

High-Level Steering Group Teleconference - Minutes

Friday 17 April 2019, 09.00-09.45 AM

See full list of participants

1- Introduction

The Chair welcomed the participants. He noted that education was hit particularly hard by COVID-19, forcing 1.53 billion children out of school. He outlined that the meeting would look at ECW's progress to date and its recent COVID-19 response, and discuss the resources needed to urgently sustain action in responding with speed to this crisis and recovery in its aftermath. He acknowledged the outstanding efforts of ECW in delivering emergency investments in response to Covid-19, and invited the ECW Director to present an update.

2- Director's Progress Update and ECW's COVID-19 Response

- The Director thanked all HLSG members for their continued support and credited their contributions to the success of ECW's rapid response. The actual work on the ground was coordinated and implemented by UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO, WFP and civil society organizations, such as Save the Children, Plan International, Norwegian Refugee Council, Jesuit Refugee Service, Finnish Church Aid, War Child and many local NGOs, through established coordination mechanisms fit for each context and under the leadership of the host-governments.
- The Director advised that by the end of the week, close to USD 650 million would have been mobilised through the ECW Trust Fund. With a target of \$1.8 billion to be mobilised by 2021-early 2022, the Director acknowledged that the current pandemic will likely slow down these efforts, but reiterated that ECW's role was to deliver in emergencies and crisis. Funding would thus be much needed during the pandemic in order for ECW to deliver on its mandate in emergencies and protracted crisis contexts.
- She highlighted that ECW currently has **10** Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs) operational. This is in addition to its First Emergency Response (FER) investments in **30** countries affected by conflict, forced displacement and natural disasters. **2.3 million** children and youth have

been reached, nearly **50 % of which are girls**, with quality education investments through a holistic approach encompassing the full spectrum of interventions including school feeding, psychosocial services, teacher training, supplies, infrastructure, protection and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services, among others. This figure did not include an additional 2 million children and youth in Yemen, who had received support through ECW investments though not holistic due to access and an active conflict.

- She highlighted that 46% of beneficiaries related to forcibly displaced children and youth. In Uganda, the Primary Gross Enrollment Ratio for refugee and host-community children having increased from 53% to 75% as a result of ECW's investment in the Joint Emergency Response Programme for Refugees and Host-Communities, while in Afghanistan, 58 % of the beneficiaries are girls students in ECW's investments.
- In response to COVID-19, the Director outlined the rapid situation analysis conducted by the ECW Secretariat through existing grantees in-country. Based on these assessments, ECW decided to invoke the FER window, releasing USD 23 million to 55 grantees across 26 countries. Applications were coordinated at country level by the relevant coordination mechanisms, such as clusters for non-refugee situations and EiE working groups for refugee situations and had involved all partners.
- She stressed that ECW's FER reserve had therefore been completely exhausted by these efforts and called for an additional USD 50 million to help complete the full financing of all 26 emergency responses and replenish the ECW emergency fund back to its normal levels.
- In conclusion, the Director looked forward to the adoption of the revised Operational Manual (OM), updated following an inclusive and comprehensive process by Cambridge Education to have a manual more fit for purpose for humanitarian-development coherence in crisis-context. In this regard, she stressed that the current manual produced by Boston Global Consulting, adopted by the HLSG in 2017, was a robust manual and that the revision was exclusively related to the need to create a more crisis-sensitive manual fit for ECW's particular mission. The Director recalled that the OM had been cleared by the ECW Executive Committee in Dubai in February and UNICEF's Legal Department and was now ready to be approved by the High-Level Steering Group.

The Chair thanked the Director for this overview, expressed appreciation to the generous contributions made to support ECW investments and opened the floor for interventions. All HLSG members praised the Chair for his leadership and commended the Director and ECW Secretariat on the outstanding results achieved. The following statements were made:

- The DFID-FCO Minister for Sustainable Development & the Overseas Territories, and Special Envoy for Girls' Education opened the discussion by thanking the Chair and the Director for their leaderships and commending the impressive results achieved, stressing ECW's heightened role throughout the COVID-19 crisis. The UK priorities for the Global Education response were twofold, focusing on mitigating key risks in the short term and protecting education systems and finance in the medium to long term. The Minister reiterated the UK's long-standing commitment to 12 years of quality education for every girl and in this regard announced an additional £5 million (USD 6.2 million) pledge to ECW's COVID-19 emergency response. She urged fellow HLSG members to follow suit in order to allow ECW to fulfill its mandate.
- The Assistant Deputy Minister for Global Issues and Development of Canada (on behalf of the Minister of International Development) applauded, under the Director's leadership, the ECW Secretariat's urgent and immediate response. Canada voiced its commitment to ensuring children and adolescents' continued learning throughout the pandemic, and in particular for refugees and the displaced, while also working to prevent further exacerbation of barriers to girls' education. Canada was currently reviewing its response and considering how to best support the urgent education needs created as a result of the pandemic. The Assistant Deputy Minister reiterated Canada's continued support to the provision of education in emergencies, including through its opportunity to Chair the ECW Executive Committee.
- The Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark thanked the Chair for his inspiring leadership and the Director for a very useful presentation. Denmark expressed great concern at the increased risk of violence and violations of girls and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, including, child marriages and teenage pregnancies due to higher numbers of children out of school. Minister Prehn announced Denmark's support to ECW's COVID-19 response by frontloading DKK 100 million (USD 14.5 million) to ensure quicker access to already committed funds. These

