African Coalition for MHM Feedback & Membership Form 2020

Guided by the Johannesburg Call to Action: Improving Menstrual Health Management in Africa, and recommendations from the 2018 inaugural East and Southern Africa Menstrual Health Management Symposium, the purpose of the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management (ACMHM) is to strengthen coordination among key stakeholders, build on and support the evidence base to better transition research to action.

The Coalition also aims to support multi-sectoral policy making and scale-up of evidence-based and sustainable programmes that address the menstrual health management needs of girls, women and all people who menstruate in Africa throughout their menstrual life cycle. In the past year we have attained some successes including policy advocacy, leadership in the development of product standards, knowledge sharing and collaborative partnerships for MHM, among others.

**Background and objectives of the survey**

During the ACMHM leadership meeting in February 2020, the leadership of the Coalition decided to disseminate a survey with the intention to:

1. Get the views of current and future members on how the Coalition can make their participation more meaningful and beneficial
2. Be guided on how the Coalition can better respond to the members’ needs
3. Create a platform for the Coalition to attract more members
4. Acquire inputs and suggestions on how the Coalition can improve its engagement and partnerships with the members and other external partners.

**Respondents’ profiling**

Completed by 116 respondents, the questionnaire findings indicate an interest by people who are not yet members of the Coalition to become members. This was confirmed by an increase in the registration for ACMHM membership between April and May 2020.
In terms of membership, the majority of the respondents were not members of the Coalition, and that explains the increase in membership registration. Almost a quarter of the respondents (23.5%) joined the Coalition from either having registered or participated in the first East and Southern Africa Symposium on MHM in 2018.

In terms of being involved in the ACMHM and its activities, it is encouraging to note that most respondents were members of the ACMHM, with at least 15% being members of the ACMHM leadership team.

**Summary of findings**

Over the past 18 months that the African Coalition for MHM has been active, it has managed to establish itself as a credible partner and membership organisation, which continues to attract members and partners in various fields and countries, even beyond Africa. This is demonstrated by the interest as noted by the willingness to be a member of the ACMHM, in correlation with the point indicated above. It is important to highlight that the 1 respondent exception was a test survey and therefore will not be reported on.

Regarding the usefulness of the Coalition and related updates, almost all respondents indicated that the updates from the Coalition are very helpful as they provide a space for learning and sharing of experiences. More highlights include the indication that the meetings and updates provide mutual sharing of the latest developments in MHM programming, policy
and research. They are very helpful in terms of networking and knowledge building as the information shared is useful and the meetings have great insights.

In terms of meetings, the task force meetings were reported as useful although for one task force, it was indicated that “only a few people usually attend the meetings and provide updates”. The leadership meetings are always helpful.

Generally, the meetings as well as the WhatsApp group are deemed to be helpful as they also facilitate coordinating the efforts of CSOs as they facilitate learning and sharing networking, and provide a good platform to establish and maintain strategic partnerships and capacity strengthening for ultimately improving the MHM responses for women, girls and people who menstruate in Africa.

Even though most of the responses indicated the importance and value of the ACMHM interactions and virtual activities, there is need to constantly reflect and to discuss more holistic issues instead of focusing on one aspect of menstrual health management.

**Networks and linkages**

Some of the most prominent networks, coalitions, and platforms that the respondents belong to include:

- MHH Collective
- Alliance pour la santé menstruelle
- Shabab le shabab health alliance
- AIDS/HIV, Sexual reproductive health and right and gender equality Youth Network in South Sudan
- Malawi MHM hub
- Youth End Period Stigma
- Global Menstrual African MHM Consortium
- Youth End Period Stigma
- SUSAN Alliance
- Kenya Coalition of MHM
- Continental Coalition
- Menstrual health management regional consortium
- Menstrual Cup Coalition
• Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) Menstrual Health Workstream
• Ubuntu Coalition
• She Decides
• South African Coalition for MHM
• Online community member of NigCoMHM
• Sex Rights Africa Network
• Shabab Le Shabab health alliance South Sudan
• MHM in Schools Virtual Network
• Girls Opportunity Alliance
• Gift a girl child initiative

• National Menstrual Hygiene & Management Steering Committee, Uganda
• MHM East Africa Research Network
• National coalition for MHM in Uganda hosted by the Ministry of Education and Sports
• MH Hub
• Menstrual Hygiene Day/ WASH United
• The Global Menstrual Health Hub
• International Women’s Health Coalition
• Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe

This therefore highlights the need for ACMHM to strengthen linkages with these networks, but most importantly to reinforce itself as a credible partner complimenting and reinforcing the work of the other networks and coalitions, while also learning from them.

