



ECDAN Executive Leadership Council (ELC) Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2024

Virtual Meeting

9:00 AM-12:00 PM EST

In Attendance:

- **Executive Leadership Council Members:** Borhene Chakroun (UNESCO/Co-chair), Ghassan Issa (ANECD), Liana Ghent (ISSA), Sheldon Shaeffer (ARNEC), Erinna Dia (UNICEF), Lisa Bohmer (Hilton Foundation), Mark Tomlinson (Stellenbosch University), Anshu Barnajee (WHO), Bernadette Daelmans (WHO), Joan Lombardi, Marcy Vigoda (SUN), Eduardo Queiroz, Emily Garin (Sesame Workshop), Gabriel Demonbynes (World Bank), Sarthak Goyal (Pratham), George K Werner
- **ECDAN Secretariat:** Elizabeth Lule, Peter Colenso (Strategy Consultant), Emily Gilkinson, Shekufeh Zonji, Brett Weisel, Sarah Marjane, Katherine Shek, Hannah Frohm, Amanda Germanio, Carol Mochoge

Apologies: Lynette Okengo (AfECN), Sneha Sheth (Dost Education), Amina Abubakar (Aga Khan University), Muhammad Musa (CARE), Youssef Hajjar (The Arab Resource Collective), Nikolaj Gilbert (PATH), H.R.H Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan

Welcome and Agenda

ECDAN's Executive Leadership Council (ELC) Co-Chair, Borhene Chakroun, welcomed ELC members and Secretariat staff to a special ELC meeting where the main objective was to approve the new 2024-2028 strategy. The Co-Chair reflected that ELC members have been engaged in many ways over the past several months since the strategy refresh process kicked off in June. He noted that the process has been very inclusive and participatory, with opportunities for stakeholders beyond the ELC to contribute as well. The Co-Chair also acknowledged that this meeting was initially scheduled for December 2023 but had to be rescheduled due to lack of ELC members' availability. Given the importance of this meeting, a decision was made to wait until the new year in order to have maximum participation.

The Co-Chair went through the agenda, explaining that the first half of the meeting would focus on reviewing and approving the strategy, facilitated by Peter Colenso. Then regular business of the ELC would be conducted, and finally there would be a discussion on unlocking financing.

The ELC unanimously adopted the agenda as planned.

The minutes of the last meeting, held June 2023 over two days, were done in two parts: one focused on strategy development and the other on ELC business. These were circulated as part of the package of documents for ELC members to review.

The June 2023 ELC Meeting minutes were unanimously approved as drafted.

Strategy Refresh Approval

Peter Colenso, the Strategy Development Consultant summarized the steps taken during the strategy refresh process, highlighted the stakeholders involved, and noted the substantive feedback incorporated. Since the ELC meeting was postponed from when it was initially scheduled and documents shared on December 6, the Secretariat had time to continue working on finalizing the results framework with endline targets and baselines populated. An updated version was shared with the ELC members via email before the meeting.

After Peter's recap, the Co-Chair opened the floor for comments. Most of the questions and suggestions related to the results framework since that was the document which had been further developed since it was last discussed. The ELC made several recommendations for refining the strategy, with points including:

- The document misses a strong statement about the increase in violence and conflict, which is of particular concern for the Arab Early Childhood Network. Any reference to the polycrisis and humanitarian settings is also missing from the results framework. It was suggested that crisis-specific and language be added. The collaboration with Moving Minds Alliance and other ECDAN partners who specialize in humanitarian settings can be emphasized.
- It was not clear how 2030 SDG targets were calculated for an endline of 2028. WHO, UNICEF and others responsible for SDGs recommended maintaining the 2030 targets for clarity.
 - The Secretariat responded that there is an internal column on the results framework that is not visible in the PDF copy which has a link to the website where the latest available data was found and indicates the year. There is a data lag of a couple years in most cases. It also has the calculations for pro-rating the endline target.
- In some places it is not clear if the target is annual or cumulative. Adding a specification in the measurement tool column or elsewhere would help.
 - The secretariat clarified that all targets are meant to be cumulative except for those that are gathered in a survey and those would reflect and then the endline is an annual measure in 2028.
- The accuracy and ambition of a few specific targets was questioned, specifically webinar attendance (which is lower than the baseline) and partners in collaborative groups (which is less than half of all projected partners). It was recommended to check or explain these.
 - The Secretariat explained that participation in webinars was exceptionally high during COVID lockdown time and has decreased. In setting the target for the coming period, ECDAN looked at webinar registration averages from the past year.
- Using evidence and experience of others to guide policy creation as well as program implementation is important. It was recommended to add this language to strategic objective #2.
- A typo was noted on indicator 1a (IPA).

