

High-Level Steering Group Teleconference - Minutes

Thursday 21 April 2022, 08.00-09.45 AM

1- Chair's Welcome and Introduction

The Chair, the Rt Hon. Gordon Brown:

- Welcomed all participants and particularly newcomers attending the HLSG for the first time.
- Noted that in such difficult times and unprecedented circumstances, such as in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Myanmar, the Sahel- millions of children and displaced children are in dire need of ECW's help and the catalytic role it plays with its partners.
- Thanked Germany for their recent contribution of EUR 200 million and USAID for the recent contribution of USD 18 million.
- Noted that ECW's Trust fund currently stood at just above USD 1.1 billion, showcasing how ECW has moved to a new level as a Global UN Fund whose objective is to help 128 million children in emergencies and protracted crises. More funds were however needed to reach this objective in such challenging times.

Statement by the Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, Mr. Niels Annen (Please refer to the full statement attached)

2- Update on the Response to the Situation in Ukraine

The Chair:

- Thanked the ECW Secretariat for acting with speed and leading the Ukraine response through the FER window.
- Catherine Russel, Executive Director, UNICEF provided an update on UNICEF's response to the situation in Ukraine, and to Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to outline UNHCR's coordination in refugee-receiving countries in response to the situation in Ukraine.

Catherine Russel, Executive Director, UNICEF:

- Children in Ukraine are under attack. In less than two months, nearly two thirds of all Ukrainian children have been displaced. By 15 April, the UN had estimated that 11.4 million children had been forced to flee. The situation faced by the 3.2 million children who have remained in Ukraine is a matter of utmost concern as violence continues to escalate and their lives are at immediate risk. UNICEF estimates that half of these children are at risk of not having enough food. Attacks on water systems and power outages have left 1.4 million without access to water.
- Education is also under attack. Hundreds of schools and educational facilities have been attacked or used for military purposes or are being used as shelters for civilians. Nationwide school closures are disrupting the learning for nearly 6 million school aged children.
- UNICEF and partners are working closely together in Ukraine and neighbouring countries and thank ECW for its strong support.
- Partners need to reach all children affected by conflict with humanitarian assistance and meet their immediate needs for safety, food and water, protection, mental health and psychosocial support.
- Highlighted the tireless efforts and perseverance of teachers, who were working in such difficult circumstances to support children's education.
- UNHCR and UNICEF have been working closely with host governments to ensure that child refugees were integrated in national school systems.
- Education provides children affected by the war in Ukraine and conflicts around the world hope, fosters a greater sense of normalcy and the possibility of returning to a normal childhood.

Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR:

- As of 20 April, 5 million people had fled Ukraine, 90% of which were women and children. The Ukraine crisis has generated the largest influx of refugees in Europe since World War 2 and brought on many challenges which have affected public services and schools in particular.
- The choice to grant temporary protection has offered refugees from Ukraine an extraordinary legal and institutional framework implement inclusion. This model serves as a good lesson learned for the future.
- In the context of UN agencies' interventions, the role of NGOs and ECW will inevitably have to be more focused on emergency, initial interventions that offer a range of services to people in need. And in this regard, UNHCR is grateful for ECW's initial and early contribution of USD 1.5 million FER contribution to Moldova as the most fragile of host countries.
- Although there has been an extraordinary response from international and individual donors and the private sector, USD 129 million are still required to support the education sector.
- Resources must also remain as flexible as possible given the uncertain nature of the conflict and in order to adapt best to the evolving situation. Close coordination from all actors will be key to maximise interventions.

The Chair opened the floor for interventions. The following statements were made:

Susan Hopgood, President, Education International:

- Many of EI's member organisations are involved in supporting refugees and their access to education by carrying out training such as in Poland for teachers to teach in Polish to refugee children. Many organisations have contributed to a solidarity fund that has already raised hundreds of thousands to support teachers and teacher unions in Ukraine.
- In May, EI in partnership with Polish member organisations will be co-hosting a working seminar on supporting the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in the education system. The purpose is to bring together actors involved with refugee education to share the issues, policies and practices on how to best organise education for Ukrainian refugee children.

