

ECW ExCom Meeting Minutes

13 February 2019
Stockholm, Sweden

EXCOM MEMBERS:

Nancy Smyth (Canada - ExCom Chair), Yasmine Sherif (ECW Director), Dean Brooks (INEE), Daniel Endres (UNHCR), Justin van Fleet (Representative of the Chair of HLSG), Annica Floren (European Commission, on behalf of Aida Liha Matejicek), Camilla Helgø Fossberg (NORAD/Norway), Maria Agnese Giordano (Global Education Cluster), Linda Jones (UNICEF, on behalf of Jo Bourne), Alicia Herbert (DFID/UK), Kerstin Holst (UNESCO), Annina Mattsson (Dubai Cares), Nicolai Steen Nielsen (Denmark), Joseph Nhan-O'Reilly (Save the Children), Nina Papadopoulos (USAID), Pdraig Power (GPE), Anna Rosendahl (SIDA/Sweden), Eline Ruisendaal (Netherlands), Ben Sadek (Plan International), Margriet Schreuders (Deutsche Postcode Lotterie)

ACCOMPANYING OFFICIALS:

Alice Birnbaum (Canada), Alexandra Galeitzke (GIZ/Germany), Thomas Lid Ball (Norway), Randi Gramshaug (Norad/Norway), Stijn DE-LAMEILLIEURE (European Commission), Tomas Lundström (Sida/Sweden), Thomas Ostermann (Denmark), Ita Sheehy (UNHCR), Emily Todd (DFID/UK), Emma Spicer (DFID/UK), Emma Wagner (Save the Children), Sara-Kate Goltz-Wharton (DFAT/Australia)

ECW SECRETARIAT STAFF:

Michael Corlin, David Hartstone, Graham Lang, Li Peng, Christian Stoff

OBSERVERS

Yousuf Caires (UAE), Eman Hableel (UAE)

APOLOGIES:

Rudolf Huber (BMZ/Germany), Aida Liha Matejicek (European Commission), Jo Bourne (UNICEF)

SUMMARY OF EXCOM MEETING

The Chair convened the meeting and outlined the items on the agenda and key decisions of the meeting, namely,

- To approve the replenishment of First Emergency Response window to US\$24.7Million
- To decide on the option for the review mechanism for Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRP) and Acceleration Facility grants
- To approve the Acceleration Facility Strategy

SESSION 1: Director's Briefing

The Director provided a briefing on ECW's lessons learned to date, a financial update, the Annual Work Plan, the Operations Manual Task Team and the criteria for First Emergency Response, followed by a request for replenishing the First Emergency Response (FER) reserve for 2019.

On the lessons learnt, she highlighted:

- 1) The benefit of donors taking on a co-lead in-country at the outset and during formulation of MYRPs, as this brings strong donor ownership and support for the MYRPs.
- 2) The importance of strong grantees on the ground, either UN agencies or major international NGOs to ensure accountability, since fund management cannot be monitored from New York. However, she stressed the need for continued investment in local capacity and civil society through in-country grantees.

- 3) The need for ExCom to work jointly with the Secretariat in resolving challenges for grantees on the ground, especially where grantees are represented in ExCom.
- 4) Bridging the humanitarian-development divide through adaptation and flexibility, adopting a combination of humanitarian and development principles suited for crisis environments.
- 5) ECW success depends primarily on results and sustainable impact, which attracts financial resources, which in turn is also linked to alignment with broader multilateral reforms supported by donor governments, EU and the WB.
- 6) The importance of reassessing the lead-time for delivery of FERs and MYRPs to ensure that ECW delivers on its promise of both speed and quality. This requires vigilance of redundant bureaucracy in order to focus on results in-country.

The Chair opened the floor for ExCom members to comment on the Director's update.

Financial update

The Financial report could benefit from more narrative and explanation. ExCom suggested improving the finance report with deeper and broader financial analysis, focusing on:

- More narrative detail, more explanation of the calculations, and better labeling of the different rows and columns.
- Adding narrative around the utilization rate/delivery rates ("burn-rates") both from the Secretariat to the field and at the field level to the beneficiaries.
- The rationale behind delays (for example in Somalia or Afghanistan)
- Getting inputs through close collaboration with Secretariat country-leads, who know each situation and are in constant contact with grantees in-country.
- The above feedback is also an indication of expectations on the Annual Report.

The ECW Director welcomed the suggestions put forward by ExCom. She stressed that the Secretariat will work with the Financial Task Team to further develop the financial reporting. She also indicated that more elaborative financial reporting will be managed by the in-coming Deputy Director, who will have a strong financial background. She welcomed the suggestions of creating a dashboard.