Overall, the ELC members were very pleased with the clarity and brevity of the document as well as the results framework. A few ELC members requested to go through the results framework again in detail and were asked to send any final comments to the Secretariat in a week's time.

The ELC then officially approved the adoption of strategy contingent upon the Secretariat addressing the comments provided, as possible.

The Co-Chair moved the conversation into a discussion around how the ELC and Secretariat can disseminate the strategy and generate energy and engagement of partners to support implementation of the strategy.

Various ideas were put on the table including:

- ECDAN presence at regional conferences is a good opportunity for visibility. This is planned for the upcoming [AfECN conference](#) in March and others when dates are known.
- Presenting at the [Summit of the Future](#) happening in NYC in September is another opportunity.
- Writing a blog and preparing social media posts to promote the strategy beyond the usual members to generate excitement would be good. If ECDAN could be featured in some media articles that could reach an even wider audience.
- The Second [World Summit for Social Development](#), planned for 2025, is another opportunity. Organization is starting already.
- It would be a good idea to have meetings with bilateral donors.
 - Some progress has been made with USAID. ECDAN has been engaged in their CATALYZE project.
 - Canada and Australia have also shown interest in this work. Grand Challenges Canada has been a door opener. Both Canada and Australia have contributed to the World Bank's Invest in Childcare initiative.
 - FCDO (UK Aid) has been less engaged.
- The strategy adoption is an opportunity to galvanize funders and get their contribution to implementation. A consultation was held with philanthropic donors and now follow-up will be needed.

ELC members were asked to share contacts they have with bilateral, funders, media, event organizers, and other target audiences. ELC members committed to taking an active role in disseminating the strategy and getting buy-in.

ELC Business

Committee reports

The ELC members were provided with minutes from each committee meeting as part of the package of documents circulated before the meeting. The Steering Committee, Nominations Committee, and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) presented briefly about their recent meetings.

- The Steering Committee noted that many of their members participated in the Strategy Working Group to support the refresh process. The committee's one official meeting prepared for this full ELC meeting.
- The Nominations Committee reported it has had only one meeting since the Paris meeting. Their work has focused on cultivating high-level champions, and developing a formal strategy, Terms of Reference, budget, and process for supporting champions. The Nominations Committee is on standby for further guidance on how it can support

ECDAN's possible independence by establishing a formal governing Board of Directors, once a decision is made about ECDAN registration as a legal entity.

- The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) reported that Amina Abubakar has stepped down as co-chair due to scheduling conflicts. The search to find a successor is underway. The TAG has been very engaged in the strategy refresh process and this has invigorated the TAG in many ways. During the last TAG meeting the group discussed how it might refine its role to increase its focus and its prestige. Having a concrete project to work on such as the landscape report and the strategy was productive. One idea generated was to consider publishing an annual commentary on ECD issues. Other suggestions focused on how the TAG could be structured to provide specific technical feedback on initiatives.
- Although not a governance committee, the chair of the Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group's (GPAAG) requested that GPAAG's role be considered a potential addition to the governance structure as it has a central role in ECDAN's technical work related to advocacy. The Executive Director noted that GPAAG has been key for the Global Childcare Campaign and has kept partners connected and could be restructured to address other emerging issues.

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Secretariat quarterly reports

The Secretariat's second and third quarter activity and financial reports (April through September 2023) were included in the package of materials provided to ELC members in advance of the meeting. The Executive Director highlighted a number of key achievements that included:

- UNGA and COP28 have been inspiring and encouraging milestones. There has been great interest, energy and synergy between partners. Youth leaders have been involved. We made several breakthroughs at this meeting. COPE 28 included a children's day. For the first time in 30 years, children were included in the report and the Loss and Damage Fund. It was agreed to have an Experts Dialogue during the UNFCCC June meeting in Bonn.
- NurtureFirst, the home-based childcare collaborative, launched in December with its new name and brand. It will likely be spun off and no longer incubated by ECDAN in 2024.
- The Strengthening systems for ECD work is progressing. BRAC is hosting a meeting for childcare systems group members in early February in Bangladesh.
- GISP is hosting a partners and donor meeting in Geneva in mid-January.
- ECDAN will participate in regional meetings and is planning side event on childcare advocacy with ECD and women's equality partners in Tanzania in March.
- ECDAN will have a follow up meeting with partners who engaged in COP28 to prepare for the experts' consultation planned in June as well as chart the way forward for climate change working group.

No comments or questions were raised.

