

PMNCH Board Response to the External Evaluation

1. Introduction

The Board has carefully reviewed the findings and recommendations from the external evaluation, which was conducted by the consortium of Cambridge Economic Policy Associates (CEPA) and “*hera - right to health & development*”. The report and its appendices were made available to all Board members, and to the entire PMNCH membership, as soon as it was completed (see PMNCH website: www.pmnch.org). In addition, members of the Executive Committee, Strategy Committee and chairs of the Governance & Nomination Committee (GNC), as well as main PMNCH working groups met for an in-person two-day Strategy Retreat in Geneva on 16 to 18 February 2020 to, among other things, discuss the recommendations of this evaluation.

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the Partnership's overall performance and achievement of its goals and strategic objectives. 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 evaluation was overseen by a Board appointed External Evaluation Reference Group (EERG), which oversaw the entire process and reported to the Executive Committee. The EERG oversaw the selection process, development and appraisal of the final report. Details of the EERG and their function are provided in Section 3 below. The EERG's appraisal of the final evaluation report was sent to the EC for its endorsement on 23 April 2020.

Overall, the Board noted, with appreciation, that the report acknowledges the key and widely recognized role PMNCH has played in the area of women's, children's and adolescents' health (WCAH), as well as the continued need to voice key issues pertaining to WCAH and well-being, especially in an increasing complex and crowded global health architecture. The Board also appreciated the many critical areas of improvement pointed out by the evaluators and recognized that there are now several important opportunities for the Partnership to evolve its work and adapt to the changing environment within which it operates. The evaluation findings and recommendations provide an important input into this thinking, and the shaping of the next PMNCH 2021 to 2025 Strategy.

The remainder of this document presents the Board's response to the evaluation's recommendations, including decisions on next steps and timelines. This is an iterative document, which will be updated throughout 2020 in line with the implementation of activities that respond to the evaluation recommendations.

2. Context and interpretation of overall findings

This external evaluation is the third time that PMNCH has commissioned an independent evaluation since its inception in 2005. The Partnership has a history of using these evaluations actively to readjust its course and strategy reboot were necessary. Changes from the previous evaluations include:

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- The PMNCH 2008 evaluation process encouraged PMNCH to focus on financing gaps for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) in the MDG era, thus empowering PMNCH to pursue a successful programme of work that resulted in significant increases in Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) commitments and funding for RMNCH, as well as building consensus around the RMNCH continuum of care.
- The PMNCH 2014 evaluation reflecting the transition between the MDGs and the SDGs - directing PMNCH's focus towards multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approaches at country, regional and global levels in a new and updated Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.
- Now, fully within the SDG era, the 2020 evaluation urges PMNCH to zero in on "the unfinished agenda" of preventable mortality and morbidity: i.e., achieving greater focus for greater results and greater impact.

Reflecting on the external evaluation report, the Board appreciates the importance of the following two overarching findings: (i) PMNCH's vision and mission is still highly relevant and urgent; whilst at the same time (ii) PMNCH needs to address imbalances in its operations (e.g. trying to "do too much with too little"). These are both addressed in turn below.

PMNCH's vision and mission is relevant, valid, and urgent

The evaluation has found that:

- PMNCH's vision and mission to improve the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents remains highly relevant to the SDGs and to the vision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) through Primary Health Care (PHC).
- Public-private consensus-building, alignment and partnership – for instance, through PMNCH's alignment across 10 constituencies – is essential to progress, well-articulated by SDG 17.
- Uniting with one voice is urgent in the current political climate, when hard-fought gains in sexual and reproductive health are under threat, when stillbirths remain a neglected tragedy, when progress in newborn health has stalled, when inequity continues to be a significant problem across the globe, when new challenges are emerging in the context of humanitarian and fragile settings, and when the needs of older children and adolescents are only now coming to be recognized.
- PMNCH offers unique value. With 1,000 partners in 192 countries, PMNCH remains an unparalleled advocacy platform for the continuum of care of women, children and, importantly, adolescents.
- PMNCH offers considerable strengths through its high-level champions and broad convening power. It has an impressive track record of identifying gaps that require dedicated attention and spearheading new initiatives that influence political attention, such as the Every Woman Every Child's Global Strategy (2010 and 2015); Every Newborn Action Plan; GFF Civil Society group; the Adolescent and Youth constituency; the Nurturing Care Framework for ECD, and many others.

