



Women's,
Children's and
Adolescents'
Health

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PMNCH Executive Committee Meeting

Virtual meeting: 14 June 2021, 14:00 to 16:00 CET (120 min)

Document Title: EC-07-2021; 04g, Summit on Adolescents

Summary:

The work on adolescent well-being began with leadership of young people, UN agencies, academia, civil society and PMNCH when a [Call to Action for Adolescents](#) was issued by PMNCH Board, Chair Rt Hon. Helen Clark. The Call to Action highlights the need to prioritize investments in adolescents in country policies and programmes. Today, there are more than 1.2 billion aged between 10-19 years, and more than half of the world's population is under the age of 30, with 90% of them living in low- and middle-income countries. These numbers show an urgent need for multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral coordination to address adolescents' needs. In March 2021, 30 youth Leaders, Heads of States, Ministers of Health and Finance, and Heads of UN agencies expressed support and solidarity for this initiative in an [open letter to the BMJ](#).

[The Call to Action](#) calls for a Summit on Adolescents in 2023 for garnering political and financial commitments. The Summit will serve as an ambitious commitment-making milestone for policy shifts, programme re-design and enhanced financial investments for what we call a second generation of adolescent programmes and services. Commitments made by national leadership at the Summit will reinforce political advocacy efforts for ring-fenced financing, policy shifts and social accountability mechanisms at the country level for adolescent well-being.

Given the magnitude, scope and level of partner engagement required in planning and successful execution of this Summit, work will need to commence early including specific fundraising for the event. The note below contains background, pathways leading to the Summit, two different formats/scenarios for the Summit in 2023 and, it also makes a case for merging the Summit with the PMNCH Partners' Forum, which is also planned for 2023.

Actions Required:

The EC is requested to approve:

- Starting the planning process for the Summit on Adolescents in 2023.
- Merging the Summit with the planned PMNCH Partners' Forum, noting that both are planned for 2023 and the significant synergies in terms of content and messaging, practicalities, and costs.
- Development and presentation by the Secretariat of the following to the EC at its meeting in December 2021:
 - a full Concept Note for the Summit including a workplan plan and budget; and
 - a resource mobilization plan with guidance from the newly established Standing Committees.



Concept Note: Global Summit on Adolescents 2023 Adolescent Well-being: An Advocacy Initiative

1. Background

The PMNCH Executive Committee at its meeting on 24th February 2021, directed the PMNCH Secretariat to provide the EC for its reflection and decision “a note that sets out considerations for potentially having the PMNCH 2023 Partners’ Forum be the host for the Summit on Adolescents, as both are planned to take place in the same year”. This concept note on the proposed Summit on Adolescents seeks to address this request.

The [PMNCH 2021-2025 Strategy](#) encompasses three priority areas that need urgent attention if the SDGs are to be achieved, these include: (i) Maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH); (ii) Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); and (iii) Adolescent health and well-being (AHWB). The new strategy also identifies advocacy as a PMNCH primary function supported by knowledge synthesis, campaigns & outreach, accountability and partner engagement at country, regional and global levels. In advocating for adolescents as a priority area, PMNCH will contribute to adolescent-specific policies, financing and service outcomes as articulated in its Theory of Change and Results Framework

The ‘Adolescent Well-being Initiative’ has been developed in the context of the PMNCH’s new strategy and is driven by its multi-pronged approach of knowledge synthesis and curation, political mobilization, partners engagement, and capacity building in support of the [Call to Action for Adolescents](#).

Rational for an Initiative and Global Summit on Adolescents

Evidence confirms that a thriving adolescent population fuels economic growth by contributing to increased productivity and lower health expenditures (e.g. fewer juvenile offenders, less need for social support), thereby reducing intergenerational inequities. Far too many of today’s 1.2 billion adolescents (10-19 years) are at risk of failing to reach their full potential. The second decade of life is often fraught with challenges that impede adolescents from becoming educated, healthy, informed, skilled and empowered as fully active citizens.

