



ECDAN Executive Leadership Council Meeting Minutes

September 19, 2024

Washington, DC

9:00 AM-5:00 PM EST

In Attendance:

- **Executive Leadership Council Members - in person:** Borhene Chakroun (ELC Co-Chair/UNESCO), Lynette Okengo (ELC Co-Chair, AfECN), Joan Lombardi, Mark Tomlinson (Stellenbosch University), Amer Hasan (WBG), Liana Ghent (ISSA), Erinna Dia (UNICEF), Lisa Bohmer (Hilton Foundation), Samyukta Subramanian (Pratham), Muhammad Musa (BRAC IED), Kammerle Schneider (PATH)
- **Executive Leadership Council Members - virtual:** Sheldon Shaeffer (ARNEC), Sheila Maina (WHO), Anshu Banerjee (WHO), Ghassan Issa (ANECD), Emily Garin (Sesame Workshop)
- **ECDAN Secretariat - in person:** Elizabeth Lule, Sarah Marjane, Emily Gilkinson, Brett Weisel, Shekufeh Zonji, Hannah Frohm, Katherine Shek

Apologies: Sneha Sheth (Dost Education), Youssef Hajjar (The Arab Resource Collective), H.R.H. Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan, Eduardo Quieroz (Bracell Foundation), George K. Werner (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Center), Dr. Joanne Raisin (SUN)

Welcome and Agenda

ECDAN's Executive Leadership Council (ELC) Co-Chair, Borhene Chakroun, welcomed ELC members and Secretariat staff to the 2024 in-person ELC meeting. He then invited Kamm Schneider, PATH's Chief Global Health Programs Officer, to speak as the meeting was hosted at PATH's Washington DC office. She welcomed the group and expressed her gratitude for the commitment of partners that makes ECDAN's impact possible.

Materials for the meeting were shared with members a week in advance, including the meeting agenda. The co-chair reviewed the meeting agenda and asked for it to be adopted by the members.

The ELC unanimously adopted the agenda as planned.

The next order of business was approval of the ELC meeting minutes. The minutes from the April 2024 meeting were shared in advance.

The ELC unanimously approved the minutes as drafted.

The Executive Director then highlighted that as a matter of procedure, ELC members should annually submit a conflict of interest (COI) declaration. The COI form was included in the meeting materials.

ELC members did not complete the form physically in the meeting and agreed to fill it in and submit it electronically to the Secretariat for filing.

Committee Reports

Minutes for the previous Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meetings were shared in advance. The committee chairs shared relevant updates with the ELC.

Lynette reported that the Steering Committee meeting focused primarily on preparing the ELC meeting agenda.

Mark, Chair of the TAG, shared the following highlights from the TAG meetings:

- The TAG co-chair stepped down last year and a successor has not been elected.
- The TAG collaborated on drafting an open letter to the children of the world on the polycrisis, which they are still attempting to get published.
- There was discussion in line with the new strategy about repurposing TAG to be more focused and proactive by raising issues to the ELC and Secretariat and proposing actions, but this change has not been realized. The Open Letter though was an attempt to collaboratively produce something of value.
- Climate change and AI and their disproportionate effects on children are areas the TAG has recently discussed. In the last meeting they provided feedback on the terms of reference (ToR) for the Early Years Financing Technical Working Group.
- There are still many people on the TAG list who are not actively engaging. Mark recommends restructuring the TAG and making it much smaller with a clearer mandate.
- There is a conflict of interest with members of the TAG advising ECDAN as many members compete with ECDAN for the same funding opportunities.

The floor was opened for ELC members to make comments and ask questions about the committees. It was noted that:

- There are too many committees and there is overlap and duplication between them as all play an advisory role. The Steering Committee duplicates the role of the full ELC and the functions are overlapping.
- The committees and advisory groups have played a historic role in ECDAN's governance transition from the Interim Executive Committee to the ELC, but with a new strategy it might be timely to re-evaluate.
- The committees should be tied to the strategy and support its implementation and functions clearly delineated.

Action:

The Secretariat to prepare a 2-page document redefining and clarifying the mandate of the committees and working groups in line with the new strategy, proposing what will add value to the strategy implementation and reduce administrative burden.

