



ECDAN

Early Childhood Development Action Network

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Executive Leadership Council Meeting: April 21, 2022 Minutes

Prepared by: ECDAN Secretariat

Attendance

Attendees: Bernadette Daelmans, Bindiya Patel, Borhene Chakroun, Boniface Kakhobwe, Eduardo Queiroz, Erinna Dia, George Werner, Gerda Verburg, Ghassan Issa, Iffath Sharif, Joan Lombardi, Liana Ghent, Lisa Bohmer, Lynette Okengo, Mark Tomlinson, Muhammad Musa, Rokhaya Diawara, Sanjay Wijesekera, Sheldon Shaeffer, Sherrie Westin, Sneha Sheth, Youssef Hajjar

ECDAN Secretariat: Elizabeth Lule, Shekufeh Zonji, Brett Weisel, Debjeet Sen, Jacqueline Deelstra, Nina Garcia Wright, Sarah Marjane

Guest Presenters: Carmen Lica, Abdur Rahman Khan, Neil Townsend

Regrets: Anshu Banerjee, Amina Abubakar, HRH Sarah Zeid, Jeff Bernson, Rukmini Banerji, Zsuzsana Jakob, Nikolaj Gilbert, Peter Laugharn

Proceedings

Welcome and introduction [Interim Co-chairs]

The interim Co-Chair, Lynette Okengo, opened the meeting and welcomed ELC members, alternates, and observers and thanked them for their time and for the work they do to support young children and their families. The interim Co-Chair thanked the various committees and secretariat for their work over the last six months. On behalf of the ELC, she thanked Joan Lombardi, the outgoing interim Co-Chair for her leadership and support to ECDAN. She reflected on the overlapping crises that continue to affect children and their caregivers worldwide and reminded the group that this meeting and the various discussions were critical in developing collective actions for supporting children and families in crisis.

The interim Co-Chair welcomed new ELC members: George Werner, Eduardo Queiroz, and Youssef Hajjar, who introduced themselves.

Introduce new Co-Chair [Nominations Committee]

George Werner, a representative of the Nominations Committee (NC), reported on the process and criteria the NC used to select a new ECDAN Co-Chair. He introduced the newly elected Co-Chair, Borhene Chakroun, Director of UNESCO's Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems.

The process and profile to select a second Co-Chair were outlined. The NC recommended that the second, external Co-Chair be a high-level influencer at the policy and political levels.

The next steps include:

- Revise the Co-Chair profile
- ELC to send in nominations to the NC by the end of April
- The NC recommends an external Co-Chair to ELC by the end of May

Comments by new Co-Chair [Borhene Chakroun]

Borhene Chakroun thanked the ELC and its committees for their work and shared that he is honored to be elected as the new Co-Chair. He thanked Joan Lombardi, outgoing interim Co-Chair for her support of ECDAN and Lynette Okengo for agreeing to stay until the second Co-Chair has been selected and to ensure a smooth transition and onboarding process.

As new Co-Chair, Borhene Chakroun shared his ambitions for ECDAN:

- Increase political commitment to investing in early childhood development, care, and education;
- Bring new energy to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and reverse the losses seen during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Expand the network by attracting new constituencies, partners, and stakeholders to contribute to ECDAN's mission, and link ECDAN to other global agendas.

Review of agenda and approval of last meeting's minutes and matters arising [Interim Co-Chairs]

It was suggested to make objectives more actionable, including adding next steps for ECDAN's collective action and better coordination of preparedness and response, advocacy, and increased visibility.

The ELC unanimously approved the October 21 ELC meeting minutes.

Feedback and questions on ECDAN progress report [ECDAN Secretariat]

Elizabeth Lule, ECDAN's Executive Director (ED), thanked the interim Co-Chairs, welcomed Borhene Chakroun as the new co-chair, and thanked the members of the committees of the ELC.

She reminded the ELC of the huge challenges arising from the ongoing overlapping crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, food insecurity, and conflicts that threaten young children's rights, health, development, and wellbeing. The need for collective and coordinated action within the network has never been greater. She provided an overview of the COVID-19 scoping review conducted in partnership with Stellenbosch University, Harvard University, and Grand Challenges Canada.

