

MINUTES

Executive Committee Meeting

Wed 29 May 2024, Berlin, Germany

1. Co-chairs' welcome and introduction

The Executive

Committee (ExCom) co-chairs:

- 1.1 welcomed all participants to the meeting and introduced observers joining from the Global Campaign for Education Germany (see full list of participants in Annex A);
- 1.2 outlined the agenda items for the meeting, including announcing the brief participation of the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, Svenja Schulze.
- 1.3 highlighted resource mobilization in bridging ECW's funding gap and recalled the High-Level Steering Group (HLSG) meeting discussions about this topic on 18 April; thanked ExCom members and their HLSG counterparts for sharing their commitments and expressions of support during the HLSG meeting;
- 1.4 thanked GIZ and the organizers of the ExCom meeting, with particular thanks to the co-chairs of ECW's Operational Manual Advisory Group Judith Herbertson (FCDO) and Dean Brooks (INEE).
- 1.5 asked participants for consent to record the meeting. No objections were raised.

2. Executive Director's Update

The ECW Executive Director:

- 2.1 thanked BMZ and GIZ for hosting and co-organizing the ExCom meeting in Berlin;
- 2.2 introduced ECW's Chief of Education Dianah Nelsen joining the ExCom meeting in person for the first time;
- 2.3 reinforced the goal of ECW to deliver education to as many children and adolescents in crisis and conflict situations;
- 2.4 announced that in line with the EiE Finance Observatory initiative, ECW funding is now registered in OCHA's Financial Tracking Service and that the process for registering ECW funding in the International Aid Transparency Initiative is almost complete;
- 2.5 shared highlights from the 2023 portfolio overview and financial allocations report *From Crises to Classes*, in particular:
 - a) the active programmes in 32 countries with a total value of US \$674 million;

- b) the intensified efforts towards gender equality by increasing funding allocations, whereby 28% of Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) and 10% of First Emergency Response (FER) programmatic costs in 2023 were dedicated to gender-targeted interventions;
- c) the heightened focus on early childhood education, allocating \$19 million, surpassing the 10% target, with a particular emphasis on pre-primary level education.

2.6 informed participants that these highlights will be reported in the forthcoming Annual Results Reports which the Secretariat aims to share with the ExCom by the end of June; meanwhile, related questions about the Report may be directed to ECW's Chief of M&E and Global Reporting, Christian Stoff;

2.7 emphasized that the right to quality education is a fundamental human right, yet denied to children and adolescents whose education is impacted by multiple crises;

2.8 provided an update on the situation in Ukraine, where:

- a) MYRP grantees are now proceeding with the inception phase of the MYRP with thanks to contributions from Germany (€10 million) and Japan (US \$ 3 million);
- b) an additional US\$ 14 million is required to fully fund the MYRP;
- c) joint programming on the humanitarian-development nexus is evident given the collaboration with local NGOs and contributions of private sector partners such as the Global Business Coalition who have provided funding through ECW in support of digital learning in Ukraine;

2.9 provided an update on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where:

- a) over 1.6 million children in multiple provinces, including North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, are facing severe disruptions to their education due to armed conflicts, inter-ethnic tensions, and natural disasters;
- b) women and girls are threatened by widespread gender-based violence;
- c) ECW has provided US\$ 22.2 million to the country from 2021 to 2024 and reached over 70,000 children (50% girls);
- d) a new MYRP and a FER are being developed in 2024 to support the country (an exit strategy in humanitarian settings like in DRC is unlikely).

2.10 provided an update on the situation in Sudan, where:

- a) the ongoing conflict is forcing the country towards famine with as many as 19 million children currently missing out on schooling;
- b) UN WFP, UNHCR and civil society partners have done commendable work in the bordering countries;
- c) ECW's MYRP and FER investments continue to provide essential services to displaced children in the country;
- d) despite over US \$2 billion in pledges resulting from the Sudan humanitarian conference, there was little focus on the lifesaving role of education.