Furthermore, in 2020, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic presented a massive shock to an already struggling global health system and world economy and curtailing previously achieved progress. For example, adolescents have faced disrupted schooling, weakened social networks and mental health issues, and are more likely than older adults to lose casual and part-time work, suffer financial hardships and to have less access to social protection and unemployment benefits¹.

We, as a community, have paid insufficient attention to the multidimensional and intersectional nature of adolescent well-being and the importance of the transition to young adulthood. It is too often wrongly

¹ Uniting for adolescents in covid-19 and beyond: BMJ 2021;372:n719 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n719>



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assumed that, as long as adolescents are given a formal education and access to basic healthcare, their well-being will take care of itself. Efforts to support adolescent programmes have tended to be piecemeal, with different sectors focusing exclusively on their own areas of expertise and sometimes losing sight of the overall objective of promoting adolescents' rights and well-being. A multisectoral approach requires collaboration between various sectors, including health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, transportation and social protection.

Meeting adolescents' needs and mitigating the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as school closures and social isolation, requires sustained investment in the high-quality, adolescent-responsive multisectoral interventions espoused by the SDGs to improve adolescent well-being. As such, to achieve the SDG commitments, more must be done to ensure adolescents' right to participate on equal terms with other stakeholders on matters that affect their lives are realised. This is especially important for vulnerable groups (the poor, very young adolescent girls, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, those living in humanitarian settings, etc.) who are most at risk of being left behind.

2. Collaborative Action for a Multi-sectoral Response to Adolescents' Needs: Pathways to the Summit

In response, as one of the world's leading platforms championing adolescent and youth issues, PMNCH is convening an unprecedented coalition of governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations, and academic institutions—all working closely with adolescents and young people—committed to implementing the recommendations of Call to Action for adolescents.

The Call to Action has three key actions:

- Develop strong multisectoral, whole-of-government policy approaches that truly address adolescent health and well-being.
- Strengthen political commitment and funding through a global summit on adolescent well-being.
- Engage adolescents and youth people in all legal, policy, and programme processes that affect their lives.

Most notably the Call to Action calls for an **Adolescent Summit in 2023** for garnering political and financial commitments. The Summit will serve as a platform to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, share evidence and new programming guidance developed based on the Adolescent Well-being Framework and draw upon the recommendations of the [Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Well-being](#)² and the [Governing health futures 2030: Growing up in a digital world](#).

Underpinning this Call to Action is a new agreed definition and conceptual framework for adolescent well-being to inform policies and programming. Published in [Journal of Adolescent Health, this definition and framework](#) has been agreed upon by all stakeholders working on adolescents.

² The second report of the Lancet Commission on Adolescent health and wellbeing is expected to be launched at the PMNCH hosted Adolescent Summit/ Partners' Forum

The new definition and framework emphasize the importance of integrating five interconnected domains in adolescent health and well-being programming: good health and optimum nutrition; connectedness, positive values, and contribution to society; safety and a supportive environment; learning, competence, education, skills, and employability; and agency and resilience. If adopted, this approach will result in concrete policies, integrated programmes, and sustained investments for adolescent well-being at the country level. The Summit will be the first of its kind to bring key actors and sectors together to agree on how to best implement and accelerate these agreed actions and ensure mutual accountability.

The leadup to the summit is characterized by three distinct phases:

Phase 1 - 2020-2022: Consensus building on the Call to Action for Adolescents including on definition and conceptual framework for adolescent well-being

- **Building the Adolescent Well-being Framework**, by summarizing evidence-based, effective policies and programmatic interventions within each of the 5 domains and 27 sub-domains of the framework to update the WHO's [Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents \(AA-HA!\)](#) to accelerate the implementation of adolescent well-being programmes at national and sub-national level.
- **Developing user-friendly evidence packages**, including:
 - a BMJ collection of articles on adolescent well-being and a suite of policy briefs to advance policy advocacy, and engineer policy and programme shifts at national level
 - Socio-economic investment case and evidence on returns on investment from adolescent well-being programmes which will serve as an advocacy and capacity building tool for in-country partners for mobilizing enhanced and sustained financing for adolescent well-being
 - Collaborating with [GAMA](#): Global Action for Measurement of Adolescent Health³ to develop, promote and disseminate indicators to measure adolescent well-being and other monitoring mechanisms.

