



# ECCDAN

Early Childhood Development Action Network

## Executive Leadership Council and Executive Group Joint Meeting Minutes

Tuesday October 27, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT

**Attendees:** Aisha Yousafzai (Harvard University), Ana Nieto (UNICEF), Bernadette Daelmans (WHO), Diana Hincapie (IADB), Diego Adame (LEGO Foundation), Evelyn Santiago (ARNEC), Ghassan Issa (ANECD), Joan Lombardi (International Expert in Child and Family Policy), Liana Ghent (ISSA), Lisa Bohmer (Hilton Foundation), Lynnette Okengo (AfECN), Melissa Kelly (World Bank Group), Pia Britto (UNICEF), Rokhaya Diawara (UNESCO), Romilla Karnati (Save the Children USA), Sarah Klaus (OSF), Stephen Lye (Alliance for Human Development), Tarun Dua (WHO)

Anshu Banerjee (WHO), Borhene Chakroun (UNESCO), Hana Brix (World Bank Group), Muhammad Musa (BRAC International), Nikolaj Gilbert (PATH), Omar Abdi (UNICEF), Peter Laugharn (Hilton Foundation), H.R.H Sarah Zeid (Princess of Jordan), Sheldon Shaeffer (ARNEC), Sneha Sheth (Dost Education)

**Regrets** Naomi Rutenberg (ChildFund International), Sarah Bouchie (LEGO Foundation), Sherrie Westin (Sesame Workshop), Zsuzsanna Jakab (WHO)

**ChildFund International** Bizuwork Negussie

**ECCDAN Secretariat:** Elizabeth Lule, Shekufeh Zonji, Wairimu Macharia, Selam Geremew Debele

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### Welcome Remarks by Executive Group Chair [Pia Britto]

The Chair of the Executive Group, Pia Britto, welcomed participants to the meeting that transitions the Executive Group to the Executive Leadership Council. She reminded meeting



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attendees that this was a historical moment for ECDAN as it enters a new phase and how exciting it has been to see the growth of the network since it was launched in 2016. She reminded the meeting attendees that ECDAN was established to support the ECD community and to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. While there is one target SDG (4.2.1) there are several other relevant SDGs that also apply to our vision of giving every child the best start to life. As governments started to increase their political commitments and policy articulations, agencies started to build out their program of work, and research generated more evidence, the global ECD community needed a global network that would help make connections amongst the key actors and connect regions around the world; be a credible source to access and share information to support program scale up and policy reforms and implementation; and advocate effectively sustaining the drum beat on smart and sustained investment in early childhood.

In the early days of ECDAN, over 100 ECD professionals and partners came together across six working groups and volunteered their time to create the blueprint for the network. This was guided by the Executive Group and facilitated by a nimble and lean Secretariat. She asked the meeting attendees to join her in celebrating ECDAN's achievements and the results presented in its progress report. ECDAN's results are built on the hard work of the ECD professionals, and the generous contributions of several partners and foundations, which include the following:

- **Political:** G20 endorsed ECDAN as the ECD global knowledge exchange and learning platform for G20 countries.
- **National policy and program:** Nurturing Care Framework, 137 country profiles on its website in collaboration with the Countdown 2030 Task Force.
- **Capacity building:** Knowledge fellows recruited and over 5,000 subscribers.

She reminded attendees that we are now entering a period of growing challenges and growing needs for children as COVID-19 evolves, and that ECDAN will need to adapt to this new reality. It will need to strengthen its advocacy efforts to preserve and secure new investments for young children and their families as governments face contracting budgets and competing priorities. ECDAN will need to be more focused and targeted towards specific priorities.

She thanked the leaders who announced ECDAN in 2016, each member of the task forces, the generous donors and partners, the strong Executive Group, and the resilient and passionate Secretariat for their contributions to the success of this network towards fulfilling the mission for young children's development and wellbeing.

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## **Introductions of Executive Group and Executive Leadership Council Members**

### **Executive Group**

Members of the Executive Group (EG) introduced themselves and shared that they were happy to be part of ECDAN and to have seen the network grow, the momentum it has gained and their hopes for the future. They expressed their continued commitment to global collective efforts to improve the lives of young children and to growing a global movement especially during these unprecedented times.

They welcomed the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) and wished them the best in this new phase of ECDAN.

### **Executive Leadership Council**

Members of the Executive Leadership Council introduced themselves and expressed their enthusiasm to be part of the Executive Leadership Council. They:

- Congratulated the Executive Group and the Secretariat for the work that they have done.
  - Reiterated the importance of investing in ECD and expressed the urgency to support young children and their families
  - Agreed that ECD must remain a global investment and public policy priority.
  - Called on participants to hold one another accountable to accomplish ECDAN's vision and mission.
  - Highlighted that there should be special interest and focus on "inclusion" and equity, in response to the adverse impacts of COVID-19.
  - Prompted participants to focus the conversation not just on school readiness, but parent readiness as well.
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## **Program/Operations Report, and 2020–2021 Workplan [Elizabeth Lule]**

Elizabeth Lule presented<sup>1</sup> on the challenges facing children and families, the ECDAN vision, mission and impacts and its theory of change as a network of networks. She presented ECDAN's Strategic Framework for 2020 to 2023 and the key activities and results under each of the four strategic objectives. She also presented the 7/1/2020 – 6/30/2021 workplan and budget and provided a snapshot of what success looks like by providing an overview of ECDAN's impact and reach, and presented highlights of ECDAN's partnerships and collaborative activities. [Please see attachment for complete presentation.]