2.11 mentioned the challenges in fulfilling pledges in donor conferences and cited the recent pledges of US \$ 8.1 billion for Syria during the international donors meeting in Brussels on 27 May.

2.12 expressed frustration over the trillions of money going to war machinery while there remains a funding gap for humanitarian-development work, particularly for increasing access to quality education.

2.13 provided an update on the situation in Gaza, where:

- a) over 36,000 people have been killed, including more than 15,000 children;
- b) 80,000 are severely injured, and 2 million live in fear and face famine;
- c) lack of a ceasefire impedes aid delivery;
- d) basic human security is absent, hindering essential activities like education and mental health support
- e) mental health and well-being are a priority, given the widespread trauma experienced by the population;
- f) ECW's support to UNRWA and UNICEF is under implementation and the opportunity to expand MHPSS, NRC's *Better Learning Program*, and collaboration with other partners is being explored.

In discussion, the ExCom:

2.14 recognized the ECW Executive Director's global advocacy efforts in promoting ECW's unique role and strategic objectives in high-level events such as the World Bank Spring Meetings;

2.15 shared information on MHPSS interventions in Palestine such as NRC's Better Learning Program equipping teachers with psychosocial and educational tools to support children and families affected by war and displacement; and similar efforts by Education International providing psychological support to teachers in Gaza.

2.16 raised the challenges faced by unpaid teachers in many conflict-affected countries which have been prolonged for years thus becoming a significant barrier to learning; and thus called for the establishment of a fund to support teachers in crisis contexts;

2.17 underscored the profound regional crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa including attempted coups and kidnappings of teachers and students in countries such as Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Niger.

2.18 noted that the Global Business Coalition aims to secure an additional 100,000 new learning devices for Ukraine in time for the next school year in September;

2.19 discussed how to reconcile the growing demand for funding given the global decrease in education resources and a constant and potentially diminishing allocation of around 3% towards emergencies within education budgets;

2.20 emphasized the importance of improving coherence and coordination, operationalizing partnerships, and recognizing different expertise to enhance collaboration;

2.21 encouraged continued work on establishing a clear link with development financing and system approaches for addressing issues faced in countries like South Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic;

- 2.22 recognized efforts of the ECW Executive Director and the Secretariat's Advocacy and Communication team in empowering and mobilizing the youth and student-led constituency in getting more resources and building new networks at the national level.
- 2.23 stressed the priority of highlighting the issue of education in emergencies within discussions on financing for education, recognizing the need for specific attention to this area.
- 2.24 suggested that future advocacy efforts incorporate the significant role of schools as hubs for community engagement and resilience-building initiatives, as could be learned in Somalia;
- 2.25 inquired about strides made in disability inclusion in programming and funding support, expressing interest in learning more about the progress in this area;
- 2.26 noted Germany's commitment advocating for disability inclusion and its hosting of the Global Disability Summit in 2025.

In response, the Executive Director:

- 2.27 acknowledged the challenges faced by teachers, including being subjected to violence, and not receiving fees, emphasizing the importance of supporting refugee teachers and providing them with equal support;
- 2.28 welcomed additional financial support from donors like the Global Business Coalition for Education in closing the gap for Ukraine and other crisis-affected and disaster-stricken countries; and thanked the ExCom for broadening ECW's private sector network;
- 2.29 affirmed the need to address the challenge of reconciling education as a basic service with its inclusion in humanitarian response efforts;
- 2.30 highlighted the fundamental role of education in achieving multiple and long-term development goals and advocated for its prioritization;
- 2.31 highlighted the complementarity and unique roles of the three global funds for education – ECW, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFed);
- 2.32 stated that 5% of donor contributions to ECW go to children with disabilities; 10% of beneficiaries are children and adolescents with disabilities.