Phase-2 2021-2023: Youth engagement multi-stakeholder consultations and political engagement to generate commitments and action on recommendations from the Call to Action

- **Galvanizing support for the Call to Action and a global summit on adolescents through UN processes:** mobilizing member states to endorse the Call to Action, issue a joint statement at Commission for Social Development, followed by an inter-governmental declaration on adolescent

³ GAMA provides technical guidance to WHO, UN H6+ agencies and other relevant measurement groups to define a core set of adolescent health indicators, for the purpose of harmonizing efforts around adolescent health measurement and reporting. <https://www.who.int/data/maternal-newborn-child-adolescent/gama/about-gama>

well-being in the UN Third Committee⁴, calling for a high-level special session on adolescents at the UN General Assembly during 2023.

- **Leveraging Global Financing Facility's (GFF) catalytic mechanism** to prioritise the adolescent well-being agenda at country level by advocating for the Adolescent Well-being Framework and its recommendations to be included in the country specific investment cases.
- **Ensuring meaningful adolescent and youth engagement:** mobilizing further endorsements for the Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (MAYE), developing guidance on MAYE and setting up systems to track and report on MAYE to ensure mutual accountability among partners.
- **Building critical capacity of youth-led organizations through** grants and technical support to youth organizations in 11 countries to implement the [Advocating for Change for Adolescents toolkit](#). The grantees will advocate for implementation of the recommendation of the Call to Action for Adolescents, and adoption of the adolescent well-being framework in national programmes through participation in national multi-stakeholder platforms and dialogues (including MSPs Transform Health countries).

Phase 3 -2022-2024: Summit and Impact at Country Level:

- **Uniting voices of adolescents through a series of high-level events, webinars, eSummits, and communities of practice** to gather experiences, drumming up interest and participation in the lead up to actual Summit in 2023. This will include, among others, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Global Youth Meet, the High-Level Political Forum and the United Nations General Assembly).
- **Developing a digital tools suite** to engage stakeholders for effective joint advocacy. It would include but not necessarily be limited to:
 - A resource hub with a focus on adolescents, including digital toolkits and a compendium of evidence and guidance to support country-level action.
 - Facilitation of virtual communities of practice (CoP), formed by a diverse, global community of stakeholders, which will enable innovations that can include a marketplace, discussion forums and communication channels for active engagement with and for youths and adolescents.

⁴ The UN Third Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs is a strategic platform for Member States to present a resolution for an Adolescent Summit in 2023. The Third Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, is chaired by H.E. Katalin Bogyay (Hungary). The UN Third Committee has not reviewed and endorsed a holistic adolescent and youth resolution since 20128. The 76th session will convene in October 2021 with negotiations to follow in November – December 2021. It will serve as a key opportunity to: (a) raise the visibility of adolescent well-being through a joint statement with endorsement from several countries to be presented at the High-Level Political Forum, and b) present an adolescent and youth resolution, including a point calling for a UN Summit on Adolescents.

The PMNCH Digital Action Plan will enable much of this work through a variety of features that afford greater inclusivity and participation as we amplify the voices of adolescents across the world.