Decisions and Actions

- **ECW will provide comprehensive financial analysis for the next ExCom in June.**
- **Financial Task team will be reactivated to work with Secretariat Country-leads to develop the narrative in advance of ExCom meetings**

Lessons learned and AWP

ExCom inquired about the risk of inappropriate use of funds by local NGOs, how to monitor in-country resources, and using capacity from hosting agencies to improve financial management.

The Director provided further clarification:

- 1) As per the transparency policy, the Director informs the ExCom Chair of any alleged allegations of fraud. There have been no verified allegations related to local partners contracted by ECW so far. However, it is commonly recognized that implementation through local partners in conflict-affected countries has to be managed and monitored at the point of delivery, i.e. in-country.
- 2) While an internal system is being put in place to monitor the in-country resources, country-leads travel frequently to the field to conduct monitoring and provide technical support and capacity development.
- 3) There are timelines on milestones in the AWP and comments have been incorporated. If anything has been left out, the Secretariat will ensure these are incorporated and will re-circulate the AWP.
- 4) As per the hosting agreement, ECW is using UNICEF's capacity on human resources, legal and negotiation of financial donor agreements. This is different from the financial investments

and operational planning and programming activities, which are managed by the ECW Secretariat and the ECW governance structure.

The ECW Senior Education Advisor further explained that monthly calls take place with countries, to regularly monitor the situation and help find solutions to any bottlenecks. The Initial Investment in Yemen, for example, has been problematic, but the Secretariat has had several calls with in-country partners to sort it out.

On FER replenishment

The Director stated that the request for replenishment of First Emergency Response Window was US\$24.7 million, which was a target established by HLSG at its September 2018 meeting. She then outlined the criteria for using FER funds and also stressed that “life-saving activities” require rapid decision-making during the most critical moments, or else it would be difficult to argue that it was ‘life-saving.’”

ExCom noted that where there is a gap between the end of the FER and the start of the MYRP, a bridge finance mechanism should be explored to allow activities to continue under the FER modality until MYRP seed funding kicks in. Further discussion is needed about bridging between the FER and MYRP, particularly with regard to grantee selection. The grantee for the FER may not necessarily be the best-placed to act as grantee for the MYRP.

Decision and Action

- **ExCom approved the 24.7 M RM target for the First Emergency Response Reserve and agreed to conduct a review against resource mobilization targets at the June meeting.**

Session 2: Review Panel

ExCom members expressed consensus in support of the option of External Review Panel with the following comments,

- Keep the review process quick.
- Provide further information on the cost implication related to establishing the external review panel.
- Develop a shared understanding of what a good proposal looks like to ensure coherence in the quality.
- Consideration of a chair on the Panel to act as the focal point for both the Secretariat and ExCom, to moderate in the case there is no consensus, and to coordinate feedback and integration of comments into proposals.
- Clarify the feedback mechanism for looping back to ExCom.

Decision and Action

- **ExCom approved the External Review Panel
The Secretariat to prepare an update in advance of the HLSG meeting on how this will be taken forward, including cost, developing rosters and selecting qualified experts.**

Session 3: Resource Mobilization

The representative of the Chair of HLSG recapped the discussion at the ExCom retreat last November and reiterated that 2019 is a replenishment year according to the approval of HLSG to reach the RM target determined under the Strategic Plan.

ExCom expressed their support to assist in the preparation and follow-up of a replenishment event, stressing the following needs,

- The indicative timeline of the replenishment event and any related plans, including processes and moments
- Precise figures and numbers and further clarification of RM targets.
- The urgency of matching HLSG member to high level events.

ECW Director thanked ExCom members for their offer to support and share responsibility:

- 1) ECW has exceeded its RM target two years in a row (based on the revised targets approved by HLSG). While ECW started with limited RM capacity, all staff in the secretariat are contributing to RM in one or another way, depending on their area of responsibility.
- 2) The replenishment event will be most effective if it takes place during UNGA week. The practical preparations will start now. Meanwhile, it needs to be preceded by bilateral discussions, which are ongoing.
- 3) The draft Case for Investment will be shared with ExCom in early March
- 4) All ExCom members are invited to come forward and host or support a replenishment event during UNGA week in September.
- 5) Welcomed the sense of responsibility and support from ExCom members to organize visits to capitals and meeting with congress or parliaments for the Secretariat

Decisions and Actions

- **The draft Case for Investment will be shared in early March**
- **A short options paper on how HLSG members can support RM, including bilateral events and private sector engagement will be developed.**

Session 4: Acceleration Facility Strategy

ExCom congratulated the Secretariat on the completion of the strategy and expressed its broad support for the overall approach.

