



ECDAN Executive Leadership Council (ELC) Business Meeting Minutes¹

June 13, 2023
Paris, France

In Attendance:

- **Executive Leadership Council Members - in person:** Borhene Chakroun (UNESCO), Lynette Okengo (AfECN), Ghassan Issa (ANECD), Liana Ghent (ISSA), Sheldon Shaeffer (ARNEC), Erinna Dia (UNICEF), Lisa Bohmer (Hilton Foundation), Sneha Sheth (Dost Education), Mark Tomlinson (Stellenbosch University), Amina Abubakar (Aga Khan University), Kelly Randels (PATH)
- **Executive Leadership Council Members - virtual:** Joan Lombardi, Marcy Vigoda (SUN), Eduardo Queiroz, Sherrie Westin (Sesame Workshop), Muhammad Musa (CARE), Kammerle Schneider (PATH), Sarthak Goyal (Pratham)
- **ECDAN Secretariat - in person:** Elizabeth Lule, Shekufeh Zonji, Emily Gilkinson, Peter Colenso (Strategy Consultant)
- **ECDAN Secretariat - virtual:** Brett Weisel, Sarah Marjane, Katherine Shek, Hannah Frohm, Amanda Germanio, Carol Mochoge, Carrie Hubbell Melgarejo
- **Additional UNESCO staff - in person:** Rokhaya Diawara, Nina Rottger

Apologies: Dr. Anshu Barnajee (WHO), Amer Hasan (WBG), Youssef Hajjar (The Arab Resource Collective), H.R.H Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan

Please note: There are a couple items that were discussed earlier in the agenda but which required ELC approval and therefore they are captured here even though they were discussed before the regular business meeting.

Welcome and Agenda

ECDAN's Executive Leadership Council (ELC) Co-Chair, Borhene Chakroun, welcomed ELC members and Secretariat staff to the second in-person ELC meeting and special strategy session. Each person introduced him/herself.

The Co-Chair went through the agenda, explaining that the first day and a half would be focused on the strategy refresh, facilitated by Peter Colenso, and the last afternoon would be ECDAN's regular governance meeting. Each afternoon would be hybrid for ELC and Secretariat members who were unable to be present in person. The ELC unanimously adopted the agenda as planned.

¹ N.B. These minutes record the regular ELC business meeting session which took place on the afternoon of day 2 of the two-day meeting. The rest of the meeting was focused on preparing for the strategy refresh, as noted in the agenda. The Strategy Refresh portion of the meeting has its own report.

Strategy Refresh process

Peter Colenso presented the steps and timeline that he is planning to follow in supporting the Secretariat and ELC to refresh ECDAN's strategy and have a draft ready for approval in November. The main components of the strategy refresh include:

- June: Reflection and strategic visioning with the ELC in this meeting
- July: Stand up Strategy Working Group
- July-Aug: Survey partners for inputs + conduct individual interviews and focus group discussions with selected partners
- Sept: Prepare brief consultative draft strategy with main priorities + get feedback from ELC and broader partners
- Oct-Nov: Finish drafting strategy with inputs provided
- Nov: Present draft strategy to ELC for approval

The strategy process will be managed by three core groups.

- The ELC, guiding the process at three main points, playing a high-level advisory and sign-off role.
- A more inclusive Strategy Working Group (SWG), meeting monthly to advise on the refresh process and verify findings and directions that emerge from consultations.
- The Strategy Core Team (Peter Colenso and Secretariat staff), meeting weekly to facilitate and deliver all aspects of the strategy refresh process.

The ELC unanimously approved this process.

'Looking Forward' - Pathway to Independence

The Executive Director explained ECDAN's history and current status as a hosted entity that does not have legal status. ChildFund was ECDAN's first host and PATH was selected in 2020 through a competitive and transparent process. ECDAN's donors met with PATH in early 2021 expressing concern about PATH's overhead, set by NICRA with the US Government at 26 percent. The NICRA has recently gone down to 20 percent and they are working to see how it can be reduced further. ECDAN is under pressure from some donors to become independent. The ED proposed to conduct a financial analysis to determine the costs and legal steps needed to register as a 501(c)3 in the United States or elsewhere for the ELC's consideration. The ELC's endorsement of that planned analysis was tabled until the later business meeting with the ELC members joining virtually.

The discussion, however, led to several recommendations for expanding the analysis. It was also clarified that PATH is not asking ECDAN to leave and is providing a conducive environment and therefore there is no urgency to complete the analysis before or in tandem with the strategy refresh. Rather, it can be included as an action within the updated strategy. The points made for the Secretariat to consider included:

- Multiple options/geographies should be considered, not just 501(c)3 registration in the U.S. Europe in particular might be more conducive.
- Multiple elements should be considered, beyond just the financial cost of doing business in each scenario. The legal implications, reaction of different constituencies, strategic leverage, and staffing required should also be outlined for comparison.
- Even if the overhead appears high, the real costs and complications of independence are significant and need to be carefully weighed before any action is taken.

ELC Business

Minutes approval and committee reports

The Co-Chair opened the meeting. The first order of business was approval of the last ELC meeting minutes.

- The November 2022 ELC Meeting minutes were provided to ELC members in the folder of materials for review. No member requested any adjustment to the minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved as drafted.

The ELC members were also provided with minutes from each committee meeting. The Steering Committee, Nominations Committee, and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) presented briefly on their recent meetings.

