

MINUTES

Executive Committee Meeting



Tuesday, 25 November 2025, Virtual

1. Welcome and introduction

Dr. Heike Kuhn, ExCom Co-Chair, opened the meeting.

- 1.1 Welcomed all participants and framed the session as the crucial first step in the journey to develop ECW's new Strategic Plan for the period 2027-2030.
- 1.2 Noted that the quorum for decision-making was reached.
- 1.3 Ensured consent for the recording of the meeting.
- 1.4 Recalled that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the "Reflections and Aspirations" paper, which serves as the foundational document for the Strategic Plan. The discussion would be structured around two guiding questions.
- 1.5 Extended sincere thanks to the ECW Secretariat for their intensive work in preparing the paper and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members for their valuable contributions.
- 1.6 Called for Any Other Business (AoB) items to be raised in advance.

2. Presentation of the Reflections and Aspirations Paper

The ECW Secretariat, represented by Raakhi Williams, Chief of Strategy, Planning and Accountability, presented a summary of the key propositions in the Reflections and Aspirations Paper:

- 2.1 **Single Investment Window:** Proposed integration of First Emergency Response (FERs) and Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs) into a single "Emergency Response Programme" (ERP- working title, final name TBC). This aims to increase flexibility and speed and reduce the administrative burden by creating one programme per county, with strengthened crisis readiness.
- 2.2 **Catalytic Financing:** Exploring ways to leverage additional capital beyond traditional grants by combining ECW's programmatic results and impact measurement with partners' financial instruments. This would complement, not replace, core Trust Fund contributions.
- 2.3 **Localization:** Committing to advance meaningful engagement of local partners in global governance and country-level decision-making, and to increase funding as directly as possible to local and national actors, building on the 29% achieved in 2024.
- 2.4 **Financial parameters:** Committing to maintain the 7% operational expenditure cap. The Paper proposed allocating 5% of programme funding to the Acceleration Facility and 95% to the new single investment window. The Secretariat clarified that, due to the integration design, a fixed percentage split between emergency response and crisis readiness and system strengthening within the new funding modality would not be feasible, but a clear narrative on ECW's humanitarian role would be provided.

2.5 Key improvements: The Paper outlined six areas for becoming a faster, more efficient, and locally-led fund, including streamlining the protracted crises portfolio, reinforcing Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) as a core element, and sharpening the Acceleration Facility to focus on fewer, and more strategic investments.

3. Discussion on Overall Direction and Priorities

ExCom expressed broad support for the strategic direction and priorities outlined in the Paper, welcoming the increased speed, reduced portfolio size, expanded localization, catalytic financing, and the single investment window. Key themes and endorsements included:

- 3.1 Strong foundation:** Members widely commended the Secretariat for producing a clear, strategic, and promising paper that provides a strong basis for the full Strategic Plan.
- 3.2 Humanitarian focus & differentiation:** Many members welcomed the sharper humanitarian focus and emphasis on speed and agility as ECW's core, unique value. This was seen as critical for differentiation within the global education architecture, particularly in relation to GPE. However, the EU and Germany stated that a too strong wording on humanitarian contexts and emergencies will be difficult for them to justify with their funds coming from developments budgets. The focus should rather be put on strengthening the Triple Nexus.
- 3.3 Support for integrated model:** The logic of a single investment window to reduce transaction costs, increase flexibility, better operationalize the Triple Nexus, and strengthen crisis readiness was generally supported.
- 3.4 Localization ambition:** The commitment to localization was strongly welcomed but consistently highlighted as an area requiring much greater ambition, clearer operationalization, and stronger accountability mechanisms in the final plan.
- 3.5 Alignment with replenishment aspirations:** Members emphasized the importance of aligning the emerging Strategic Plan with ECW's upcoming replenishment and Case for Investment, requesting a clearer articulation of the fund's value proposition for donors, including differentiation from GPE, a sharper narrative on catalytic leverage, and clarity on priority contexts to guide fundraising.

4. Discussion on Gaps, Refinements, and Requests for Clarification

ExCom identified several areas requiring consideration for further refinement, sharper definition, or clarification in the subsequent draft of the Strategic Plan:

4.1 Clarifying ECW's unique mandate and differentiation:

- Clarify ECW's unique role versus GPE to avoid overlap, confusion, and duplication. Emphasize ECW's role as funder of first responder in emergencies, including clear processes for how medium and longer-term support then follows.
- Highlight ECW's signature strength, such as measuring holistic learning outcomes (including psychosocial support and trauma-informed approaches), data on crisis-affected children, and a focus on displaced learners and refugees, and ensure these are more prominently featured and operationalized in the new plan.
- Strengthen the articulation of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (Triple) Nexus and clarify how this approach will be implemented. It is crucial for some donors 'funding envelopes'. Several

members questioned whether the proposed name “Emergency Response Programme” implies an overly narrowly humanitarian approach.