Benefits of participating in Coalitions, networks and platforms

• Alliance building
• Joint Advocacy
• Knowledge Sharing and amplifying change
• Learning best practices
• To make an impact on lives of girls while debunking stigma and creating an enabling environment for both girls and women
• Knowledge sharing and networking with other professionals on SRH
• Information sharing, solidarity and shaping a shared vision
• Empowered with the latest knowledge, information and research
• Exposure, building strong professional networks and a learning platform
• Networking, learning opportunities, cooperation
• Policy Advocacy
• Gain knowledge, connect with other health advocates, disseminate accurate information to grassroots
• Increased youth participation
• Joint problem solving
• Skills development and leadership
• Regular sharing of lessons, especially in community engagement
• Access to opportunities
• Capacity building and skills building
• Joint resource mobilisation
• An opportunity to pause and reflect on miles and misses within the MH space.
• Understanding the general MHM landscape and new learnings that inform programming
• It makes the accessibility of data easy and presents a lot of opportunities for partnerships
• Increased accountability
The issue of inclusion and collaborative partnerships was high was noted from these respondents:

“The voices of women and girls with different disabilities who are experiencing untold suffering are heard, they are knowledgeable about MHM, they have capacity to resist unequal treatment in society, can advocate for change in negative attitudes towards them, improved self-esteem and confidence among women and girls with disabilities”.

“Coalitions open up a fresh way of thinking and collective efforts reach beyond the sensational”.

Generally, the overall impact of partnerships was highlighted, as well as increased accountability.

**Recommendations**

Several comments and suggestions were made.

**Team meetings**

- The leadership meetings could be more meaningful if the task force leaders attend the meetings prepared to share concrete information from their teams.
- The meetings could do with more guidance and direction
- The meetings are highly informative, but they should be held regularly
- The challenges have been on our side as members as sometimes we do not set aside time to participate more
- More effort is needed towards recruiting more members and give direction and to the MHM work in Africa, especially is there are more members from Governments.

**How the ACMHM can be more active and beneficial to members’ and partners’ needs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic</th>
<th>Information sharing</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introducing and supporting country chapters that will provide space for awareness for membership to the coalition</td>
<td>Share information on upcoming events, research agenda, funding opportunities and involvement of young people</td>
<td>Encourage members’ participation on ACMHM activities and supportive engagements; Create opportunities where every member can thrive and impact positively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate networks with like-minded organizations for joint initiatives</td>
<td>Sharing of more educative articles and job openings</td>
<td>Provide content in French</td>
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<td>Share concrete information widely from the various task forces.</td>
<td>Creating a platform to talk about these pertinent issues</td>
<td>There should be support system within the members e.g. South-South among the members and countries</td>
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<td>Facilitate interaction across the taskforces</td>
<td>Disseminate information, by organizing consultations and experience-sharing meetings; Organise member training, and facilitating for members to work</td>
<td>Strengthen evidence and thereby the investment case for MHM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set ACMHM activities which are country specific</td>
<td>Develop and facilitate online courses; more seminars and symposium online and conferencing</td>
<td>Being available when we call out for help</td>
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<td>Capacity Building for members: workshops; Information, Education and Communication (IEC); MHM educational tools</td>
<td>Provide space for individual members to share new knowledge on MHM across the life cycle</td>
<td>Clearer leadership from the secretariat around the purpose and benefit of ACMHM to members.</td>
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<td>More insights on financing MHM</td>
<td>We share our experiences after 2018 symposium, and we learn and update</td>
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<td>Develop and share more reading material about MHM, including training manuals on MHM especially for rural settings</td>
<td>Sharing opportunities for funding and resources for trainings</td>
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<td>Supporting and strengthening members, and also providing a safe space for advocating on MHM efforts (e.g. use of other menstrual hygiene products options) for members who may have difficulty or not be able to take action alone, particularly when operating in a hostile or difficult environment.</td>
<td>By creating more platforms for ACMHM members specifically to interact. Also, by acquiring social media contacts of all members and encouraging collaborations in terms of awareness.</td>
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<td>The programs under MHM should promote equal participation of all people from the grassroot in all processes of planning, designing and implementation of projects.</td>
<td>Share more updates on ACMHM proposed activities and provide opportunities for individual members to participate actively</td>
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<td>Creating local inventories of MHM organisations, and Connect local communities of practice</td>
<td>Active involvement to seminars and conferences so as to network and learn and share the experience in MHM</td>
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<td>Provision of funds to members</td>
<td>Organization of more regional meetings to discuss how to achieve goals</td>
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<td>Develop programs in countries</td>
<td>Showcase more, the work and achievements of members</td>
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<td>Working together with other local and international organizations</td>
<td>Documentation of good practices; Collaborating with members on research, training</td>
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<td>Engage more grass roots NGO's working on the frontline with communities; Allow grassroots organisations to be part of the conversations and meetings and bring in their knowledge and experience</td>
<td>Produce more documents either manuals, policy briefs or even petitions if the need arises that are directly under the Coalition</td>
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<td>Regular MHM discussions to enable and help members to better understand MHM and how to integrate it into programs</td>
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<td>A more collective and intentional engagement of men and boys to support MHM</td>
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</table>
Directly work with organizations of women and girls with disabilities like HURIWD because we know our problems more than any other person