Sarah Bouchie, Chief Impact Officer, LEGO Foundation:

- Echoed concern for the situation in Ukraine and expressed appreciation for ECW and fellow agencies' work to support this crisis.
- Referenced LEGO's recent USD 16 million contribution in emergency funding to support the people and children of Ukraine, as well as their education and protection.
- The LEGO Foundation remains supportive and flexible with partners coordinating the overall response given the fluid nature of the crisis.
- The LEGO Foundation is keen to ensure that innovative and thoughtful pedagogies are not lost in the process which should also include psychosocial support and emotional learning.

Michael Messenger, President & CEO, World Vision:

- Thanked UNHCR and UNICEF for their efforts on the ground noting that they had played a critical role for the planning and coordination of World Vision's relief response.
- World Vision has coordinated with UN efforts, civil society partners to respond to the crisis by providing lifesaving kits and by setting up child-friendly spaces to respond to the psychosocial needs of children which will have to continue to scale up to meet the evolving needs
- Commended ECW for leading the response to the crisis through its FER and for looking beyond immediate needs. A robust analysis considering both how to respond to the urgent needs and strengthening access to education and social cohesion in the surrounding areas and host countries was highly encouraged.

LeAnna Marr, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator and Acting Senior Coordinator of United States International Basic Education Assistance, USAID:

- Thanked UNICEF and partners involved in the successful mission to Moldova during which USAID announced its USD 18 million annual contribution to ECW.
- Stressed that ECW's choice to provide a first grant to Moldova was very strategic as the country was overlooked within the overall response.
- underlined that given the fluidity and movement of Ukrainian refugees, a coordinated regional response and prioritizing distance learning was critical.

3- Director's Progress Update on ECW's new Strategic Plan 2023-2026

The Chair handed the floor to the **ECW Director, Yasmine Sherif**, to provide an update on ECW's recent achievements and on the development of the new Strategic Plan:

- The Director noted that the USD 1.5 million disbursed through the FER window were based on an initial assessment and funding, which may still grow as the needs are determined and unravel. ECW's ExCom also approved a total of USD 5 million for a MYRP in Ukraine, bringing the total of ECW's Ukraine response to USD 6.5 million.
- Thanked UNICEF for developing the technical framework on education in Afghanistan and noted that all partners were working very closely on the ground.
- ECW investments currently spanned 43 countries and to date have reached 5 million children through its partners **[please refer to the Map of ECW Investments]**.
- The development of the new Strategic Plan, led by a core team from the ECW Secretariat, will draw on experiences and insights from the broader EiEPC community. It has been informed by an ongoing stakeholder consultation process.
- The final Strategic Plan will be presented to HLSG for endorsement and launched at the September 2022 HLSG meeting, in conjunction with the UN General Assembly and the Transforming Education Summit.
- Although ECW's Trust Fund has reached a total of USD 1.1 billion, the Fund and its partners will be seeking to scale up investments to respond to the ever increasing needs.
- The overall estimated financial needs for the trust fund to successfully implement the Strategic Plan are a minimum of US\$1.5 billion to reach those left furthest behind.
- Girls' education, MHPSS, climate change and children with disabilities will be the key priorities focused on in the new Strategic Plan.
- ECW is look to HLSG to provide the broader strategic direction and steers for the new Strategic Plan and invite to share directly here or through ExCom representatives.