PMNCH needs to address imbalances in its operations

The evaluation also identifies urgent issues to be addressed:

- The number of PMNCH members has nearly doubled in size in the SDG era, resulting in the expansion of PMNCH governance structures and engagement management approaches, which are now seen as unwieldy, with shallow partner participation.
- Digitization of PMNCH's operations is at its infancy, and its further development and integration across all PMNCH activities will be critical to fostering an improved, interactive partner engagement experience critical to deliver on the power of partnerships.
- Whilst members' priorities and constituency interests and expectations have expanded significantly, the Partnership's budget and the size of the Secretariat have not, which requires a stricter and more realistic prioritization and focus moving forward.
- Although efforts were put in place to prioritize (e.g. the six EWEC thematic focus areas) – the resulting outputs and deliverables still proved to be too many and insufficiently prioritized leading to a sense that the Partnership was trying to “do too much with too little”, thus stretching the resources too thinly. Consequently, partners have increasingly been reflecting on what PMNCH's identity and value addition needs to be focused on in the current SDG era.
- A series of operational recommendations from the Evaluation can be found in the last part of this document with specific actions that PMNCH has already undertaken and/or will undertake in the context of the development of the PMNCH Strategy 2021-2025.

The way forward for PMNCH

Despite challenges, it is important to see that the Partnership boasts a rich set of assets that can be leveraged and harnessed, ‘stitched’ together in a different and more innovative way to ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of these individual assets. This is therefore an opportunity to reboot and reimagine the Partnership, for greater effectiveness, results and impact

Examples of such assets include:

- Committed and engaged high-level champions, with unparalleled networks and reach, dedicated to a clear focus on women, children, and adolescents at a time when concerted action is needed at national, regional and global levels.
- The role and status of civil society, and the value placed on their contributions, have been elevated by PMNCH, resulting in concrete influence on political declarations and action plans (e.g., UHC Political Declaration, IPU Resolutions, etc.).
- The vibrant adolescent and youth constituency has found a voice through its engagement in the Partnership, and that is now felt at sub-national, national, regional and increasingly at global level.
- The Partnership's track-record and widely-regarded achievements in advocacy have been singled out by the evaluation as holding special promise for work going forward.

What we know

Progress for WCAH requires greater focus in the SDG era:

- A re-imagined, rebuilt PMNCH, fit for the SDG era, will learn from the lessons of history. For instance, when the foot went off the gas for the child survival movement in the 1990s, it was a very expensive lesson. It was not until the early-mid 2000s, with the development of dedicated evidence and advocacy platforms, such as Countdown to 2015 and PMNCH, that we regained focus, momentum, and progress.
- Progress simply does not happen without dedicated leaders, platforms, messaging, and a roadmap, informed by evidence and powered by consensus. Now, in 2020, through the Strategy Retreat and supported by the external evaluation, we have a timely opportunity to re-imagine how to address our unfinished agenda for women, children and adolescents.

3. Appraisal of the PMNCH External Evaluation Report

The PMNCH External Evaluation was overseen by the EERG, which reported to the PMNCH Executive Committee. The EERG members are listed in the box below. The group was chaired by Flavia Bustreo, Fondation Botnar, Chair of the Board's Governance and Nominations Committee and supported by an external consultant.

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. The membership also comprised of a significant representation across PMNCH's constituencies, as well as regional and gender balance. The members met eight times over the course of this evaluation. The bidding and selection of the external evaluators was overseen by the EERG following standard WHO procurement procedures.