Secretariat Reports

ECDAN Secretariat Highlights

ECDAN's quarter two report was shared in advance of the meeting along with highlights in pictures of activities that have taken place since the April meeting. The Executive Director shared some notable updates, which included:

- The strategy launch has continued with dissemination at ARNEC and OMEP meetings and through its social media platforms.
- ECDAN's 2023 annual report was released and shared broadly.
- The Systems Masterclass, a collaboration effort with Harvard University and the University of Chicago's NORC, included 14 expert-led sessions in a two-week period. It was free but offered a digital certification for those who attended more than 7 sessions. It was very well received and hugely appreciated with over 12,480 registrations and 4,000 live attendees, with more watching the recordings.
- Working with multiple partners from Childcare, Gender Equity and Women Economic Empowerment, a proposal was prepared to support capacity strengthening of local advocates to generate public demand in a few countries selected countries.
- ECDAN has been building bridges with children's rights groups and contributed to the Expert Dialogue at the UNFCCC meeting in Bonn on the disproportionate impact of climate change on children.
- ECDAN has spun off its incubated initiative, NurtureFirst to be implemented by the Global Development Incubator.
- ECDAN has celebrated the graduation of its 2023 Knowledge Fellows cohort and has onboarded 8 new Fellows for the 2024 cohort.
- The process for ECDAN to become an independent entity has been put on hold until multi-year funding is available.
- A consultation with ECD donors was held in August to discuss resource needs to implement the new strategy.
- The Global Advocacy Lead provided an overview of ECDAN's champion engagement process. A terms of reference and resource kit outlining the role of ECD champions has been developed and was shared in the pre-reading materials. The vision is to be purposeful about selecting champions across various spheres of influence and intentionally growing relationships, raising voices, and leveraging opportunities.

Action:

The ECDAN Secretariat will meet with its donors twice a year to keep them informed of ECDAN's progress and align on priorities and seek their help to raise more program support to support the implementation of the strategy.

Given that donors are shifting priorities, the Secretariat will need to prioritize to do fewer things and do them well.

ECDAN Financial Report

ECDAN's Director of Finance and Operations presented the financial report for the second quarter and provided some explanations. The report was also shared in advance of the meeting. Key details included:

- After quarter two, total expenditure is at 46% of the annual budget, which is healthy.
- Consultant spending was slightly lower as many deliverables are due in Q3 for consultants and sub-agreements.

- The diversity of funders has dropped and there are several grants ending that are not being renewed due to changing donor strategies.
- There are 5-6 donors who have committed funding for 2025. There is a projected shortfall of 30% for 2025 at this point.

ECDAN's Sustainability and Governance

ECDAN's independent registration process is paused for now as discussions with donors are ongoing about multi-year funding and rebalancing project support with program support. ECDAN will need to explore new resource mobilization sources beyond philanthropic funders to meet its fundraising goals.

The Secretariat has a draft resource mobilization plan and will be working to map and approach potential bilateral, private sector, and philanthropic funding opportunities and organizing outreach.

Action:

ELC members to prioritize fundraising for ECDAN as part of their mandate and provide guidance on private-sector fundraising. The ED will follow up and set up individual meetings with ELC members to discuss resource mobilization strategy.

Governance

It was noted that the governance changes will need to be done in alignment with the Constitution in terms of rotation of ELC members and adding new committees or advisory groups that are part of the overall governing structure. The ELC has never formally evaluated its performance and this may also be timely.

Action:

- **The Secretariat to refer to the ECDAN Constitution and coordinate with the Co-Chairs and the Nominations Committee regarding ELC member rotation as well as make a proposal on committees and advisory groups.**
- **The ELC to review self-assessment tools and reflect how effectively the ELC is delivering on its mandate.**

Collaboration Mechanisms

A proposal was made for the Global Policy and Advocacy Advisory Group (GPAAG) to be restructured, made smaller, be given a broader focus than just childcare, and elevated to be part of ECDAN's governance structure.

The ELC advised that delineation between GPAAG and TAG as TAG is also restructured will be important.

A framework of the networks' collaborative and engagement structures was presented. The ELC advised the Secretariat to streamline and simplify the structures, ensure efficiency, and tailor the structures to strategy priorities and Secretariat capacity.

Action:

The ELC was open to having the GPAAG as part of the governance structure and requested the Secretariat to prepare a network map of all the collaborative groups showing how they connect and contribute to the strategy.

Unlocking Financing for ECD

The ED introduced the discussion on unlocking financing by reminding ELC members that this was identified as a priority in the strategy as real change at scale requires more significant investment in the early years.

ECDAN is already partnering with Theirworld on the Act for Early Years global campaign and has co-organized several in person and virtual events. The value addition of ECDAN to the global campaign is defining the how to make financing more equitable and efficient while taking a deep dive into innovative financing and new sources of financing.