- Communicate ECW’s value proposition more clearly for resource mobilization, including ECW’s humanitarian niche, speed of response, and ability to reach the furthest-left-behind children.

4.2 Strengthening and Operationalizing localization:

- Strengthen the language on localization, which several members perceive as currently “watered down”; narrative in the final plan must be more explicit, intentional and more ambitious.
- Address concerns that the single window/consortium model could “reduce local access if not carefully designed.
- Provide clearer definitions of roles within the consortium model (e.g., international actors as fiduciaries/enablers, local actors as designers/decision-makers).
- Set a quantifiable financial target for funding as directly as possible to local and national actors, moving beyond the current 29%.
- Address operational barriers such as due diligence pathways and ensuring localization is not accidentally undermined by larger grants or pre-selected consortia.
- Include domestic resource mobilization as part of the localization agenda and link it to government ownership and ECW’s exit strategy.
- Elevate capacity development as a full, explicit component of localization rather than presenting it as isolated points.

4.3 Operationalizing the Single Investment Window:

- Ensure the new model does not compromise speed and agility. Clarify what “faster” means in practice (e.g., simplified steps).
- Clarify how single investment window will allow for context-appropriate response and how pre-approved consortia will function across changing contexts.
- Provide a clear operational model, including process timelines, decision-making criteria for activation and withdrawal, and accountability frameworks.
- Consider implications for country-level partners who are familiar with the three-window model.
- Balance flexibility with strategic focus to avoid diluting ECW’s core emergency mandate and safeguard against deprioritizing new emergencies or forgotten crises.
- Clarify whether there will be a reserved allocation for the non-priority countries and define criteria to trigger support. Feedback also suggested reconsidering the need to specify a set number of countries, with a preference to keep this more flexible.
- Provide clearer prioritization of countries and crisis types would assist donors in aligning funding decisions with ECW’s strategic focus and replenishment goals.

4.4 Addressing Specific Gaps and Strengthening Content:

- Strengthen and make more measurable commitment to refugee education, including clear reflection of refugee inclusion within the prioritization scoring criteria, while ensuring alignment with Global Education Cluster prioritization does not marginalize refugee-hosting countries.
- Enhance focus on teachers, including a stronger, more explicit focus on teacher-specific issues: training, professional development, safety and the payment of salaries in crisis contexts.
- Further integrate Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) throughout the plan, including in the learning agenda, M&E indicators, and ensure explicit attention to disability inclusion.
- Provide clearer, more practical examples of how catalytic and innovative finance approaches would work in practice, and outline how they will align with other initiatives, including GPE’s innovative financing. Expand detail on tapping climate-related finance (e.g., the Green Climate

Fund and disaster-risk financing instruments). Emphasize the importance of leveraging domestic education financing.

- Clarify the tension between investing in “resilient systems” at the sub-national/school level and not engaging in “national system strengthening”, ensuring a clear link to sustainability and exit strategies, without duplicating GPEs system-level work.
- Ensure the Acceleration Facility balances the focus on using a competitive process around a small set of high-impact themes, to avoid a heavy proposal burden on applicants. AF has a unique role in supporting partners who carry out system-wide functions (e.g., standard setting, trend analysis, advocacy), and these functions are critical but hard to fundraise for.
- Defer any further governance review until after the replenishment to avoid adding complexity during the process.

In response, the Secretariat

- 4.5 Acknowledged receipt and understanding of the feedback.** Noted that the feedback helpfully clustered around clear themes (localization, teachers, Nexus, system strengthening, GPE differentiation, single investment window, etc.).
- 4.6 Noted the complexity of reconciling diverse views** and committed to negotiating these points “sensitively” and conducting further bilateral conversations as needed.
- 4.7 Noted that ECW and GPE have been having intensive conversations**, including a recent strategic dialogue.
- 4.8 Confirmed that all points would be considered.** Strongly encouraged members to submit detailed written feedback via the form provided to ensure all nuances were captured.