3. Update on the revision of the ECW Operational Manual

The ExCom co-chair:

- 3.1 introduced the session by recognizing the co-chair of the Operational Manual Advisory Group Judith Herbertson for facilitating the process of updating the Operational Manual.

The Operational Manual Advisory Group co-chair:

- 3.2 presented an overview of the progress of reviewing the Operational Manual, remaining decisions, and timeline towards completion;
- 3.3 stated the purpose of the review process, aiming to align operations with the Operational Manual and address areas where deviations have occurred;
- 3.4 presented the two-track approach for the Operational Manual review process which included technical inputs from the ECW Secretariat Section Chiefs and substantive 1:1 consultations with the members of the Operational Manual Advisory Group;
- 3.5 discussed the four substantive areas of priority:
- a) governance
 - b) oversight and accountability
 - c) hosting agreement
 - d) conflict of interest
- 3.6 outlined the review areas where there is strong level of consensus and remaining governance issues that are yet to be agreed (refer to the presentation on Annex C for more details);
- 3.7 referenced the hosting agreement, in particular ECW operating without one, and shared plans to meet with UNICEF to discuss alignment between the Operational Manual and the hosting agreement, ensuring complementary language and clarity in guidance.
- 3.8 mentioned that there were two additional meetings on the Operational Manual on 28 May and 30 May respectively to allow more time for substantive discussions, and invited interested ExCom members to the meeting on the 30th to discuss the future model of the ExCom, emphasizing the importance of diverse voices and focused decision-making;
- 3.9 thanked members of the Operational Manual Advisory Group and various individuals involved in the review process, including Operational Manual consultant Anne Lund, co-chair Dean Brooks, Jessica Prout, the ExCom co-chairs Heike Kuhn and Merete Lundemo, and ECW Deputy Director Graham Lang.
- 3.10 underscored the need to adhere to the timeline and focus on the substance of the draft Operational Manual to ensure its readiness for HLSG decision in September.

In discussion, the ExCom:

- 3.11 request that a copy of the Powerpoint presentation be shared with ExCom members for review;
- 3.12 recalled the existing Operational Manual provision regarding the tenure of the HLSG chair, which is two three-year terms plus, if necessary, an additional year. This provision has been implemented and thus the current Chair's term will end in September this year. Recognizing that there is not enough time between now and September to recruit a new Chair, it is being proposed that the incumbent stay on for an interim period until the Operational Manual update is finalized and during which a new Chair will be identified. The Co-chairs had reached out to the HLSG Chair with this proposal, and he had agreed;

- 3.13 In his response the Deputy Director recalled that the minutes of the September 2023 HLSG meeting stated that there was *“no objection to review as part of the update of the Operational Manual, the associated provision on the tenure of the current chair to extend it until the end of this strategic planning cycle, i.e., until the end of 2026”*;
- 3.14 raised the need to evaluate and clarify the decision-making powers and practices of ECW’s governing bodies. One option would be to have ExCom as the only decision-making body while HLSG could serve as a high-level advisory body. However, it was clarified that:
- a) no consensus has yet been reached regarding the division of decision-making authority between the ExCom and HLSG, particularly on delegating authority of the HLSG to the ExCom;
 - b) reviewing the current governance structure does not entail ‘watering down’ or weakening the role of the HLSG;
- 3.15 emphasized the importance of efficiency and planning ahead, especially regarding the process for selecting a new HLSG chair and the other crucial issues identified in the review of the Operational Manual;
- 3.16 highlighted some of the agreed issues for review, particularly:
- a) adoption of performance review processes for the ExCom and HLSG;
 - b) term limits for members from other constituencies, suggesting to clarify whether limits should apply to individuals or organizations, and proposing a system of permanent seats to ensure essential representation;
 - c) alignment of the Operational Manual and the hosting agreement;
- 3.17 stressed the significance of lived experiences and ensuring diverse and meaningful representation and voices, particularly from the global South, within the Secretariat’s governance structure and decision-making processes;
- 3.18 proposed delineating the roles of ECW’s governing bodies, wherein the ExCom should focus more on the operational issues while the HLSG should focus more strategically on advocacy and fundraising.