The Chair thanked the Director for ECW's efforts and echoed that whilst there has been an improvement in funding, only 2.5% of humanitarian funding was being donated to education. The Chair opened the floor for interventions. The following statements were made:

Vicky Ford, Minister for Africa, FCDO:

- Noted that the UK was proud to be a founding member and a leading donor to ECW.
- Highlighted that one of ECW's strengths is its rapid response in times of crisis, both to protect and educate children, particularly those who are displaced by conflict or by natural disasters.
- Stressed that a stronger focus on emergency education response is needed.
- The UK noted that more can be achieved by working differently such as by having fewer, targeted and funded multi-year programmes which would lead to stronger, more sustainable results.
- The UK wishes to see more engagement with host governments on integrating displaced children into schools and stronger capacity across the emergency education sector.
- The UK expressed that the Acceleration Facility has not delivered on its mandate, despite best efforts. The current level of funding is clearly insufficient to meet current needs and an ambitious funding target is welcome. The UK reiterated its readiness to support fundraising efforts through its advocacy.

Manuel Bessler, Deputy Director General, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Head of Humanitarian Aid Department, Switzerland:

- Welcomed ECW's inclusive process and spirit in which the new Strategic Plan was being developed.
- Switzerland supports ECW's plan to strengthen the FER window as it is one of the Fund's greatest selling point in contrast to other global education funds, thanks to its rapid response. The MYRP window should be maintained precisely because of its key bridging function between the humanitarian and development divide and addressing this nexus, specifically in the context of conflicts.
- Switzerland encourages ECW to put further emphasis on climate resilience by integrating a disaster risk reduction component in all of its MYRPs, particularly in countries prone to natural disasters, and to continue focusing on protection and MHPSS, whilst ensuring that learning is at the core of its interventions.
- ECW is not simply a catalyst but plays a major advocacy role for education in emergencies.
- Switzerland announced that it will be co-hosting alongside Germany and Norway, ECW's High-Level Financing event in February 2023 and will be seeking to reach the ambitious target of USD 1,5 billion to address the urgent needs of children and youth affected by crises.

Aslak Brun, Director General, Norway:

- Underlined that girls' education and gender equality must be prioritized in ECW's new Strategic Plan and encouraged ECW to express a clear commitment to the right to quality education for marginalised girls and adolescent girls in its new strategy.

- Norway welcomed ECW's commitment to integrating climate into the new Strategic Plan and suggested that areas where ECW could contribute best be identified, such as climate related disasters, contribution to disaster risk preparedness and integration of environmental knowledge and skills in education programmes.
- Norway encouraged ECW to incorporate support for protection and safe schools, as well as psychosocial support for students and educational staff, as a priority area for the new strategy.
- Improving coherence between humanitarian and development efforts and developing strategies contributing to bridging this gap should be prioritized.
- Norway noted that ECW's funding targets must be ambitious yet realistic. Norway is committed and pleased to co-lead ECW's High-Level Financing Event alongside Switzerland, Germany and partner countries in 2023.

Kathleen Flynn-Dapaah, on behalf of Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development, Canada:

- Stressed that the new Strategic Plan should make a clear case for ECW's value add and should focus on it strength, drawing on lessons from recent evaluations, to continue to improve the quality of programming. One of ECW's key strengths has been to mobilise partners and to lead the way in drawing global attention to the importance of education in emergencies.
- Canada welcomed ECW's focus on country level capacity development and partnerships and encouraged the Fund through its MYRPS to further align interventions with countries, strategies and existing institutions for greater resilience and sustainability. greater complementarity with other global funds such as GPE is encouraged.
- Canada highlighted priorities such as internally displaced learners, support for trauma and MHPSS and improving the quality of learning and the measurement of learning outcomes.
- ECW has an important role to play in the context of climate induced disasters and could focus its advocacy efforts and added value as a convener around the theme of climate resilience.
- Finally, accountability to local populations remains a key priority for Canada which was a central theme to the Together for Learning Campaign that recently took place, and partners are encouraged to champion the youth manifesto published during the Summit.

Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

- Commended ECW for its inclusivity throughout the development of the new Strategic Plan, which will set out clear directions aligned with the priorities agreed by EiE partners and the Action Track One of the Transforming Education Summit (TES).
- Education in Emergencies is at the center of UNESCO's collective approach in which ECW has played a key role.
- UNESCO has been coordinating the collective engagement of the global EiE community through two concrete actions to date: i. The elaboration of a discussion paper on EiEPC as a contribution to Track One, focusing on financing, planning, coordination, and high impact interventions to target populations in need and to which over fifty partners have already signed up to; ii. The development of a guided note to mainstreaming EiE through the Transforming Education Summit (TES) preparatory work. The TES pre-summit will take place on 29-30 June.

Rob Doble, Sector Director, Education, Porticus:

- Supported the strong focus on quality and learning, particularly the inclusion of social emotional learning and psychosocial support to address the impact of trauma on children's development and learning.
- Porticus welcomed ECW's progress on holistic learning outcome to resilience and encouraged the Fund to look at specific benchmarks and targets to allow implementors in the respective MYRPs to assess holistic learning outcomes and to strive to reach those targets.
- Porticus supports the equity focus and progress, the localisation agenda and the commitment to working closely with national education systems.

Tariq Al Gurg, CEO, Dubai Cares:

- Expressed great support for ECW's new Strategic Plan and target which is aligned with the rapidly increasing needs of children affected by crises.
- At the recent RewirED Summit, during which the Global Declaration on Connectivity for Education was launched, EiE was at the centre of many events and was a cross-cutting theme in most sessions.
- Following the success of the Summit, Dubai Cares and the Education Commission are developing an outcomes report extracting key recommendations and priorities and building on the recommendations of the Global Education Forum and the TES five Action Tracks. Dubai Cares is .

Heike Kuhn, Germany, Head of Education Division in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany:

- Commended ECW as a young Global Fund for the immense progress made and for playing an influential role in the sector of education in emergencies.
- Germany is looking forward to co-hosting ECW's High-Level Financing event alongside Switzerland and Norway and invites the HLSG to share this responsibility and champion its replenishment.
- Gender Equality, Girls' Education and inclusion of children with disabilities are key priorities for Germany and must be invested in and included in all processes. Climate education should also be included as a central cross-cutting theme.
- Germany welcomed ECW's membership to the Safe to Learn Declaration

Titta Maja, Director General for Development, Finland:

- Stressed that ECW holds a very important and timely role and should continue to focus on refugees, IDPs, girls' education and children with disabilities.

- To succeed its mandate, ECW needs a strategy that will guide its focus and strengthen its impact, especially at country level. The strategy should define clear criteria for country selection and guide efforts to ensure sustainability and multi-year resilience programmes.
- Finland welcomed the increased focus on learning and on comprehensive approach improving student's wellbeing, for which school feeding is a critical input. The new strategy should deliver results in terms of the number of children reached and improved learning and wellbeing whilst strengthening the education system resilience.
- Finland also welcomed the proposed increase of the FER window for which the allocations is there must be guided by humanitarian needs' assessment and ECW's strong Case for Investment.

Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General, EU,

- The EU underlined the importance of consulting and including children and youth in this process, particularly those who live in fragile contexts and former or current beneficiaries of ECW's support.
- The EU's key priorities include: i. Teachers' quality education, which is a prerequisite in closing the digital gap to ensure the success of the green agenda and to achieve any of the sustainable development goals. teacher support should be a systemic component of all ECW interventions; ii. Strengthening of MYRPS and emphasis of anticipatory action, preparedness and preventative measures. Resilience building and strong, effective MYRPs are key for all future investments and will contribute to building the triple nexus and the localization agenda; iii. Advocacy for quality education and for increased funding for EiEPC.
- The EU has committed to spending at least 10% of its humanitarian funding on education and is keen to ensure that funds are spent effectively and efficiently.
- Resource mobilisation efforts should therefore be accompanied by investments in data and evidence, in analysis and tracking of the resources leveraged and coordination of funding to help identify and address gaps.