PATH is still working to close the books for the financial year that ended on December 31, 2023. The Secretariat will share the Q4 narrative and financial reports via email once the books are closed. This is expected in early February. Then the Secretariat will work on preparing its annual report for publication.

The Executive Director shared that a consultant was hired and is completing an analysis of legal independence options and costs. Once this report is finalized it will be shared with the ELC and a special meeting will be called to discuss the findings and chart the way forward.

The Executive Director also shared that the Secretariat will have its annual planning retreat in February. The team will work on crafting implementation plan for the five-year strategy as well as the 2024 budget and work plan. This will be circulated via email as well once complete and can be discussed and approved at the same meeting.

Roundtable on ECD Financing

The Co-Chair opened the floor for discussion and partner updates related to unlocking ECD financing. ECDAN facilitated a virtual meeting on this topic on November 21 as a follow up to its in-person session at UNGA. Several key points were highlighted including:

- New funds related to nutrition are an opportunity.
- There is an education financing network hosted by USAID.
- ECDAN is having discussions with GPE and advocating for them to increase their spending on the early years beyond 11%.
- ECDAN intends to set up a regular financing working group that will continue to meet and help partners collaborate in unlocking financing for ECD.
- Sesame Workshop has been focusing on responding to crises. Asking for the unique needs of young children and caregivers to be prioritized within specific investments (i.e. humanitarian actions, WASH, health, education) has been more successful in getting initiatives funded and integrated into existing sectors than making a distinct ECD ask.
- Consensus is needed around what “more and better financing” means. Sesame Workshop did an exercise, and the results were varied, which is part of the problem in advocating to Ministers of Finance. Development partners need to be consistent and repetitive instead of asking for different things. Sesame Workshop will be convening donors in the fall to prepare for the Summit of the Future. There is a need to get more concrete around how much money is needed to do what. After that is clear there could be a convening to push for pledges.
- UNESCO has been working on organizing a meeting for Ministries of Finance and Education to facilitate alignment. They are also organizing pre-Summit of the Future events to discuss reforms to how governments allocate financing for education and other development priorities. Planning is underway for a global Ministries of Education meeting on SDG4, which will be held in October 2024 in Brazil. They will also be launching a global report to follow up on the Tashkent Declaration.
- WHO noted the G7 will be adding nutrition to its agenda, and the G20 will be adding equity to the Brazil meeting agenda. Highlighting the impact of global migration and climate change on young children and pregnant women could unlock other pools of funding. W.A.S.H. and gender equity resources are other opportunities.
- UNICEF is focused on working with country-level governments on investing in ECD and has seen greater funding allocation. UNICEF has created a training module on public financing for children that with an ECD module. UNICEF is interested in breaking down requests to Ministers of Finance into actionable items.
- There are potential untapped resources in Gulf countries.
- There is a group of CSOs and government partners in Brazil that we could connect with for the G20 presidency. The wife of the finance minister is a champion for ECD. ECDAN

partnered with TheirWorld to collect signatures for a letter to President DeSilva that was delivered by Gordon Brown.

Closing remarks and action items

The Co-Chair thanked the participants for their attendance and celebrated the momentous achievement of adopting a new strategy for the coming five years. The Co-chair opened the floor for the Executive Director and participants to nominate dates and locations for the next ELC meeting. Nominations included:

- An in-person meeting (contingent on funding availability) in April around the IMF/WBG spring meeting, in June, or in September around UNGA, though hotels will be expensive.
- UNESCO would be willing to host the meeting in Paris again.
- The meeting could be a side event to a Regional Network's annual meeting.
 - ARNEC Regional Conference will be in Penang, Malaysia from May 27-30.
 - ANECD Regional Forum will in Morocco in September.
 - ISSA's Conference will be in Sofia, Bulgaria from October 22-24.

The date and modality for the next meeting were not specified. The options will be considered, and a decision communicated.

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

- ELC members to submit any final comments on the strategy within one week (by January 17).
- The Secretariat to make edits to the strategy to address the feedback from the ELC and then distribute the finalized and professionally designed strategy document.
- ELC members to share contacts of bilaterals and other contacts who can contribute to launching and implementing the new strategy.
- The Secretariat to circulate its Q4 narrative and financial reports via email after the financial books are closed.
- The Secretariat to prepare its 2024 workplan and budget and share via email for review and approval.
- The Secretariat to disseminate the analysis of multiple options for legal independence and call a meeting to discuss the way forward.
- The Secretariat to formalize a financing working group to continue the discussion on coordinating on this issue.
- The Secretariat and Co-Chairs to propose a meeting time and location after considering budget availability.