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)

In appraising the evaluation report, the EERG considered five aspects of this work, namely: (i) evaluation questions used; (ii) appropriateness of methods; (iii) validity of findings; (iv) substantiation of recommendations; and (v) feasibility of implementing the proposed recommendations.

External Evaluation Reference Group's overall conclusions on the evaluation report

The EERG noted that the external evaluation report was detailed and comprehensive. The structure of the report – which clusters key findings and recommendations under four thematic topic areas – helped to lend both clarity and practicality. It was also noted that the report provided many findings and recommendations that were considered valuable inputs into the ongoing development of PMNCH's new 2021 to 2025 Strategy. The EERG suggested that it was pleased with the responsiveness of the evaluation team

However, the EERG also noted that the report does not provide a prioritization of key findings and recommendations, which was something that was agreed at the start of this process. The report also leaves unanswered questions concerning what the critical and necessary next steps should be to move

the Partnership into the next phase of its work. A sense of what the highest priorities are, what might be tackled first, what can be set aside until resources materialize, was also missing in the report. Furthermore, the report raises, but does not resolve, questions surrounding *how* to implement course corrections and desirable change as the Partnership moves into its next strategy phase.

Further details are provided in the full EERG appraisal, which can be downloaded from PMNCH's website. [Web link to be provided once the Appraisal is accepted by the EC and then published]

4. Board response to the recommendations

The Board values the external evaluation's contributions to its thinking as it develops the Partnership's next five-year Strategy. This external evaluation is one of a number of important inputs, together with other audits, reviews and evaluations that have taken place in 2019. In formulating the Board's response to the external evaluation, the overall approach is as follows:

- (i) **Overall response.** The Partnership's overall and long-term response to the findings from all of the reviews, including the external evaluation, will be reflected in the new PMNCH 2021 to 2025 Strategy (including an updated governance structure).
- (ii) **Publishing the external evaluation.** The external evaluation has been published on PMNCH's website, and members were informed by an email from the PMNCH Board Chair on 30 January 2020. In addition to the evaluation itself, an information letter from the Board Chair was also sent. The section on PMNCH's website dealing with the external evaluation also includes a link to the set of 'Speaking Points' that have been developed and endorsed by the Chair and the Executive Committee to enable and support PMNCH stakeholders to use them as a reference point in responding to questions related to the evaluation. As noted, the evaluation has been discussed at length at the above Strategy Retreat (February 2020) and will be used in the continued consultations of the Strategy development.
- (iii) **Responding to the evaluation itself.** The PMNCH Board's response to the evaluation will be an ongoing process and will include:
 - a. The External Evaluation Reference Group (EERG) Appraisal of the evaluation, as included in this report (Section 3), to be presented and endorsed by the EC at their meeting on 9 April 2020.
 - b. The development of the new 2021 to 2025 Strategy will be guided by the evaluation and its recommendations, with the PMNCH Board, its committees and the Secretariat working closely together to address the recommendations raised, particularly those related to the need to achieve greater focus and prioritization of activities in this future period.
 - c. The Governance and Nominations Committee are in the process of considering in detail governance related recommendations that have emerged from the external evaluation. They have already commenced a process of developing options for governance restructuring, and an external consultant is in the process of being hired to lead on this. The options will be included in the next round of consultations planned to take place in May 2020.

- d. A similar group to the above, but on Country Engagement has been established by the Board and will develop options to our country support, leveraging also on the consultation process for the development of the PMNCH Strategy 2021-2025 currently ongoing. These options will also be included in the next round of consultation planned to take place in May 2020.
- e. Individual PMNCH working groups on Advocacy, Accountability and Evidence and Knowledge are also meeting and continuing to examine the role that PMNCH could or should play in these areas going forward, reflecting on the findings from these reviews, and the external evaluation in particular.

