

United Advocacy Working Group for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH)

Terms of reference

Background and Rationale

Despite decades of progress, evidence increasingly shows that global momentum to improve maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) and wellbeing has slowed, and in some regions, reversed. Progress toward reducing maternal, neonatal, and child mortality has stagnated since 2016, and the world remains significantly off track to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to MNCH. Rising inequalities, shrinking fiscal space, climate shocks, conflict, and coordinated pushbacks against sexual and reproductive health and rights have further eroded earlier gains.

Multiple global, regional and country-level initiatives, such as Every Woman Every Newborn Everywhere (EWENE), Child Survival Action (CSA), and advocacy efforts linked to financing, accountability and service delivery, share common goals but currently operate through parallel advocacy structures.

While these initiatives bring value, fragmentation has increased the burden on countries, diluted messaging, and reduced collective influence. Stakeholders have therefore agreed to simplify and unify advocacy coordination into a single, light-touch mechanism that focuses on core advocacy functions, while respecting existing technical mandates and governance.

The United Advocacy Working Group for MNCH is established to serve as this shared advocacy coordination platform.

Purpose

The United Advocacy Working Group provides a single, coherent platform to align and strengthen advocacy for maternal, newborn and child health and wellbeing across global, regional and country levels, in support of EWENE-CSA priorities and the broader MNCH agenda.

The Group does not replace technical working groups, programmatic governance, or institutional mandates. Its role is to coordinate advocacy.

Core Advocacy Functions

The Working Group will coalesce around a small number of essential advocacy functions:

1. Information and Evidence Exchange
 - Share key data, evidence, policy updates and accountability findings relevant to MNCH advocacy.
2. Intelligence Exchange
 - Share political intelligence on emerging risks, opportunities, policy windows, financing moments and advocacy entry points.
3. Collective Strategic Reflection
 - Joint reflection on advocacy strategies, priorities, narratives and influence pathways at global, regional and country levels.
4. Coordination of Key Moments and Messages

- Align messaging, advocacy asks and partner engagement around major global, regional and national moments.
 - Coordinate organization of joint advocacy events, statements and products where relevant.
5. Leveraging Partner Capabilities
- Mobilize and align partner strengths, networks and tools in support of a shared advocacy workplan.

Scope and Levels of Engagement

Global level (priority)

- Shape global MNCH advocacy agenda and messaging.
- Align engagement around major global moments (e.g. WHA, UNGA, financing replenishments).

Regional and country levels

- Existing regional and national advocacy efforts led by UN agencies, PMNCH, PATH and partners will continue.
- The Working Group will leverage these efforts where possible to advance EWENE-CSA targets and goals

Membership

Membership of the United Advocacy Working Group will be composed of the current membership of the EWENE Advocacy and Accountability Working Group and the CSA Advocacy Working Group.

The unified group brings together this existing membership into a single, streamlined advocacy platform, without expanding or duplicating membership structures. This ensures continuity, preserves institutional memory, and reduces additional coordination burdens on partners and country actors.

Membership remains functional and action-oriented, focused on contributing to shared advocacy priorities, information exchange, strategic reflection, and coordinated action across global, regional and country levels.

Membership is flexible and functional, focused on contribution rather than representation alone.

Governance and Ways of Working

The United Advocacy Working Group will operate as a single, collaborative coordination platform.

Meetings and Planning

- The Group will meet monthly.
- During these meetings, members will:
 - Share information, evidence and political intelligence
 - Jointly reflect on advocacy strategies and priorities
 - Agree on a time-bound action plan of priority advocacy activities for implementation over the year
 - Review progress and adjust actions in response to emerging opportunities or risks

Implementation Modalities

- Smaller, time-bound task groups may be formed to deliver specific advocacy activities (e.g. coordinated messaging, joint events, advocacy briefs, engagement around key global or regional moments).
- These task groups will:
 - Be composed of interested and relevant members of the Working Group
 - Operate using existing partner capacities and platforms
 - Report progress and outputs back to the full Working Group during bi-monthly meetings

Leadership and Co-Chairs

- The Working Group will be led by three co-chairs:
 - PMNCH
 - One UN agency (UNICEF, WHO or UNFPA)
 - One civil society–focused organization (PATH as first chair)
- The co-chairs will be responsible for:
 - Setting meeting agendas in collaboration with the Secretariat
 - Facilitating meetings and guiding strategic discussions
 - Driving follow-up on agreed actions and ensuring momentum between meetings
 - Representing the Working Group in interactions with EWENE-CSA management structures and other relevant platforms

This governance approach is designed to be light, flexible and action-oriented, enabling partners to align efforts efficiently while leveraging existing mandates, expertise and resources.

Secretariat

The Secretariat will be hosted by PMNCH and will serve as the operational backbone of the Working Group. Advocacy leads from UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA will work closely with the Secretariat. A detailed Secretariat TOR is provided in Annex 1.

Relationship with EWENE-CSA Management Structures

The United Advocacy Working Group will provide updates to the EWENE Management and CSA advisory Group during six-monthly EWENE-CSA management and advisory meetings to:

- Ensure strategic alignment with EWENE-CSA priorities
- Maintain linkages with other EWENE-CSA technical and programmatic workstreams
- Highlight emerging advocacy priorities

Guiding Principles

- Country-driven advocacy aligned with country needs
- Simplicity and efficiency reducing duplications
- Complementarity of mandates and ensuring synergies
- Equity and rights-based approaches
- Continuum of care (maternal, newborn and child)

Annex 1: Terms of Reference – Secretariat of the United Advocacy Working Group

Purpose

To provide coordination, facilitation and light operational support to enable effective functioning of the United Advocacy Working Group.

Core Responsibilities

1. Coordination and Convening
 - Prepare agendas, background notes and materials for bimonthly meetings
 - Convene meetings and document decisions and action points
 - Support coordination across global, regional and country advocacy efforts
2. Workplan Development and Tracking
 - Facilitate development of a common advocacy workplan
 - Track progress against agreed actions
 - Flag risks, gaps and emerging opportunities
3. Information and Intelligence Management
 - Compile and circulate advocacy-relevant evidence, intelligence and updates
 - Maintain a light repository of shared advocacy messages and materials
4. Liaison and Reporting
 - Prepare brief updates for EWENE-CSA Management Group meetings
 - Serve as the primary point of contact for Working Group members