Giving space for leadership to the people from the South

Be more deliberate in capacitating organisations that are doing MHM work and track their progress. This can be done through the forming of an Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool on MHM which will form the baseline and identify areas that need strengthening and which organisations have capacity in that area within the Coalition.

Strengthen coordination among members, foster partnerships, create linkages for funds with donors

Create a much more active digital space for members to share experiences, knowledge and other activities that can further develop and enhance members’ visibility.

**Participation in ACMHM task forces and active engagement in activities**

Even though 13% of the respondents indicated that they are already members of the various task forces, it is worth noting that the SRHR, Education, and Marginalised Groups have the most numbers of interested members, followed by WASH, Products & Standards, and Humanitarian settings, respectively. The Secretariat will share the updated membership lists with the leadership team once finalised.

Would you like to contribute actively to the ACMHM activities as a new member of one or more of the following task forces?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Force</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MHM and Education</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHM in Humanitarian settings</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHM and Marginalised groups</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHM Products, Standards and Value chain</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHM and Water, Sanitation &amp; Hygiene and...</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to be just a member without...</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to be just a member without...</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the need for **active contribution** to the ACMHM activities, the area of priority is advocacy initiatives at 83.5%, followed by technical and academic conferences, and policy dialogues. There was general interest to contribute in the various **knowledge management**
platforms and initiatives including webinars, newsletter contributions, capacity building for other members, as well as dissemination of research findings. The most popular key areas were:

- Effective advocacy for MHM
- MHM Policy development
- Platform / network / coalition building
- Product development, dissemination, and disposal
- Research and measurement
- Resource mobilisation and MH financing

It is also worth noting the commitment of the respondents as there was general willingness to participate (through self-funding), in the next African Symposium on Menstrual Health Management, which was initially planned for 2020.

**Secretariat support**

The respondents indicated their willingness to support the ACMHM Secretariat and contribute to the work of the Secretariat in the following ways (by order of priority):

- Technical support to the Secretariat
- Support the secretariat communication activities and initiatives
- Technical support the ACMHM Secretariat in the organisation of webinars, leadership and task force meetings, regional events etc.
- Financial support to the ACMHM Secretariat, including resources for office space, human resources, meetings, and other activities.

**Conclusion**

There is general willingness and commitment by the current and prospective ACMHM members, and the ways of working need to be further enhanced and strengthened. There is a call for more engagement, lessons sharing, and capacity building activities from the Coalition. This necessitates more intensive efforts by the Secretariat to highlight and emphasise the role, comparative advantage, and the capacity of the Secretariat to deliver on the expectations. It also highlights the needs for re-organisation and stronger focus on knowledge management and leadership from the task forces.