A summary of all the Evaluation report's recommendations is set out in the table below. The table indicate both the evaluators' 18 recommendations (derived from Section 6 of the Evaluation report) and the Board's response for the implementation of each recommendation. It also provides a timeline for implementation, where this is possible. It also indicates if the recommendation has been accepted, partially accepted or rejected. As shown in the table below, 17 of the 18 recommendations have been accepted and one has been partially accepted (Recommendation 2).

PMNCH will update the status of implementation of the recommendations as they unfold over the course of next year, and report back to the governance bodies, as appropriate.

Table 1: Recommendations and Board's responses

	Recommendations		PMNCH Board response and suggested timeline
	Evaluation area I: Focus and prioritise		
1	A landscape analysis of the global institutions and foundations working in WCAH should be conducted to identify areas where Partnership engagement can add maximum value through its unique competencies.	<i>Accepted</i>	An initial landscape analysis has been conducted ahead of the Feb 2020 Strategy Retreat in Geneva, where it was presented. This is starting point to a more detailed analysis that is under consideration, which will input into the Strategy development process that is already underway. <i>Timeline: February to December 2020</i>

	Recommendations		PMNCH Board response and suggested timeline
2	Consider how to increase collaboration and alignment with the UHC2030 Partnership.	Partially accepted	<p>The Board is pleased to note that collaboration with UHC2030 Partnership is already ongoing and a draft joint workplan has already been agreed. The collaboration will start immediately in several areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget advocacy toolkit related work; • Social Participation Handbook related work, especially under advocacy component; • follow up activities around the UHC declaration in New York in 2019, specifically on country accountability; and • Civil Society related work, especially in relation to funding <p>The Strategy Retreat recommended that PMNCH does not merge with 'UHC 2030', but to continue to be supportive of the UHC agenda and the need to ensure that UHC delivers for WCAH and wellbeing.</p> <p>Timeline: Already underway</p>
3	The Partnership should study the implications of focusing on the "unfinished business", particularly in HFS	Accepted	<p>The Strategy Retreat identified the unfinished business and equity to be the focus for the Partnership going forward, with sub-focus on MNCH, SRHR and Adolescents. It was agreed to set aside the existing six EWEC thematic areas. This will be reflected in the new PMNCH strategy.</p> <p>Timeline: Already underway as part of the Strategy development process</p>
4	The Partnership should review its role in country engagement and how the country engagement objectives can be achieved through PMNCH partners.	Accepted	<p>The Strategy Retreat discussed the country engagement strategy. The PMNCH country engagement working group is currently (Q1 / Q2 2020) developing an Options Paper to set out possible approaches that PMNCH may consider in its engagement processes with countries and how these can feed into the new 2021 to 2025 Strategy. These options will be sent out for consultation mid-May and will be finalized by end of June.</p> <p>Timeline: February to December 2020</p>
Evaluation area II: Develop a coherent advocacy and communications platform			
5	Clear statement of the Partnership's mission, goals and objectives.	Accepted	<p>The Strategy Retreat proposed new vision and mission statement, goals and objectives, which are to be reflected in the new Strategy, for consultations among the Partnership as a whole. These are included in the draft Strategy Outline document which has been shared with all of PMNCH's members. This first consultation phase will complete by middle of April 2020 and then the next one, on the full draft, commence from May 2020.</p> <p>Timeline: February to December 2020</p>
6	PMNCH website could be improved to provide a sharper picture of PMNCH's mission and goals.	Accepted	<p>PMNCH is in the process of re-evaluating its overall digital strategy, its membership engagement and its website. Close attention will be paid to developing a digital platform that provides high quality information and resources to partners, while offering interactivity among members.</p> <p>Timeline: March to December 2020</p>