Key priorities identified by survey respondents to address future emergencies include:

- Improve cross-country and cross-sectoral collaboration to identify shared research goals, share tools and information, and monitor and evaluate joint progress
- Improve access to online spaces for sharing real-time evidence, innovation, and best practices as emerging in an emergency
- Improve access to resources in different languages
- Greater advocacy for increased funding and better coordination of resource allocation
- Improve support for locally-led research
- Prioritize ECD issues that are overlooked like responsive caregiving and early learning
- Increase research in low-income countries
- Improve research on the impact of mental health on parent-child interactions and child development outcomes

In the discussion of COVID-19, ELC members raised the following:

- The need to translate research into coordinated action, using the evidence for advocacy to inform public policy and define our collective and coordinated actions to respond
- Advocate for the importance of research in times of crisis
- Communicate research evidence and make it available and accessible through op-eds or messaging

Action:

- Work with GPAAG on coordinated advocacy in support of young children and their families
- The Secretariat is organizing round-table discussions between researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates
- The Secretariat will report back concrete next steps at the next ELC meeting

The Executive Director presented the Secretariat's work plan for January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022. [Details can be found here.](#)

She summarized ECDAN's 2022 priorities:

1. Roll out the Global Childcare Campaign in collaboration with 23 partners from both the childcare/early childhood and the gender equality and women's economic empowerment movements
2. Secure new political and financial commitments for childcare and investments in the early years
3. Strengthen the knowledge exchange, learning, and communication platforms
4. Grow the number and impact of partner collaborative initiatives including the Global Initiative to Support Parents
5. Onboard and support new ELC co-chairs
6. Fundraising

ECDAN's 2022 work plan was approved, with recommendations to illustrate how the work plan is addressing challenges identified in the strategic plan. The ELC also suggested developing a dashboard showing where partners are synergizing or duplicating efforts, highlighting opportunities for collaboration, and showing how resources from partners are shared.

The 2022 work plan was approved with the proviso to make revisions linking actions to challenges identified in the strategic framework.

Action: The Secretariat will make revisions to incorporate recommendations and share the revised work plan by email in October.

Financial report and 2022 budget [PATH]

The Project Administrative Director reported on ECDAN's 2022 financials and budget and thanked the donors for their generous support and partners' in-kind contributions. ECDAN's 2020-2022 totals US \$3,589,462 funded by 10 donors. ECDAN's 2022 budget is US \$2,258,908

The ELC approved the 2022 budget.

Report from the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) [TAG Co-Chairs]

TAG Co-Chair Dr. Mark Tomlinson shared that the TAG has met twice since the last ELC meeting and is working on how the group can contribute and guide the technical priorities of the network. The TAG had also discussed the implications of the COVID-19 scoping review and made recommendations to the Secretariat to increase advocacy efforts, share the learning, and work with partners to translate the evidence to inform policy.

It was agreed to:

- Review what we have learned about the successes and failures of the COVID-19 crisis response and reflect on how to build resilience beyond recovery.
- Compile evidence-based solutions and share them with partners.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the TAG and the Steering Committee.

Children in emergencies [Joan Lombardi]

Joan Lombardi welcomed and introduced the panelists and invited them to share their work and make recommendations for what ECDAN can do to support young children and their families in crises:

- Liana Ghent and Carmen Lica - International Step by Step Association - supporting young children in Ukraine
- Abdul Rahman Khan - Plan International Bangladesh - coordinating support to the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar
- Sanjay Wijesekera - UNICEF - supporting children in humanitarian settings
- Neil Ferguson- Moving Minds
- Ghassan Issa - Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD)

She invited partners to reflect on what they would like ECDAN's role to be in responding to emergencies while listening to the presentations.

International Step by Step Association (ISSA)

Liana Ghent, Director of the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), and Carmen Lica, Director of the Step by Step Center Romania, reported on the current conflict occurring in Ukraine and the impact on border countries.