Discussion focused primarily on the operationalization, resources and workload:

- With limited capacity in Secretariat, reassurances that the proposed objectives, which are ambitious, can be achieved.
- A suggestion to include a section on how the Strategy will be monitored as the version submitted does not propose any measurement mechanism or indicators
- Whilst it is helpful to see the indicative budget, the Secretariat should retain the flexibility to allocate resources across the objectives as appropriate, rather than be constrained by the figures presented in Strategy.
- The indicative strategic actions outlined in the Strategy potentially imply a large number of small grants which increase the transaction costs for the Secretariat and will impact on its capacity to effectively manage these investments. The Secretariat should consider an approach which combines the development of small and large grants under the Acceleration Facility to better balance and manage the associated workload.
- More emphasis should be put in the Strategy on ensuring that investments will target marginalized groups. It was noted that Gender has been removed as specific objective and is now a cross-cutting theme and ExCom members highlighted the need to ensure that this will not negatively impact on the implementation of the Gender Strategy (which had originally been slated to be largely financed by the Acceleration Facility).
- Larger initiatives and regional proposals should be encouraged, as should support to strengthening data collection and analysis to help bridge the humanitarian-development divide.

In response to the query on capacity to implement the proposed objectives, the Senior Education Adviser explained that funds for the first year of the Strategy (amounting to USD\$5.7m) are now available. More detailed planning has therefore already been undertaken by the Secretariat on the use of these funds to implement priority strategic actions and ExCom feedback on balancing larger and smaller grants will be factored into these plans. In relation to supporting the implementation of the Gender Strategy, this will be supported from several different sources of funding, including the Secretariat Budget and Multi-Year Resilience programme funds as well as from the Acceleration Facility.

In response to a query on the targeted support funding modality, the Director highlighted that her HLSG-delegated authority to approve proposals under US\$500,000 is a strategic tool and enables ECW to move with the agility and accountability it has been set up to pursue. She also noted that whilst the work on the Acceleration Facility is important, it must not take disproportionate amounts of time away from Secretariat staff – the priority is the MYRPs and FERs, which are the unique added value of ECW.

Decision and Action

- **The Acceleration Strategy was approved in principle, pending integration of comments received.**
- **The Secretariat will circulate a final version of the Strategy which will take into account additional comments from ExCom both during the meeting and those received in writing.**

Session 5: Global Partners' Project report

A briefing was provided by representatives from UNHCR, INEE and GEC on the report. This report serves as background to a set of country case studies that further explore country-level coordinated planning and response. It presents a global mapping and framework for analysis of formal coordination approaches for education planning and response in emergencies and protracted crises.

Session 6: ECW Monitoring and Evaluation Approach

The ECW Senior Education Economist gave a presentation outlining ECW's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) approaches, capacity development goals, reporting timelines as well as key documents and tools. ExCom members expressed appreciation for the presentation and noted the high ambition of this plan and suggested prioritization.

Actions and Decisions:

- **ECW Secretariat to explore simplifying the list of indicators based on a rapid review. It is a light process, not intended to reopen the discussion on the results framework.**
- **ExCom members expressed their readiness to offer technical support of their M&E staff in any related discussion through an informal interest group, as needed in the future.**

Session 7: The Global Compact for Refugee

The Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions in UNHCR gave a briefing:

- 1) The Refugee Compact affirms a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to refugee situations and development actors have a vital role to play in responding to refugee emergencies and protracted situations. ECW can be a mechanism and a tool to promote education for refugee children and youth.
- 2) Fifteen countries have rolled out the Compact's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which has mobilized \$6.5 billion that would have not been accessible through traditional financing. In Ethiopia, Uganda and Djibouti, the narratives of refugee policy were changed to grant more rights to refugees.
- 3) This is a forward-looking agenda and should be brought to the HLSG.
- 4) The UNHCR Director drew attention to the crisis in Venezuela, the application of the Global Compact and invited ECW to support a speedy response to education needs identified.
- 5) The global Refugee Forum will take place in December in Geneva and ECW could take part in it and explore linkages to additional replenishment.

Session 8: ECW Corporate Risk Framework

ECW Director gave a brief presentation discussing the strategic implications of these documents, especially the updated Corporate Risk Framework. She highlighted the importance to achieve quality results with the required speed, as the top-priority. To mitigate risks, she emphasized the need to: (a) work together collectively to stay the course and be fit for purpose; (b) jointly mobilize the required resources; (d) deliver as one across the humanitarian/development divide; (e) be alert to - and reduce

- redundant bureaucracy; (f) mitigate delays and stay focused on delivery and results in the field. In response to a query, she agreed that all MYRPs should have a political context analysis. This is produced in-country and should be incorporated in the MYRPs. Regarding providing funding to local NGOs as grantees, further discussion is needed, perhaps in the context of the Results Report.