	Recommendations		PMNCH Board response and suggested timeline
7	PMNCH to clearly articulate its specific role in global accountability for the Global Strategy relative to the work of others	Accepted	<p>The Strategy Retreat recommended that PMNCH's main function would be Advocacy, with the other three functions (Analysis, Alignment and Accountability) becoming more underlying and supportive to Advocacy. The Retreat further recommended that accountability products and investments be more directly linked to serve Advocacy objectives. The ongoing consultation for the PMNCH 2021-2025 Strategy development process will be pivotal to inform the role of PMNCH in the broader accountability landscape.</p> <p>Timeline: February to December 2020</p>
8	Invest in communications technology to ensure that its messages reach the widest possible audience.	Accepted	<p>Prior to the start of the external evaluation, PMNCH had already in May 2019 commenced extensive work to develop PMNCH's Digital Strategy and plan for its implementation.</p> <p>Strategy</p> <p>The Digital Strategy sought to respond to two questions, namely how can PMNCH: (i) use digital tools to implement its core functions better; and (ii) more broadly support Partners to harness digital tools to accelerate the impact of their work? In setting out the principles and roadmap to achieving this, the Strategy also called for PMNCH to hire a digital consultant to provide in house leadership in implementing this strategy.</p> <p>Implementation</p> <p>A specialized consultant has been identified and hired in February 2020, and work on operationalizing the Digital Strategy has started. The main deliverables and tasks related to this implementation work are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further develop PMNCH's digital membership system and enhance or modify its built-in features and tools based on needs; • design and develop the PMNCH knowledge synthesis digital platform to be integrated into the current membership system; • design and implement an action plan to roll-out the digitalized membership system to all PMNCH constituencies; • develop regular reports on the utilization of the system; • translation of PMNCH's Digital Strategy into a prioritized set of costed deliverables and activities to support the efforts of cross-cutting partner-led working groups; • development of a PMNCH app; • re-development of the PMNCH website; • contribution to the development of milestones for the PMNCH implementation of its Digital Strategy and reporting on results. <p>Timeline: Digital Strategy completed. Implementation February 2019 to February 2021.</p>

	Recommendations		PMNCH Board response and suggested timeline
9	Include metrics for the advocacy and communications platform to determine value for money.	Accepted	<p>The work on fully digitizing PMNCH's operations, as noted above, has started. This will include redeveloping PMNCH's website and digitizing the membership engagement processes, among others. This work will be instrumental in enabling the development and the following of metrics to determine progress and value of money.</p> <p>The new Strategy 2021-2025 will include a clear results framework with identified indicators for each of the functions. A first draft will be developed by end of June 2020.</p> <p>Timeline: Overall process from February to December 2020.</p>
Evaluation area III: Develop a new governance structure with clarity around the roles and responsibilities of different governing bodies.			
10	<p>Structure of PMNCH (membership, number of constituencies, etc).</p> <p><i>NB: This was not included as a Recommendation in the External Evaluation but subsequently developed by the GNC</i></p>	n/a	<p>GNC to assess the structure of PMNCH given its mandate – including number of members, size and composition of the existing constituencies, etc.</p> <p>Timeline: Options will be included in the next Strategy consultation round in May 2020, and draft finalized by end of June 2020.</p>
11	GNC should examine the composition of the Board, the relationship between the Board and Board standing committees, and the relationship of these to the Secretariat, particularly regarding decision making and the level of consultation required for different types of decisions.	Accepted	<p>The GNC has commenced a process of considering PMNCH's governance structure and a consultant has been hired to take this work forward.</p> <p>This work will include, among other issues, a mapping and assessment of Board, standing committees and the relationships between them and with the Secretariat. It will also consider a tiered approach to PMNCH's membership, e.g. ranging from simply receiving information (passive), two-way sharing of information (engaged), and co-development and ownership of PMNCH strategies and products (active) and stated the importance of aligning PMNCH governance and Secretariat structure to the new Strategy.</p> <p>Timeline: Options will be included in the next Strategy consultation round in May 2020, and draft finalized by end of June 2020</p>
12	The role and structure of the Secretariat should be determined following the emergence of a new Strategy and governance structure for the Partnership.	Accepted	<p>Secretariat structures and staff functions/profiles will be assessed in line with the new Strategy and implementation needs, and the emerging governance structure for the Partnership as a whole. Consultant has been hired to review similar partnerships and come with alternative models and recommendations.</p> <p>Timeline: September 2020 to March 2021</p>
Evaluation area IV: Build more meaningful partner engagement			