Ms. Ghent highlighted the following:

- Countries' policies vary, but generally, there is insufficient preparedness to respond to emergencies
- Importance of 2-way information and resource sharing between refugees and governments, responding agencies, and recipient governments
- Strengthen the capacity of local partners and practitioners
- Focus on inclusion and equity

Ms. Lica shared how the Step by Step Center in Romania has conducted local needs analyses and established PrimoHubs to provide child-friendly spaces and support for parents.

They recommended building the capacity of ECD organizations and response and recovery systems and including early learning in emergency responses.

[More details can be found in this presentation.](#)

Plan International Bangladesh

Abdul Rahman Khan from Plan International Bangladesh shared the status of early childhood care and development (ECCD) at Cox's Bazar, where there are over 450,000 Rohingya children refugees.

Mr. Rahman shared some major achievements including:

- Developing an ECCD program and an Early Childhood Development Working Group
- Mapping exercises of existing ECD programs
- Developing an alternative learning model and an ECD competency framework, standard operating procedures, and caregiver guidelines
- Connecting with parents remotely and through home visits.

Challenges Include:

- Language barriers between refugees and recipient countries and communities
- Reverting to virtual support during COVID-19
- ECD is a nonessential service in emergency responses
- Lack of integrated ECD services and limited collaboration between sector responses
- Limited funding

He recommended advocacy to increase funding for ECD services in emergencies as well as advocating for integrated and collaborative ECCD services in refugee settings.

[More details can be found in this presentation.](#)

UNICEF

Sanjay Wijesekera shared the work that UNICEF is doing in response to ECD in emergencies. UNICEF has been working on three core commitments for ECD:

- Young children having equitable and safe access to essential services
- Parents and caregivers are supported in providing nurturing care
- Strengthening the capacity of frontline workers and partners in providing inclusive ECD and nurturing care

UNICEF is also working with the International Peace Consortium on work related to ECD in crises. Challenges include:

- The architecture for response and recovery exists, but there is a lack of prioritization of ECD and limited resources for ECD in emergencies.
- ECD responses do not often include multisectoral integrative services as well as monitoring if a holistic approach is followed.

Recommendations for ECDAN included defining its role to bridge siloes and stimulate collective action so there are benefits at scale, specifically in preparation and response to emergencies. ECDAN can bring together donors and provide a platform for partners to collaborate and share resources. A priority should be to make sure that ECD is properly represented in humanitarian response architecture.

Moving Minds Alliance

Neil Townsend, Director of Moving Minds Alliance (MMA), gave an overview of the work of MMA. [Details can be found in this presentation](#). Neil reflected on how a global movement is needed to shift existing power structures and impact the lives of children and how networks and creating connections can bring about important changes for children and caregivers in crises.

Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD)

In response, Ghassan Issa from ANECD shared his recommendations for ECDAN to support children and families in emergencies. ECDAN can be the global voice for children in crises and could form a committee or group dedicated to ECD in crises, specifically focused on preparedness and action plans that can be applied to different contexts.

ELC discussion [Joan Lombardi]

Partners provided feedback on the presentations on children in emergencies and agreed that ECDAN should work closely with MMA on advocacy and not establish a separate working group to avoid duplication. It was also noted that ECDAN has limited funding for this workstream.

Action:

- Develop a joint ECDAN/MMA advocacy plan with concrete asks for stakeholders to support countries with support from ECDAN's Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group (GPAAG).
- ECDAN's working groups such as the TAG should focus on identifying evidence.

Partner updates [Interim Co-Chairs]

Partners updates included:

- The **Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)** shared that they continue their advocacy campaign on climate change and are planning webinars and reports looking at the impact that climate change has on young children. ARNEC will also have a regional meeting on July 5-8 focused on children in crisis.
- The **World Bank** shared existing evidence that can inform advocacy including an estimate of the cost of the learning loss suggesting that the current generation of students risk losing US \$19 trillion in lifetime earnings which is equivalent to about 50% of today's global GDP, with children living in poverty most likely to be affected.
- **UNESCO** shared confirmation of the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education which will be November 14-16, 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The objective of the meeting is to increase political commitment to making ECCE a political priority.

Closing Remarks and AOB [Interim Co-Chairs]

Lynette Okengo (interim Co-Chair) closed the meeting by thanking everyone for a lively and productive meeting with a fruitful discussion.