Session 9: Pakistan and Iraq

The request to discuss possibility of fast-tracking Iraq and Pakistan MYRPs came from the Chair of HLSG, who was approached by the governments with queries for support. The ECW Director gave a summary of each situation and rationale and noted that both are part of the 25 MYRP target countries approved by HLSG for the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.

The discussion focused on the value added of ECW for those two countries. ExCom suggested the Secretariat gather more information and consider supporting advocacy efforts at this stage rather than bringing forward the MYRP financing or using the FER modality.

Session 10: Earmarking and Attribution of Funds

The ECW Programme Specialist for grants and Recipient Support gave a brief presentation on ECW's current approach in managing earmarked funds and emphasized that results are reported across ECW and not publicly attributed to any specific donor.

ExCom appreciated the flexibility offered by ECW's model and whilst in general it prefers unearmarked contributions to ECW, it also recognizes that donors have political constraints and strategic priorities for their ECW investments and so this may not be appropriate in all circumstances.

ExCom welcomes the revision of Standard Contribution Agreement revision as the opportunity to put in place an effective system to track funds and standardize reporting.

In response to a query whether those who don't earmark, in case of allegations of fraud, will be informed, the ECW Director assured that all donors will be notified.

SUMMARY of Actions

- **The Chair concluded the session stating that ECW preference is for less earmarking. She noted that ECW is currently consolidating comments received on the SCA and hopes that donors will be able to sign on to the revised version of the SCA.**

Session 11: HLSG preparation:

The Chair set out the papers for HLSG at their next meeting on 11 April: The Humanitarian-Development Nexus Note, the Resource Mobilization Case for Investment and Options Note including the role for HLSG members, Director's update. These documents will be shared by March 18. The HLSG will be updated with results overview. She also suggested inviting observers to the HLSG.

SUMMARY OF KEY EXCOM DECISIONS AND ACTION POINTS:

- A lessons learned paper will be produced as per the Workplan.
- Red flags signaled by the Director (CAR and Yemem) should move forward as soon as possible
- ECW will provide a financial narrative with more elaboration on calculations, burn rate and rationale. This narrative will be used to inform ExCom of planning activities for the upcoming replenishment.
- The updated AWP will be re-circulated to ExCom, reflecting all comments received.
- ExCom approved the replenishment of the First Emergency Response(FER) Window to \$24.7 million, aligning with the RM Targets approved by HLSG last September. The targets and relevant work will be reviewed in June ExCom in-person meeting.
- The relationship between FER and MYRP mechanisms to be discussed further.
- ExCom reviewed the two recommendations and agreed the Secretariat moves forward with the External Review Panel, taking into consideration the comments received.

- ExCom approved the Acceleration Facility Strategy in principle pending incorporation of comments. The Secretariat will circulate a final version of the Strategy which takes into account any changes as a result of ExCom feedback. Meanwhile, it was also agreed that Secretariat could go ahead with the implementation.
- The Case for Investment to be shared by early March.
- An options note for HLSG support to be prepared by Secretariat for the upcoming HLSG meeting
- Monitoring and Evaluation plan includes an evaluation in 2019
- Agreement that a discussion on supporting local NGOs is needed. On Pakistan and Iraq, opportunities for advocacy should be considered
- On earmarking, there is no change proposed and ExCom appreciated that any alleged fraud incidents are brought to the attention of the Chair of EXCOM and contributors to the programme. EXCOM requested all donors to be informed.
- ECW Secretariat will consolidate comments on the Standard Contribution Agreement and work with the Chair and FSO to finalize the revised SCA.
- ExCom agreed to convene an ExCom call in March to discuss the preparation of the April HLSG meeting.

AOB:

1. ECW to invite a donor representative during interviews for Deputy Director. The Director to seek guidance from UNICEF Human Resources as to the capacity. he Chair requested exploring the possibility of a vice Chair of ExCom and asked for ExCom members who may be interested in this role to communicate directly with the Chair. The Chair added that the donors' view is that this role should be played by a donor, in order to avoid any potential real or perceived conflict of interest issues.
2. The GPE briefed on the scoping work for a "family of funds" and indicated that there could be a meeting on this around the World Bank Spring meetings and reassured that it was not linked to ECW hosting.
3. The INEE advised that there could be an upcoming education appeal for Venezuela
4. Dubai Cares advised on the Global Education Expo in 2020.
5. There will be Education Commission events around the World Bank Spring meetings.
6. The annual Global Education Cluster meeting will be held in Amman in the last week of March. ExCom members are invited to attend.
7. Next ExCom in-person meeting will be in Germany in June.