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## **Financial Reporting [ChildFund International]**

Bizuwork Negussie, Director, of Grants & Project Management at ChildFund International<sup>2</sup> (CFI) presented a summary financial report<sup>3</sup> for the 2018 to Oct. 2020 period. CFI received seven awards on behalf of ECDAN — for a total grant amount of \$2.1 million. Funders include: Conrad N Hilton Foundation, Open Society Foundation, Bainum Family Foundation, and UNICEF/LEGO foundation.

Bizuwork reported that that ECDAN has expended \$1.3 million and that there had been visible increase in expenses each fiscal year, which indicated a progression in implementation and intensive work undertaken by ECDAN to respond to the needs of its partners. [Please see attachment for summary financial report.]

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to attachment for complete presentation.

<sup>2</sup> ChildFund International took on the role as ECDAN's temporary fiscal sponsor, following The Hilton Foundation's search for a potential host for ECDAN to award its first grant to. A temporary Memorandum of Understanding was signed, and CFI provided the Secretariat with HR support, consultant recruitments, financial management and reporting support, and budget management. ECDAN is currently in the process of moving grants to PATH, its new hosting agency.

<sup>3</sup> Please see attachment for summary financial report.



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## Reflections from the Executive Group Members

**Evelyn Santiago, Director of ARNEC shared the following:**

- The importance of open communication — Regional networks' engagement in ECDAN were challenging during the first two years, as they struggled to understand their place and their value add. It was an intense, albeit important process as it was very constructive, respectful, and solution-oriented, and the discussions led to working more collaboratively.
- The need to better align and connect — The regional networks' contribution is clear in that they provide the much-needed voice from the field to ensure that global initiatives and priorities are informed by what is happening or needed in the field. Strong connection and alignment remain important moving forward.
- Importance of an engagement strategy — One significant insight from working with ECDAN is that working together in the network requires a great deal of strategizing. The ECDAN Strategic Plan provides an opportunity to articulate priorities for regional network engagement and identify collaborative work and joint activities.

**Bernadette Daelmans, Head of Child Health and Development Unit in the Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing, WHO**

- ECDAN was established around the same time that WHO garnered forces to inspire the health community to do much more for the thrive agenda, and develop a framework to move this agenda forward. There was realization that ECD is broader than health. ECDAN has the great potential of creating an enabling environment that brings different voices from the different sectors and making partnerships a reality.
- Human capital development is a driving force, and although there is an unfinished survival agenda, ECD is a universal way of approaching both the survival and thrive agendas.
- ECDAN provides a unique opportunity to strengthen partnerships as a network of networks, which is a great strength at the global level, just as regional networks (ISSA, ARNEC, AfECN and ANECD) have specific strengths and work on products that serve their regional constituencies and countries. It is through all these networks and partnerships at the global and regional levels that we are all being brought together.



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- She hoped that the ELC is satisfied with ECDAN's achievements and directions so far and hoped that the ELC will add value by opening up new opportunities for ECDAN to advocate and elevate the cause.
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## **Executive Leadership Council — questions, feedback, and discussion**

Joan Lombardi thanked everyone for all that they shared. She invited the Executive Leadership Council to reflect on what they just heard, particularly in light of the aforementioned remarks and Secretariat presentation.

The Executive Leadership Council reflections included:

- The transition should examine the changing context and new issues that are arising for young children, and seize the moment to respond through collective action. As COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation, ECDAN goals and strategy could be revisited every three months, as there is opportunity to position and reimagine ECD in the context of COVID-19.
- There is a need to ensure that ECD is a global public policy priority, which can be quantified and tracked; e.g., percentage of education budgets allocated to early childhood or the level of funding for early childhood from bilaterals and other development agencies.
- Children aged 5 to 9 are often overlooked in health. As we move from survive to thrive, we should look at what we need to do for children in that age group, in addition to health and within a nurturing care framework.
- Children and their holistic development needs are often overlooked or inadequately resourced during crises (such as COVID-19), or there are no proper tools that bring methods or commitment to deal with them at scale. We should consider and share models that are currently being developed by partners. It is also important to identify, test, prove and document local solutions, so that they can inform decisions, policies and practice.
- It is important to develop a strong results framework so the work can shift from strategy to action with a clear definition of the impact indicators in addition to the process indicators e.g., how much money governments are investing in ECD. Impact indicators can then show some more direct outcomes of the advocacy work that we will be working on.



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- It is necessary to develop more global public goods and assets for evidence-based advocacy to support countries to re-imagine how they deliver and budget for ECD services, to build capacity of local advocates to demand greater investments by stakeholders in ECD and keep them accountable, and also to support and work closely with regional networks to align advocacy messages.
- The World Bank Group promotes the knowledge platform that ECDAN is developing, which is a great global asset, by sharing resources to populate the platform and by highlighting platform resources with their internal ECD network of nearly 850 staff. The World Bank can contribute by sharing knowledge with finance ministries and relevant sectors so that ECD is placed in the context of the overall country development framework.

Joan Lombardi stated that there is so much work to do to address the growing challenges for young children and their families and it is important to think about what each ELC member needs to do to accelerate progress and achieve tangible results. She reminded the ELC that they are all ambassadors and champions for young children.

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## Closing Remarks

Elizabeth Lule thanked the ELC for their reflections. She explained that the Executive Leadership Council will need to select a chair or co-chairs and will follow up with them on the process. She indicated that the next meeting will be in April 2021, around the World Bank/ IMF Spring Meetings.

She thanked Pia for being a very effective Chair, and the Executive Group for their leadership and support to building and guiding ECDAN. She thanked the regional networks for their commitment to building a global movement. She shared her appreciation of ChildFund International's support as ECDAN's temporary host, and thanked the Secretariat for their hard work. She reminded that attendees that the current challenges facing young children are huge with increasing inequalities and by working together we can have greater impact to make a difference for young children and their families and achieve our vision and mission.