**ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING**

The vision of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH) is a world in which every woman, child and adolescent can realize their right to health and well-being, leaving no one behind. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the structural barriers inside and outside of the health system that disadvantage women, children and adolescents, particularly those most marginalized. In response to the pandemic and the needs of partners, PMNCH has issued a seven-point Call to Action, calling on governments to strengthen political commitment, financing and policies to protect and promote the health and rights of women, children and adolescents and to strengthen health systems during the COVID-19 response and recovery phases.

**Why is adolescent health and well-being a focus area for 2021–2025?**

Far too many of today’s 1.2 billion adolescents are at risk of failing to reach their full potential. Each year, over one million adolescents die from preventable causes, tens of millions suffer injuries and hundreds of millions develop harmful behaviours which have both short- and long-term impacts. 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. Under the double burden of gender and age discrimination, millions of adolescent girls are relegated to the fringes of society, suffering female genital mutilation, forced marriage, intimate partner violence and other human rights abuses. 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.

Every dollar invested in selected adolescent health interventions is estimated to produce a 10-fold return in health, social and economic benefits. 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. However, unless adolescents well-being receives significantly greater political prioritization and investment, adolescent mortality and morbidity will increase, particularly in low- and lower-middle-income countries with rapidly increasing youth populations.

**What needs to be done?**

It is imperative that the recent attention to the multidimensional nature of adolescent well-being continues to build at all levels. Meeting adolescents’ needs and mitigating the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as school closures and social isolation, require continued and sustained investments in delivering an integrated set of policies and programmes. All adolescents need access to comprehensive health and social services, and high-quality education, in a safe and supportive environment free from violence, exclusion and discrimination. Multistakeholder and multisectoral approaches are crucial: adolescent health and well-being depends on collaboration between various sectors, including health, education, water and sanitation, transportation and social protection. Young people also have a right to participate on equal terms with other stakeholders on matters that affect their lives.

**How is PMNCH making a difference?**

Led by its Adolescent and Youth Constituency, PMNCH serves as the global platform for meaningful youth engagement, mobilizing advocates to increase political commitment and financing for multisectoral, rights-based national plans for adolescents. Our aim is to promote and implement solutions to improve the health and well-being of adolescents, providing this underserved population group with an enabling environment and creating opportunities for holistic growth.

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PMNCH, in partnership with Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) and the International Youth Alliance for Family Planning, has spearheaded the development and implementation of The Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement, which has been endorsed by more than 200 organizations. In 2020, PMNCH, together with the United Nations (UN) H6+ Technical Working Group for Adolescent Health and Well-Being and partners, published a new definition of and conceptual framework for adolescent well-being in the Journal of Adolescent Health.

PMNCH and partners have also issued a Call to Action on Adolescents, which is aligned with the COVID-19 Call to Action and the PMNCH 2021–2025 Strategy. PMNCH is galvanizing support for its three priorities: (1) engaging and empowering adolescents; (2) going beyond the health sector, launching a powerful multisectoral response; and (3) strengthening political commitment and funding through a global summit on adolescents. The summit will serve as a commitment-making milestone in progress towards policy shift, programme redesign and enhanced financial investments at the country level for adolescent programmes and services.

**Highlights of PMNCH’s deliverables for 2021–2025**

** Campaigns and outreach
Rallying all partners in a coordinated approach to attain common advocacy and accountability goals, PMNCH works towards promoting and improving adolescent well-being by:

- **galvanizing support for the Call to Action on Adolescents and the global summit on adolescents** by mobilizing Member States to issue a joint statement at the Commission for Social Development, followed by an intergovernmental declaration on adolescent well-being in the UN Third Committee, calling for a high-level global summit on adolescents at the UN General Assembly in 2023;

- **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, in order to generate stakeholder commitment for adolescent well-being (e.g. on 31 March 2021, PMNCH published a political think piece in The BMJ, “Uniting for adolescents during COVID-19 and beyond”, co-authored by 30 high-level champions and influencers, including youth leaders, heads of state, ministers of health and international development and heads of UN agencies, showing the great range of support for adolescent well-being); and

- **uniting voices of adolescents at a series of high-level events, webinars, e-summits and communities of practice** to gather experiences, promoting interest and participation in the lead-up to the 2023 summit (United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, the Global Youth Meet, the High-Level Political Forum and the United Nations General Assembly).

**Partner engagement**
PMNCH is supporting partner engagement, including strengthening the capacity of youth networks, by:

- **building the critical capacity of youth-led organizations and networks**, by continuing to issue grants and provide technical support to youth organizations in 11 countries to implement the Advocating for Change for Adolescents! toolkit; grantees will also advocate for implementation of the recommendations made in the Call to Action on Adolescents, and for adoption of the Adolescent Well-Being Framework in national programmes through national multistakeholder platforms and dialogues;

- **ensuring meaningful adolescent and youth engagement** (MAYE), by mobilizing further endorsements for the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE, developing guidance on institutionalizing MAYE and setting up systems to track and report on MAYE to ensure mutual accountability among partners; and

- **increasing representation of young people** (aged under 30) across PMNCH’s constituencies, working groups and committees (e.g. recommending that the Vice Chair of each
constituency is a young person) and creating professional opportunities for young people to lead and contribute to the development of various products (e.g. a BMJ series on adolescent well-being is being co-authored and peer reviewed by young people).

Knowledge synthesis

PMNCH is curating evidence, translating and packaging evidence to highlight gaps in progress, support consensus building and equipping partners for action and greater accountability for adolescent well-being by:

- **building the Adolescent Well-Being Framework** by summarizing evidence-based, effective policies and programmatic interventions within each of the five domains and 27 sub-domains of the Framework to update the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!); and

- **developing user-friendly evidence packages**, including a collection of articles in The BMJ on adolescent well-being; socioeconomic investment frameworks and evidence on returns on investment from adolescent well-being programmes; adolescent well-being indicators and monitoring mechanisms in partnership with Global Action for Measurement of Adolescent Health and Well-Being; and training resources for in-country implementing partners.