Jeroen Kelderhuis, Head of Civil Society and Education Division at the Department for Social Development, The Netherlands:

- Thanked ECW for the inclusive consultative process undertaken in the development of the new Strategic Plan.
- The Netherlands expressed full support for ECW's new strategic direction welcomed the inclusion of all cross-cutting priorities, including the emphasis on girls' education, learning outcomes, children with disabilities and MHPSS.
- The Netherlands recommended adding digitilisation in education as a key cross-cutting priority as a crucial means to provide education in times of pandemics, conflicts and climate emergencies.
- The Netherlands welcome ECW's replenishment target of 1,5 billion given the growing needs faced by children caught up in crises and conflicts.

Marianne Kress, Head of Department for Migration, Stabilisation and Fragility, Denmark:

- ECW plays a unique role in bridging the humanitarian, development and peace nexus and supporting the transition from short-term humanitarian funding to longer-term development programming which should be aligned with national priorities.
- Collaboration with GPE is key in terms of linking ECW's efforts to system strengthening including through the inclusion of refugees and displaced children in national education systems.
- Denmark strongly supports ECW's holistic approach to education and its focus on gender equality, protection gender-based violence, access to mental health psychosocial support and school meals. Efforts should be combined with a strong focus on quality education, ensuring that refugee and IDP children learn according to national curriculums.
- Denmark encouraged ECW to maintain and develop innovative partnerships within its resource mobilisation efforts. Denmark will continue to advocate for ECW through its partnership with key donors, CSOs and private foundations.

Jaime Saavedra, Global Director – Education Practice, World Bank:

- Stressed that domestic resource mobilisation and national political commitments were key to achieve sustained systemic improvements, but international efforts were also essential.
- It is crucial to scale up innovations and alternative modalities of education by using easy access to technology, community centres, investing creatively on training both host and displaced teachers.
- The World Bank supports ECW's work acknowledging its ability of having a strong impact on the ground through its rapid response, disbursements through international and local NGOs and strong advocacy. Playing to these comparative advantages will be a key point in the strategic planning process. Given that the crises ECW responds to are often protracted, the multi-year approach must be maintained.
- The World Bank wishes to prioritise further the coordination on the ground with UN institutions, the World Bank, GPE and ECW. Given the limited resources globally, ECW could focus further on the countries most in need, with the least resources and less national capacity to respond.

Abbas El Halaby, Minister of Education and Higher Education, Lebanon:

- Despite all challenges, Lebanon continues to strive in providing all children in country with access to equitable and quality basic education, secondary education, technical and vocational and higher education.
- The Ministry of Education and Higher education launched a five year strategic plan for its work on general education, completed its five year plan for higher education and is currently developing a five year strategy for technical and vocational education.
- Lebanon reiterated the importance of setting an ambitious strategy and laying out a practical roadmap that responds to the educational needs and emergent priorities as it seeks to mitigate crises. Lebanon welcomed ECW's increased focus in the new Strategic Plan on capacity strengthening, climate resilience, gender equality, girls' education, disability inclusion and MHPSS

support to learners and teachers. Lebanon is committed to its partnership with ECW under the recent MYRP.

Susan Hopgood, President, Education International:

- Supported ECW's ambition to raise US\$1.5 billion to support the next strategic plan and the continuation of the three current funding windows with improvements to better respond to the needs of affected countries and individuals.
- Noted that the current aid and humanitarian architecture is insufficient to ensure that teachers are paid, and students are in schools with highly qualified and well supported professional teachers.
- EI proposes the establishment of a new contingency fund to support the payment of teacher salaries in crisis and emergency contexts, particularly where there is no functioning or financially-capable government to meet this obligation, which could be additional or sit within the current funding windows and be known as the 'Teachers in Emergencies Fund (TIEF).
- Education International proposed, in addition to gender equality, children with disabilities and other emerging priorities, the inclusion of teachers as one of the key thematic areas in the new strategic plan.