5 Decision and Way Forward

- 5.1** Following the discussion, the Co-Chair presented the recommended decision language for approval.
- 5.2** One ExCom member proposed an amendment to further highlight ECW’s unique mandate by specifying “including its focus on funding holistic approaches such as trauma-informed programming and psychosocial support”.
- 5.3** Another amendment was proposed to expand the thematic scope to include TVET, skills development, lifelong learning for youth, crisis-affected parents and caregivers. However, this was rejected as it had not been part of the prior discussion.
- 5.4** The following decision language was discussed and subsequently finalized:

Decisions

The ExCom:

- A1.** approved the aspirations outlined in Section 3-4 of the Reflections & Aspirations Paper as a foundational basis for the development of the first draft of the Strategic Plan 2027-2030;
- A2.** suggested issues that require further refinement and/or development and asked the Secretariat to identify additional areas from the written feedback by ExCom members on the Reflections & Aspirations Paper by 26 November 2025. Examples highlighted during the meeting included:

- 2.1 Clarifying ECW's unique value & differentiation from GPE:** Explicitly define and strengthen the narrative on ECW's unique mandate. Articulate how ECW's work paves the way for development actors, creating a clear bridge from emergency response to sustainable system support.
- 2.2 Strengthening the commitment to localization:** Further enhance the language on localization with more ambition and concrete detail. Clearly articulate the roles of organizations in programme design. Include domestic resource mobilization and system strengthening.
- 2.3 Articulating the role in protracted crises and for refugee education:** Clarify how ECW will operate in protracted refugee situations versus other protracted crises. Include measurable benchmarks for accountability on this issue.
- 2.4 Defining the systems approach and the nexus:** Include a clearer explanation of what a "system approach" means for ECW at the local/sub-national level and how it connects to sustainable exit strategies and leveraging domestic finance, without duplicating GPE's system-level work.
- 2.5 Enhancing focus on teachers:** Include a stronger, more explicit focus on teacher-specific issues: training, professional development, safety and the payment of salaries in crisis contexts.
- 2.6 Catalytic financing:** Clarify how ECW envisions to roll this out, like GPE has done.
- 2.7 Operationalizing flexibility and future-proofing:** Add more detail on how the single investment window will allow for contextually appropriate responses and how ECW's evidence generation will be used to "future-proof" education in emergencies.
- 2.8 Single investment window:** The rationale is understandable, but concerns remain about the absence of percentages. As country partners understand the current funding windows, consider the implications of moving to one single investment window. There is a tension between larger grants and direct funding to local organizations and a need to explain how this will work. Explain how ECW will ensure the pre-selected consortia do not include the "usual suspects". Consider including a clear operational model. Explain how a pre-approved consortium could function. Explain what "faster" means in practice and how speed and agility will be maintained or improved.
- 2.9 Aligning with other organizational decisions:** Ensure the final strategic plan is coherent and feasible with the chosen host agency's policies and capabilities.
- 2.10 Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI):** Include more clarity and structure; a measurement framework to track progress and impact; better integration of PGI throughout the strategy, including in the learning agenda and M&E framework.
- 2.11 Acceleration Facility:** There are risks of a heavy proposal development burden for applicants. Need to support system-wide functions. Explain how the AF will engage and support a broad ecosystem of actors for network and coalition building, beyond just funding projects.

2.12 Further refining ECW's unique value in holistic learning outcome measurement: Include, as possible, social-emotional learning, well-being, and trauma-informed psychosocial support in crises contexts.

5.5 Raakhi Williams outlined the key process and timelines for Strategic Plan development:

- **26 Nov 2025:** Deadline for written ExCom feedback on the Aspirations paper.
- **23 Dec 2025:** Secretariat circulates first full draft of the Strategic Plan.
- **31 Dec 2025:** Send revised Case for Investment (Cfi) for TAG/ExCom feedback.
- **9 Jan 2026:** Deadline for ExCom written feedback on the first draft.
- **29 Jan 2026:** Secretariat circulates second draft for "red line" comments.
- **11 Feb 2026:** Final draft SP and Case for Investment circulated for approval ahead of the February ExCom meeting.
- **Apr 2026:** Target adoption by the High-Level Steering Group (HLSG).

5.6 The Secretariat noted the tight timeline, especially around the holiday period, and committed to considering the need for additional TAG meetings during the drafting process, particularly on the Theory of Change and results framework.

6 AOB and Close

6.1 No items were raised under Any Other Business.

6.2 The Co-Chair thanked the ECW Secretariat, the TAG, and all ExCom members for their constructive and engaged discussions. She expressed confidence that a strong first draft of the Strategic Plan would be developed and noted the importance of a concise, clear, and compelling final document.

6.3 The meeting was closed.

Annexes

Annex A: [List of Participants](#)

Annex B: [Agenda and Decision Paper](#)

Annex C: [Reflections & Aspirations Paper](#)

Annex D: [Summary of Decisions](#)

Annex E: [Presentation](#)