	Recommendations		PMNCH Board response and suggested timeline
13	PMNCH needs to strive for added value by clarifying and communicating its value proposition and ' <i>modus operandi</i> ' for partners to engage.	Accepted	<p>A critical aspect of the ongoing Strategy development process is to better define and articulate the added value of the Partnership and its constituent members. In addition, the anticipate digitization of PMNCH's work will further contribute to enabling this value to come to fore and to empower the members themselves to better engage with each other and profile their respective work.</p> <p>As part of the Strategy development process and consultations, members will have an opportunity to comment, provide feedback and shape the suggestions that have been forwarded for an updated PMNCH added value as well as the overall <i>modus operandi</i>.</p> <p>Timeline: February to December 2020</p>
14	Develop a communication and engagement strategy, addressing inter alia such questions as digital strategies, linkages with other actors in sharing and disseminating information, operationalising the interactive membership database and using it as a collaborative tool, as well as measuring the impact of these investments.	Accepted	<p>The new Strategy period will reposition Advocacy as the core function of PMNCH. The other functional areas specified in the previous Strategic Plan (Analysis, Accountability, and Alignment) would not be characterised as stand-alone functions, but rather as subsidiary in supporting Advocacy. This will represent a much greater focus and a shift in emphasis from PMNCH's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan when the four 'A' functions were equally prioritized.</p> <p>The Advocacy Working Group is working closely with the Strategy development process to define the communication and engagement strategy, in the context of this new focus on Advocacy.</p> <p>Timeline: February to December 2020</p>
Evaluation area V: Improve communication and transparency efforts			

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	Recommendations		PMNCH Board response and suggested timeline
15	Clearly articulating a Theory of Change that captures PMNCH's objectives, ways of working, contribution to change, and assumptions. Based on this, align the current Results Framework (which identifies PMNCH's Secretariat and partners' contributions to results), and make the Results Framework more transparent to partners and donors, so that this M&E tool can be used by all Partners to hold each other and the Secretariat accountable for delivery of the plan. The Results Framework should be simplified and downsized in the new strategy.	Accepted	<p>The new 2021 to 2025 Strategy is being developed around a much clearer Theory of Change, that focuses on the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem statement • Goals • Functions • Outcomes • Impact <p>The proposed theory of change is being consulted on with the Partnership as part of the Strategy development process. Efforts are also ongoing to identify flagship outputs which will be reflective of PMNCH's added value functions and contribute to the agreed upon outcomes. The outputs and outcomes will follow the SMART principles.</p> <p>Timeline: February to December 2020</p>
16	Providing the Results Framework updates (i.e. the traffic light reports that are regularly shared with the PMNCH Board) to the full membership	Accepted	<p>This is something that PMNCH has done in the past and will continue to do, with a greater emphasis on sharing with the wider Partnership.</p> <p>Timeline: Ongoing</p>
17	Sharing financial reports that are publicly available more frequently with the whole Partnership (i.e. beyond the Board), and communication efforts of other products should be increased	Accepted	<p>This is something that PMNCH has done in the past and will continue to do, with a greater emphasis on sharing with the wider Partnership.</p> <p>Timeline: Ongoing</p>
18	Following up and/or sharing reports on selected activities to assess their value for money and impact.	Accepted	<p>This is something that PMNCH has done in the past and will continue to do, with a greater emphasis on sharing with the wider Partnership.</p> <p>Timeline: Ongoing</p>