- The Steering Committee noted that much of their recent action has revolved around preparing the agenda for this meeting and the strategy refresh process, including the Terms of Reference for the Strategy Working Group.
- The Nominations Committee explained that their task had been identifying a Co-Chair for Borhene. The committee recognized that Lynette had stepped up in the meantime and agree to continue serving. The committee had gone through a process to identify and cultivate possible champions - some who might join the ELC and others who could be used in more ceremonial capacity. Considering that ECDAN's governance structure would necessarily change when/if ECDAN pursues independent registration, the Nominations Committee decided to hold off on selection of a Co-Chair until the path forward is clear. If a new governance structure is required, the nominations Committee is ready to support recruitment and selection efforts.
- The Technical Advisory Group Co-Chairs noted that attendance was an issue and posed the question of expanding the TAG's role as ECDAN's think tank for forward-looking strategy. The TAG Co-Chairs also proposed creating a poll to gather feedback from TAG members in addition to organizing a series of at least three TAG meetings to support the strategy refresh process and vision for the future role of the TAG.

Secretariat quarterly report

The Secretariat's first quarter activity report (January through March) was included in the package of materials provided to ELC members in advance of the meeting. No comments or questions were raised.

ECDAN's Finance and Operations Director presented the financial report for the first quarter and responded to questions. Some ELC members questioned what is included in "other project costs" and requested a breakdown or notes to explain this in future reports. ELC members also suggested that understanding how staff time is spent relative to the strategic objectives would be useful in understanding the relative weight of investment in each. It was also pointed out that the expenditure report does not provide a picture of ECDAN's financial health such as what grants are in the pipeline, how much cash is on hand, when existing grants expire, etc. The Director of Finance and Operations clarified that most of ECDAN's grants are for one or two years and that ECDAN has no reserve funds.

2023 workplan and budget

The ELC members were provided with a 2023 activity plan as well as a budget in advance of the meeting. The Co-Chair invited the ED to highlight key elements of the work plan before opening the floor to ELC members to comment. The questions raised included:

- How is ECDAN promoting men’s engagement in parenting?
- How are the collaborative initiatives staffed?
 - HBCC and GISP both have full-time staff hired by ECDAN who are solely dedicated to oversight of those initiatives.
 - Other initiatives are led by existing Secretariat Global Leads (Advocacy and Policy + Technical).

ECDAN’s Finance and Operations Director presented the budget and responded to questions, some of which were similar to the comments on the quarterly expense report. Some of the most important discussion points included:

- Labor and benefits are the largest cost category.
- Consultant fees appear higher because certain core staff are not able to be directly hired by PATH since they due to their residence in countries where PATH is not registered, which is necessary to be compliant with local labor laws, pay required taxes on behalf of local employees, etc. This will need to be considered whether ECDAN is hosted or independent.
- ECDAN’s current active grant balance is \$2.1 million with additional awards projected to reach 2.9 million. This leaves ECDAN with a projected deficit of approximately \$36,000 to match its budget of nearly \$3 million.
- Other project costs include payment of ECDAN’s website, Zoom account, online community platform, and other activity costs.
- ECDAN receives 5% of overhead costs back from PATH to use at its discretion to cover any shortfalls and support proposal development in case that cannot be covered with existing donor funds.

The Co-Chair moved to approve the work plan and budget, which was accepted unanimously by the ELC members.

Pathway to independence

The Co-Chair summarized the discussion held earlier related to the Secretariat’s intention to conduct an analysis of the financial implications of registering as an independent legal entity. Based on the input from ELC members, the Secretariat proposes to do the following:

- Undertake an investigation of multiple registration options and outline the implications (pros and cons) of each (different legal status in different geographic locations)
- Consider different elements beyond just the financial cost of doing business in each scenario. Including legal implications, perception by constituencies (i.e. donors, partners), strategic leverage, and staffing required.

The Secretariat will then select the option that is the most preferable and present it to the ELC at its next meeting. After consideration by the ELC a detailed roadmap can be created for pursuing the selected option.

This plan was endorsed by the ELC members.

Strategy refresh process

The Strategy Consultant reminded ELC members of the next steps in the strategy refresh process and explained the proposed structure and purpose of the Strategy Working Group. A TOR for this working group was provided in the materials given to ELC members to review prior to the meeting.

ELC members discussed their concerns related to how the key points raised during this meeting will be taken forward, how the ELC will guide the strategy working group, and who will be invited into the working group. Ultimately, all ELC members agreed to trust the Secretariat, the Co-Chairs, and the Strategy Consultant to report on and share the proposed membership and work plan for the working group with the rest of the ELC. In case special ELC sessions are required before the next November meeting, members agreed to be ready to participate.

Closing remarks and action items

The Co-Chair thanked the virtual and in-person participants for their attendance, and thanked the Strategy Consultant, Executive Director, and Secretariat staff for organizing such a successful event.

The date and modality for the next meeting in November was not specified. The ARNEC representative proposed holding the November ELC meeting adjacent to ARNEC's regional summit in Singapore.

Action items that ELC members should look forward to in the coming months include:

- The Secretariat will distribute the minutes of the meeting to attendees.
- The Secretariat will conduct and disseminate the analysis of multiple options for legal independence, presenting its most favored option for consideration at the November ELC meeting.
- The ELC Co-Chairs will generate the list of selected candidates for the Strategic Working Group and share it with the larger group.
- The Technical Advisory Group will hold a series of at least three meetings after the ELC convening to provide input to the strategy refresh process and vision for the role of the TAG going forward.
- The Secretariat will include additional breakdown of 'other project costs' in future spending reports and consider allocating staff time to different functions.
- The Strategy Consultant, Core Team, and Strategy Working group, will develop a survey tool for ECDAN's network as well as focus group discussions questions and a list of planned discussions with stakeholders.
- A 4-page consultation draft strategy will be created in September and then distributed for stakeholders (ELC and beyond) to react to before the strategy is fully drafted.