- **Digital training resources for in-country implementing partners:**
 - Virtual professional development programmes in adolescent well-being will be developed in partnership with Biomedical Research and Training Institute (BRTI), Harare, Zimbabwe and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), UK. These programmes will be aimed at strengthening country capacities to design, implement and monitor adolescent well-being programmes. These programmes will initially be introduced at the national level in at least ten countries that have endorsed the Call to Action for Adolescents.
 - Evidence-based digital toolkits will be developed for the capacity building of adolescent and youth leaders as well as adolescent and youth serving organizations
- **Implementing an integrated advocacy campaign** delivered through global and local champions, grassroots organizations, constituency representatives and media partners to support policy development, funding improvements, and service delivery, generating stakeholder commitment for adolescent well-being. This campaign will bring together stakeholders identified in the different phases of the leadup to the summit, and will coordinate efforts with existing partners focused on relevant areas such as digital innovation and data, including Transform Health Coalition, YE:T4H and FIA Foundation.

3. Summit Scenarios:

The Summit could be organized in two formats/ scenarios depending on the outcomes of advocacy efforts and political negotiations with Member States on a UN Resolution on Adolescent noting that the last UN resolution on adolescents was in 2012. These scenarios are described below. Irrespective of the scenarios, effort will be made to focus on virtual e-Summits with parallel regional events that echo the messages and cater better for regional time zones and cross-country collaboration.

Scenario A: Special Session at the UNGA followed by a Partners' Forum

This scenario would have two parts including a special session at the UNGA. The session will feature an intergovernmental political declaration which will:

- a) set out political and financial commitments by governments to work with partners and to accelerate the delivery of the SDG agenda for adolescents and achieve the “triple-dividend” by implementing the recommendation of the Call to Action including the adolescent well-being framework
- b) articulate the commitments, actions and support needed for this age group to become the engines of recovery from COVID-19 as they transition into adulthood.



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A -day Partners' Forum/Summit on Adolescents hosted by PMNCH and open to all stakeholders will follow the UNGA special session to foster and register commitments and pledges. It will provide a platform for governments to announce commitments, increased financing and streamlined partnerships including donor commitments and, for sharing new and emerging evidence on multisectoral responses, along with youth power stories on their fight for rights and a better future not only for themselves but for generations to come.

The Summit/ Forum content will be packaged in an exciting multi-media, user friendly format with interactive sessions, telling the story of a generation that faces an unprecedented crisis (Covid-19 and Climate Change to name a few) but has shown resilience and courage and we as a community need to play our part in supporting them.

If the Partners' Forum/Summit is planned for immediately after the UNGA then New York, United States could be the location of the Summit. Together with inclusive communication and engagement opportunities that will leverage digital channels, a combination of face-to-face and virtual options, as well as sequential or parallel summits/events at regional or national levels will be explored to maximize and enhance regional and national participation.

Scenario B: PMNCH Partners' Forum

Historically speaking, PMNCH's Partners' Forums ([New Delhi 2018](#); [Johannesburg 2014](#); [New Delhi 2010](#); [Dar es Salaam 2007](#)), welcomed up to 1,200 partners from around the world to improve knowledge, alignment and accountability to accelerate action on women's, children's and adolescents' health. In the new realities of COVID-19, PMNCH's virtual events have been attended by more than 10,000 people around the world; any future forums would build on lessons from digital collaboration, engagement and communication, enabling greater reach and inclusion of regional and national stakeholders.

The Partners' Forum would leverage new commitments to accelerate the implementation of Adolescent Well-being programmes within a wider UHC/SDG context. Like previous Partners' Forums, PMNCH would be the official host, potentially co-hosting with key partners.

Note: This scenario would come into play only if the UN Resolution and the subsequent special session at the UNGA 2023 does not come through.

4. Merging Partners' Forum with the Global Summit on Adolescents

Furthermore, the objectives of the intended Summit on Adolescents and PMNCH Partners' Forum are very similar in that they aim to bring together multiple stakeholders across sectors, showcasing evidence and galvanizing political and financial support for a specific/agreed theme and agenda.

There are obvious advantages to merging the two events, including strengthening the content alignment and amplification of messages, improving cost efficiencies and avoiding duplications.