resources will allow ECW to deliver WASH facilities, distance learning and psychosocial services whilst protecting young women's rights, allowing children to return safely to school when the situation allows it. Denmark also commended the LEGO Foundation's great efforts in exploring how learning through play can be adapted to distance learning efforts. The Minister called for joint and innovative thinking to ensure vulnerable children's education rights are properly addressed.

- The Executive Director of UNICEF thanked the Chair and the Director for leading ECW and producing positive results. She noted that all 152 countries in which UNICEF operated were intent on prioritising distance learning and ensuring the COVID-19 pandemic did not escalate further to an education and learning crisis. UNICEF was currently being called on by partners to implement varied approaches in its response to best cater to the needs in countries. UNICEF was also working closely with UNHCR and UNESCO to deliver solutions such as The Learning Passport programme, providing digitised curricula with textbooks and content in national languages. The ED also called for support to Generation Unlimited's work in providing after school curricula and further opportunities for children to gain occupational skills perhaps better suited to the world to come.
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees of UNHCR thanked the Chair for convening the HLSG in spite of the challenges. He urged all stakeholders to systematically include refugees in all sectors and aspects of the response to the crisis with a particular focus on health, water, sanitation and education. He explained that refugee children risked facing a double exclusion; one inherited from their pasts exacerbated by an increased absence of education services. In this regard, the High Commissioner commended the ECW Director's efforts to rapidly deploy resources and seconded UNICEF's plea for stakeholders to be innovative in their response. He appealed to ECW, UNICEF and Save the Children, typically as the main recipients of funds, to explore solutions beyond existing mechanisms as some risked marginalizing refugees even further. He also stressed the need to ensure full inclusion of refugees and host-communities and ensure that coordination mechanisms were appropriate for refugee coordination.
- The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of The Netherlands thanked the Chair and Director and conveyed her admiration towards ECW's growth since its creation. She noted that ECW had demonstrated its essential role and contributions to Education in

Emergencies through its partnerships and delivery, which is highlighted in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Netherlands had recently called for mainstreaming of support and financing for education throughout the crisis in the World Bank Development Committee. She also drew the attention to the IFFEd financing vehicle for education and stressed the link to ECW. The Netherlands has indeed pledged Euro 100 million to the Corona Response package, but it unfortunately does not involve a contribution to ECW. Minister Kaag expressed a commitment and support to the cause of ECW but did not announce a new financial commitment. She also stressed the importance of mental health and psychosocial services in, and out, of schools and formal learning spaces, where children learn about and develop the correct protective and coping mechanisms.

- The Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany thanked the Chair for his leadership and the Director for a very comprehensive progress update. ECW was providing real prospects for children's futures. She expressed concern at the alarming number of children (90% worldwide) currently of school as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and noted that the most vulnerable children faced a high risk of not returning to school when they reopen. She emphasized ECW's timely and targeted response ensuring basic needs were met. Ms. Flachsbarth reiterated the importance of resorting to existing coordination mechanisms so as to not place unnecessary burdens on partner countries and called for greater efforts to address the needs of the most vulnerable including girls and refugee children to ensure no one is left behind.
- The CEO of LEGO Foundation applauded the Director and the ECW Secretariat's speedy response to COVID-19 and noted that innovations to address distance learning challenges could be transformational within the wider ECW agenda. The LEGO Foundation values ECW as a platform for public/private partnership to support refugees children's education – and are delighted for the opportunity to collaborate closely with great partners such as USAID and with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on these issues. He announced the LEGO Foundation's additional donation of USD 15 million to further ECW's emergency response and encouraged the ECW community to contribute in tackling this challenge. He echoed calls by HLSG members to enhance work on distance learning and the importance of innovations in pedagogical approaches. In this regard, LEGO Foundation supports the development of learning through play thanks to its proven

efficacy in relieving toxic stress and helping young children overcome trauma, and its subsequent focus on early childhood education, which is often overlooked.

