, the need to make progress in Africa is central to each of the PMNCH flagship initiatives and strategic thrusts including the 1.8 bn campaign, the Global Leaders Network (GLN), the Parliamentary Engagement Strategy and others. This document identifies opportunities for PMNCH to deepen its advocacy in the Africa region in the context of these initiatives and areas of focus.

2. THE AFRICA REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Africa region bears a high burden of *maternal, newborn and child mortality*, with an exceptionally high maternal mortality rate of 545 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2022 and an Under-5 mortality rate of 37 per 1,000 live births in 2020.² The persistently high mortality rates are partly, driven by high fertility rates, HIV prevalence and adolescent pregnancies. The region is unlikely to realize any of its WCAH-related SDG targets without concerted focus on providing essential SRHR services.

The region also characterized by *the youngest population in the world*,³ with 70% of the population being under the age of 30 years.⁴ Any efforts to address the region's challenges should therefore place the concerns of adolescents at the center. This demographic challenge occurs in the context of high inequality,

¹ [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality#:~:text=Sub%2DSaharan%20Africa%20and%20Southern,16%25%20\(47%20000\).](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality#:~:text=Sub%2DSaharan%20Africa%20and%20Southern,16%25%20(47%20000).)

² <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/372247/9789240069251-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/news/young-people%E2%80%99s-potential-key-africa%E2%80%99s-sustainable-development>



of poor development markers and high poverty rates, persistent weak health systems and inadequate domestic financing to secure the required improvements. Governance challenges, conflict, humanitarian and climate-related crises have the potential to exacerbate pre-existing forms of discriminations and inequalities – or to create new ones, especially for women, girls and children who are often among the most vulnerable.

Under the leadership of the AU, the region has progressively established *a relatively enabling policy framework on WCAH*. In addition to policy frameworks, the AU has recently established a number of initiatives by Heads of State to improve WCAH outcomes. These political advocacy efforts by leaders are an important opportunity for CSOs. However, there are persistent gaps at the level of implementation and accountability. This points to the opportunity for advocacy to ensure these regional commitments are reflected at national levels or to ensure implementation of commitments at these national levels. The [Addis Ababa Declaration on Population Development in Africa Beyond 2014](#) provides CSOs with the platform to push for accountability for specific actions such as financing.

3. STRATEGIC FOCUS

In this context, the theory of change for the Africa Region Advocacy Strategy is that working in support of country partners, PMNCH can leverage its established value addition⁵ to catalyze positive intermediate WCAH outcomes in countries within the region. This will happen if PMNCH collaborates with partners, including adolescent and youth-led organizations, strategically positioned in relation to the African Union (AU) and governments in priority countries⁶ to capitalize on current momentum on WCAH within the region to deepen accountability for existing WCAH commitments.⁷

Towards these longer-term outcomes and the fulfillment of its 2021-2025 strategy, the Africa Region Advocacy Strategy seeks to contribute to (i) to driving down preventable maternal, newborn and child morbidity and mortality in the region (ii) upholding essential SRHR interventions and ensuring continuous progress in financing and equitable access to comprehensive SRHR packages (iii) *emphasizing and advancing* the health and wellbeing of adolescents. In line with the [Adolescent Well-Being Framework](#) and related regional policies.

PMNCH will pursue these objectives through several initiatives. Key among these will be; lead partners coordinating CAAP⁸ processes at country level; engaging top-level political leaders through the GLN to drive political will for action; engaging parliamentarians at country and regional levels to strengthen accountability platforms and rolling out digital advocacy hubs to facilitate collaborative efforts of partners in the context of multistakeholder platforms (MSPs).

4. ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

4.1 Knowledge Synthesis

PMNCH will avail its extensive knowledge tools and products for adoption, adaptation and use by partners in the region. PMNCH will help to close the evidence-to-policy gap by linking the partners more effectively

⁵ knowledge synthesis, partner engagement, and campaigns and outreach

⁶ periodically articulated based on ongoing PMNCH initiatives

⁷ by improving policies, allocating more financial resources, and strengthening quality and coverage of service delivery and, where required, to securing additional or new commitments especially related to Adolescent wellbeing

⁸ Collaborative Advocacy Action Plan



to global policy processes and platforms that have a bearing on regional and national WCAH efforts. In the context of CAAPs, PMNCH will support partners, including academic and research constituencies, to undertake scoping reviews of WCAH commitments, providing a ready online index of existing national commitments for regional follow-up. Entry points include the [CARMMA Plus](#) initiative⁹; the [Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index tool](#)¹⁰ and the [Continental Results Framework on Women Peace and Security and a Convention on Violence Against Women](#). PMNCH will support dissemination of these regionally produced tools and complement with global tools such as the accountability portal, commitment compendium, and knowledge briefs on key issues, such as SRHR in UHC, climate change and WCAH, and financing and investment for WCAH.

