

Executive Summary

As countries work to improve access to and utilization of essential health services for their populations, many are undertaking health system transformations to prioritize and strengthen primary health care (PHC). Between 2020 and 2021, in partnership with the Joint Learning Network for Universal Health Coverage (JLN), the Primary Health Care Performance Initiative (PHCPI) and Results for Development (R4D) launched a Community of Practice (COP) that facilitated two peer Learning Exchange communities, dedicated to fostering action-oriented shared learning focused on best practices in measuring and strengthening PHC systems across countries. The Learning Exchange agendas focused on two themes: *Transforming the Health System to Prioritize PHC* and *Understanding and Utilizing Data in COVID-19 Response and Recovery*. The COP launched a third Learning Exchange (March – November 2022) to focus on *Implementing and measuring the performance of primary care networks*. A growing number of countries are designing and implementing primary care networks (PCN) to strengthen PHC financing and delivery and ultimately improve access to and utilization of care, a process that can be supported through shared knowledge and peer to peer learning.

The learning community—comprised of peer learners and country implementation case (IC) teams from Colombia, Ghana, and Kenya—created a shared learning agenda and came together for bi-monthly Learning Exchange sessions to share country progress and exchange on topics such as *Financing PCNs, Governance and accountability of PCNs, Piloting and scaling up PCNs, and Measuring the effectiveness of PCNs*. Over the course of the learning exchange, IC teams worked to refine their problem statements, outline long-term vision statements, and develop causal chains and short-term outcomes, which served as a framework for reflecting on progress and drawing on peer and facilitator support during monthly IC team check-ins, called Learning Checks.¹

This PCN Learning Exchange revealed PHC stakeholders' deep curiosity to better understand PCNs, as well as a strong appreciation among participants for the value of the peer learning approach. Participant feedback and results suggest that the COP provided an important and valued forum for cross-country experience-sharing and learning. The experience also highlighted the need for deeper and sustained systematic learning initiatives for countries to continue to improve PHC to better meet the needs of their populations.

This paper highlights the process for developing this learning community and some of the key learnings on how to successfully implement PCNs. Furthermore, it provides key recommendations for country policymakers, practitioners, and development partners based on lessons from the PHCPI COP.

¹ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and international travel restrictions, the COP utilized a fully virtual implementation model; all meetings were hosted on Zoom, where live interpretation was provided to ensure accessibility for all participants.