- The Chair of the Board of Directors of GPE thanked the Chair, the Director and the ECW team for their hard work. She enunciated GPE's three phased approach to the COVID-19 crisis. The first involved deploying urgent responses in collaboration with partners like ECW to ensure children remained connected to education throughout the crisis. It was then crucial to begin planning for the recovery phase in facilitating a safe return to school for the most marginalised children and making up for any lost learning. The last phase would focus on planning beyond the crisis and the reopening of schools, when both domestic budgets and international assistance may have been impacted by the economic circumstances. Ms. Gillard noted the strong coordination with ECW and called for collective efforts and joint action to be sustained in order to overcome the COVID-19 challenge together.
- DDG SDC and Head of Humanitarian Aid Department of Switzerland thanked the Chair for welcoming Switzerland to the HLSG. He praised ECW's immediate action in response to the pandemic which demonstrated both its operational speed but also its administrative and financial agility, and welcomed that ECW was using the established humanitarian coordination mechanisms for crisis response. Switzerland commended ECW for taking timely appropriate action by invoking the FER window whilst ensuring it operated within existing coordination mechanisms. He stressed Switzerland's commitment to education and sustainability, underlining the inherent link between both and reiterated their continued support to ECW. Ambassador Bessler followed up on the reprogramming of MYRPS in the context of COVID-19. A note from the ECW Secretariat would ensue in this regard.
- The Assistant Director-General for Education of UNESCO thanked the Chair for convening the meeting and commended the Director and ECW team for the timely and efficient response to the crisis. She underlined that acting with speed was key throughout the COVID-19 fight. UNESCO established the Global Education Coalition to help governments and school systems address the key challenges brought on by this unprecedented crisis. Ms. Giannini emphasized UNESCO's focus on distance learning, and addressing the challenges surrounding connectivity, gender, ensuring

that no more girls are left behind, and rallying for political priorities to be more inclusive of education.

- The State Secretary of Norway (on behalf of the Minister of International Development) thanked the Chair and Director their continued engagement to education in emergencies and commended ECW's holistic and swift response to the pandemic demonstrating that it was a fund fit for purpose and expressed Norway's full support to ECW's approach. The State Secretary underlined education was vital in delivering information on hygiene and physical distancing, which are the most important measures in stopping the spread of virus. To mitigate the immediate impact on school closures, ECW was playing a crucial part in supporting continued learning through alternative learning models. Norway also stated that ensuring a cross sectoral and well-coordinated response was key and reiterate its commitment to leaving no one behind. Finally, Norway noted the importance of MHPSS across ECW's response.
- The Country Director GB & Germany at Novamedia thanked the Chair and the Director for the very rapid assessments which were undertaken. She joined HLSG members' call for speed and collaboration to be sustained. She seconded UNHCR's plea to include refugees in all aspects of the response and explained it was important to ensure support was reaching its intended target groups and the most vulnerable.
- The Global Director for Education at the WB congratulated ECW for the results achieved and stressed the importance of addressing remote learning issues and managing the continuity of systems. He noted the COVID-19 crisis was exacerbating many gaps and divides, such as on the digital level, and looked forward to addressing these challenges with all partners.

The Chair thanked all speakers for their interventions and acknowledged the dire need to address existing gaps by leveraging innovative and inclusive solutions for all. He also drew the attention to the vulnerability and fragility of children who are out of school and the danger they are facing.

3- Resource Mobilisation towards Continued Education amidst COVID-19 and Beyond Plenary

The Chair thanked donors for resources already pledged. He stressed that responding at this scale had subsequently depleted ECW's emergency reserve

to respond to future crises and called for all HLSG partners to urgently help replenish it. He reiterated ECW's USD 50 million appeal and invited Save the Children, Lebanon and the EU to take the floor.

- Birgitte Lange (CEO, Save the Children Norway), thanked ECW for its strong and continued engagement with civil society organisations. She noted that on the one hand, civil society had substantial expertise and access in the most challenging contexts and on the other, had drawn significant funding to ECW through collective advocacy efforts. Nevertheless, more was needed to meet the growing needs. Ms. Lange urged donors to step up contributions to fill the USD 50 million funding gap, called for flexibility from partners in regard to budget lines and outputs in the coming months and appealed for resources to be further distributed to local and national organisations in pursuit of the commitments under the Grand Bargain.
- The Minister of Education of Lebanon praised ECW's results and dedication to education. He noted that the crisis had affected all countries and called for resilience and education solidarity to fight this battle.
- The Deputy Director General of European Union thanked the Chair for his leadership and congratulated the Director and ECW on its agility and flexibility throughout its responses. The EU voiced its support for the newly updated Operational Manual and looked forward to receiving the updated annexes. In this regard, the EU welcomed more information on the criteria used in the selection of countries and grantees [to be detailed in the Annexes].

4- Approval of Revised Operational Manual and ToRs

After a thorough and inclusive process of consultations, the Chair invited the HLSG to approve the ECW revised Operational manual and ToRs for HLSG and the ExCom, which concluded with its approval.

5- AOB & Conclusion

Dubai Cares appealed to all HLSG members to join the call on connectivity, especially as a key component to remote learning. The Dubai Expo 2020 and



a global fund for education in emergencies

RewirEd were to be postponed to a later date which would be communicated in due course.

The Chair concluded by thanking all HLSG members for their valuable contributions to the discussion and for the generous pledges made to ensure no child is further left behind as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and after the crisis. He pledged that ECW will work with every organization to this end.

The Chair concluded by noting that the next HLSG meeting is scheduled to be held in September 2020, in New York, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.