Envisaged results will include:

- national evidence translated and synthesized for country and regional action including a focus on adolescent wellbeing for which there is a particular knowledge gap
- improved use by partners of PMNCH knowledge resources towards strengthened advocacy on WCAH
- new opportunities created for cross-country learning and solidarity on accountability for WCAH within the region, such as the creation of a cross-CAAP Digital Advocacy Hub for shared learning and experiences in the Africa region.

4.2 Partner engagement

PMNCH will strengthen (as required) and leverage WCAH-facing MSPs where these exist or promote their establishment to use existing commitments and monitoring processes to highlight delivery gaps, catalyze new commitments and amplify calls for more concerted action and investment on WCAH in line with country plans. As entry points, PMNCH will prioritize collaboration with partners, including adolescent and youth-led organizations, with strong relationships with regional and sub-regional social, economic and development organizations, including those with close links to the AU as the principal political platform in the region. This will include taking advantage of key AU moments for strategic engagement with regional structures such as the Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (for SRHR and gender equality) as well as the Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Department (on broader WCAH outcomes). By leveraging the GLN, PMNCH will also work with African leaders with visibility on WCAH. In working closely with the AU, PMNCH will seek to support African leaders to bring greater visibility of WCAH issues within existing political agendas. The GLN, for example, can support the AU's policy agenda by bringing WCAH evidence and messaging to attention at the highest level.

Regarding parliamentarians, PMNCH can leverage its partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to establish regional or sub-regional parliamentary hearings (based on the model of annual parliamentary hearings at the UN) to push for visibility of WCAH in country UHC plans and to build momentum on implementing commitments. PMNCH can also leverage relationships of its various constituency groups with parliamentary organizations at country and regional levels to access and strengthen the capacity of these parliamentary organizations on WCAH through increased access to knowledge, advocacy and accountability resources.

⁹ includes a more pronounced focus on partnerships and accountability

¹⁰ [Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index: A COVID-19 Response and Recovery Monitoring and Implementation Tool](#)



Envisaged results will include:

- WCAH related commitments in the region followed up through collaborative partner advocacy
- additional WCAH-related commitments mobilized through collaborative advocacy efforts
- the AU's policy and financing processes supported with evidence-based information and messaging through PMNCH partners
- capacity among PMNCH partners strengthened to advocate with regional organization and country governments for implementation of WCAH commitments
- renewed momentum on implementation of key regional WCAH commitments through partner efforts

4.3 Campaigns and outreach

PMNCH has established its *convening power* at global levels. This can now be applied in the Africa region through campaigns and events to increase the visibility of WCAH issues, foster collaboration across communities of practice and to ensure more uptake of and adherence to established global standards. Campaigns will mobilize and amplify voices of affected communities during selected processes and moments to highlight the gap between promises and demand deeper action. For instance, through regional analysis of [What Young People Want](#) results, PMNCH may collaboratively develop a regional advocacy plan to highlight the concerns of young people in the region. Campaigns will make innovative use of media, digital platforms and technologies for visibility of WCAH. PMNCH will explore the possibility of collaboratively establishing a Digital Advocacy Hub for partners collaborating on WCAH in the region.

PMNCH will leverage key AU moments as entry points, including the Day of the African Child (16th June), African Women's Day (31st July) and Africa Youth Day (1st November). On those occasions, PMNCH will take advantage of several synergies with the region such as the thrust by African Heads of States to create momentum on violence against women; the AU effort to monitor implementation of WCAH commitments through several and the ongoing AU initiative to pilot a domestic health financing tracker that will enable AU Member States to progress of resource allocation and key reforms towards increased domestic health financing. PMNCH will forge strategic collaborations with selected AU Envoys, High Representatives, Special Representatives and Panel of the Wise members to raise the visibility of campaigns among AU audiences.

Envisaged results will include:

- new WCAH champions engaged
- number of supportive statements by political leaders
- number of engagements with political leaders
- number of events organized/supported
- number of media outreaches

5. APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Africa Region Advocacy Strategy will be an 'all PMNCH' collaborative effort under the leadership of the Partner Engagement in Countries and the Strategic Advocacy committees. The strategy will be integrated into the various PMNCH initiatives referenced in this document and will therefore draw on the facilitation of all PMNCH Secretariat members.