ECDAN will host a roundtable of global partners during UNGA to map what different partnerships and organizations are doing and get inputs on how to advance this work in a collaborative way. The Secretariat is proposing to set up an Early Years Technical Financing Working Group, host a masterclass on unlocking financing, and co-host a global Technical Forum in 2025 leading to a Pledging Financing Summit to be co-organized with Theirworld and other partners in 2026.

The Global Technical Lead provided a presentation on the state of financing for the early years, drawing from available reports. After the presentation, the ED opened a discussion on how this might move forward and what the objectives might be. Notable points raised included:

- The scope will need to be narrowed to what is feasible, especially considering the budget and capacity constraints.
- Building the capacity of civil society to engage with governments and generate public demand is critical.
- “Innovative financing” may imply leveraging private sector funding and other sources such as debt swaps or the International Financing Facility for Education, but governments must not be let off the hook although they currently face fiscal space constraints and debt burden.
- Data constraints on tracking financing persist in many countries.
- The partnership with Theirworld is key as it adds valuable global influence with ECDAN and Regional ECD networks providing essential country-level connections through their partners.
- Local government also plays a role in allocation of funds and mayors should be engaged as they have the ability to invest, not just ministers of finance.
- UNICEF’s financing work will be packaged in a training. UNICEF has good case studies that could be showcased.
- It is necessary to build bridges between movements and multisectoral ECD experts, social policy, and sector economists to address the technical aspects of unlocking financing for young children.

The ELC endorsed the ToR for the Technical Financing Group.

Partner Data

The Senior Program Officer presented on the demographics of the network partners, showcasing diversity and very rapid growth. The Secretariat has worked to compile and organize its partner data to make such metrics accessible.

Action:

The ELC members recommended this type of data should be disseminated more widely amongst donors to add to fundraising efforts. They added that knowing more about what the partners are doing can help tell the story of collective impact.

Partner Updates

ELC members shared their organizational updates.

- ARNEC: The conference in Malaysia in May was a great success. The conference involved 500+ participants from 48 countries, 8 ministers/parliamentarians, and 6 keynote speakers. The 2025 Conference will be held in the Philippines, with the theme of ECD and inclusion and local governance in ECD delivery.
- ISSA: The conference is coming up on October 22-24, in Bulgaria. The focus is on ECD Ecosystems and ISSA is expecting a large representation from government from all over Europe and Central Asia. ISSA has also been working with 53 cities to support cultivation of a network mindset by mapping services and starting integrated planning.
- AfECN: The 2024 conference took place in March in Tanzania. Next year's conference will be in West Africa and will take place in quarter three. AfECN has supported five countries to undertake childcare dialogues and climate dialogues are starting in three countries. The African Union's Year of Education continental strategy review is underway for 2025. There will be a meeting in February 2025.
- UNICEF: UNICEF will be holding events at UNGA on Monday focused on how to scale impact for ECD, in addition to a dinner with South American first ladies on Sunday to focus on policy influence. The UNICEF Fellowship program is newly launched and new partnerships with universities to focus on parenting tools and identifying gaps.
- The ANECD team and other regional partners are embroiled in unstable geopolitical conditions. The Gaza situation is increasingly forgotten due to media fatigue and more targeted outreach and raising of awareness and shows of solidarity are needed.
- ECDAN will be holding 3 events at UNGA the details of which were shared in the pre-reading materials. The Secretariat has been in touch with the Royal Foundation to discuss engagement opportunities for the Princess of Wales as a global champion.
- Other upcoming meetings that ECDAN will participate in include the UNESCO GEM meeting in Brazil and the interministerial meeting on ending violence against children in Colombia on November 7-8.

Action:

ELC members directed the Secretariat to develop a shared calendar where global events are tracked.

Closing remarks and action items

The Co-Chairs thanked the participants for their attendance and thanked the Secretariat staff for organizing such a successful and productive meeting.

Action items that were agreed upon in the meeting include:

- The ELC members will complete the conflict of interest form and submit to the Secretariat for filing.
- The Secretariat will prepare a brief document proposing and defining a new structure for the governance committees and technical working groups clarifying how they work together yet are distinct.
- ELC members will share fundraising ideas with the ED through individual meetings.
- The Secretariat will move forward with reconstituting GPAAG and TAG.
- The Secretariat will work with the Nominations Committee on members' transitions and develop a network structural map.
- The Secretariat will share partnership data with funders.
- The Secretariat will map what others are doing related to early years financing and proceed with setting up the technical working group.
- The Secretariat and ELC members will collaborate to create and maintain a shared rolling calendar of events and conferences to better coordinate participation with one another.