4- Pledging Conference, the Situation in Afghanistan and Update on the Sahel

Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA, delivered an update to the HLSG on the current situations in Afghanistan and in the Sahel and the recent High-Level Pledging Event on Supporting the Humanitarian Response in Afghanistan which took place on 31 March. The following key points were made:

- 41 donors announced humanitarian financial contributions totaling USD 2.4 billion for 2022 for Afghanistan and the surrounding region. OCHA was currently following up on these pledges to translate them into real commitments.
- The Sahel crisis is rapidly worsening. In 2022, 30 million Sahelians will need assistance and protection – 1 million more than in 2021. In accordance with a 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview, 9 million children will need education services in the Sahel.
- The challenges have been compounded by a number of shocks, food insecurity, climate change, displacement and extreme violence that are particularly disrupting the education system.
- In terms of response, the humanitarian community reached 15 million people with humanitarian aid in 2021 including 1.3 million children who received treatment for severe malnutrition and 2.9 million children who benefited from emergency education programs.
- The lack of funding remains the challenge for coordination and responses.
- The Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) provided USD 9.7 million in 2021 and USD 11.5 million has specifically been directed to education activities.

- OCHA recently established the Regional Fund for West and Central Africa and the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund which has allocated a total of USD 2.3 million for education activities across the Sahel.
- OCHA thanked ECW for its work and looked forward to continuing its joint partnership.

The Chair opened the floor for questions and comments. The following statements were made:

Catherine Russel, Executive Director, UNICEF:

- Characterized the situation in Afghanistan as moving in the wrong direction, especially following the recent coordinated attacks on schools.
- Nonetheless, as of 30 April, secondary schools in eight provinces, remained open for girls in principle however there may be variations at the school and district levels. At the primary school level, of the 5.8 million children enrolled only 2.2 million children were girls and of the 300,000 children and community-based education which UNICEF supports about 55% were girls.
- The demand however is extremely high according to a recent youth-driven poll conducted in March, indicating that 91% of Afghanistan's children and young people, boys and girls alike, looked forward to schools opening.
- UNICEF continues to call on the de-facto authorities to honor their commitment to girls' education and along with its partners continue to explore all avenues available for secondary-aged girls to continue to learn.
- UNICEF is concerned about the fragility of the education system and food insecurity.

Jakaya Kikwete, Board Chair, GPE:

- Expressed support for ECW's new Strategic Plan and looked forward to the continued strong collaboration.
- GPE is very concerned with the plight of millions of children who miss out on their education due to conflicts or pandemics, which is why the cooperation between GPE and key partners like ECW is critical.
- GPE and ECW's collaboration in countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen and Ukraine is crucial to ensure that education needs are met and education systems are kept from collapse.
- Referenced GPE and ECW recently joint mission to Afghanistan and convened partner consultations on the Education Sector Plan Transitional Framework to develop principles to guide the use of donor funds. GPE supported ECW's MYRP with a grant of USD 22 million allowing 150,000 children to finish school during the Covid-19 crisis.
- At the High-Level Pledging Event for Afghanistan, GPE announced the allocation of USD 300 million to support the Transition Framework and the multi-year resilience plan activities. GPE underlined that if the framework is successful, no child will be left behind and the most marginalized children especially girls will learn.

Statement by H.E. Awut Deng Acuil, Minister of Education, South Sudan [Please refer to statement attached]

5- Chair's Summary and Close

The Chair thanked HLSG members for providing insightful views on the strategic priorities and acknowledgements on ECW's strengths. In terms of priorities, girls' education, disability inclusion, climate resilience, capacity building to local actors, MHPSS, digitalization, protection and school safety, quality programming and learning outcomes were highlighted and will be taken forward.

The next HLSG meeting will take place in September in the margins of the UN General Assembly.