In response, the ECW Executive - Director:

- 3.19 emphasized the importance of preserving the original conception and purpose of ECW and stressed the significance of not deviating too much from the proven leadership and foundational ideas that led to the organization’s success;
- 3.20 shared ECW’s journey on diversifying the Secretariat team, both in terms of gender and nationality, and her positive and empowering experience working with the HLSG chair;
- 3.21 explained the importance of having senior leadership and maintaining clear lines of authority to avoid potential issues like abuse of power;
- 3.22 recognized the need to strategically develop the agenda for the next HLSG meeting by including decision items that would attract principal members to prioritize and attend the meeting in person; and emphasized that attendance to these meetings should be non-

transferable to maintain exclusivity and ensure effective decision-making at the highest levels.

4. Risk Management

The ECW Chief of Strategy, Planning and Accountability:

- 4.1 provided an update on the current state of play of ECW's risk management approach, its notable achievements, key challenges and proposed solutions (see background paper in Annex B);
- 4.2 shared plans to clarify how ECW's risk management works vis-à-vis UNICEF by developing its own risk management framework;
- 4.3 presented the enablers – such as a dedicated staff, smart tools and systems, and a risk management culture – that would help address key challenges and maintain notable achievements and progress in risk management;
- 4.4 sought guidance and feedback from the ExCom on the status of ECW's risk management, priority areas of work, and need for an annual risk update.

In discussion, the ExCom:

- 4.5 expressed their satisfaction with the course of direction of risk management and commended the efforts of the Chief of Strategy, Planning and Accountability;
- 4.6 supported an annual update at ExCom on risk management and stressed the importance of a culture that does not just plan for risk but actively manages and monitors it;
- 4.7 acknowledged the importance of UNICEF's role as a host and suggested exploring opportunities for efficiency gains in risk management and aligning with the hosting agreement where possible rather than ECW creating its own framework;
- 4.8 encouraged continued collaboration with GPE on information sharing on risk management and related best practices;
- 4.9 enquired about ECW's localization efforts and raised concerns about challenges faced by local partners and grantees;
- 4.10 welcomed the offer of the international civil society organization's representative (Street Child) on hosting a lesson learning exercise and seminar, considering lessons on matching culture and capacity.
- 4.11 welcomed the addition of environmental impact assessments to risk management, with suggestions to align with existing frameworks like the Climate Charter;
- 4.12 noted the challenge of increasing grantee reporting rates, particularly the effort to improve the 73% rate, and emphasized the need for actionable steps and to discuss consequences for non-compliance;

- 4.13 noted that ExCom is responsible for monitoring ECW's operations, and it is important that ExCom receives regular updates on risk management. This could include an annual ExCom agenda item as well as a yearly report on portfolio and corporate risk, including aggregated information and analysis about risks as well as cases that have been reported to ECW.

In response, the ECW Chief of Strategy, Planning and Accountability:

- 4.14 explained that there are structural differences between UNICEF and ECW, thus requiring ECW to develop its own risk framework complementing and adhering to relevant UNICEF procedures and regulations, as the Secretariat already did for safeguarding, with the ECW draft safeguarding framework;
- 4.15 shared that ECW adopts a light-touch approach to environmental impact assessments, using existing templates and documents, and aligning with climate commitments;
- 4.16 explained that all grantees are subject to risk assessments that look into capacity building of partners;
- 4.17 recognized the challenges in reporting and behavioral change, and underlined the need for clearer reporting requirements for grantees, especially portfolio reporting in high-risk contexts;
- 4.18 welcomed the opportunity to collaborate further with GPE and partners on learning about risk management, including managing reputational risks.

5. Programmatic Portfolio Update

The ECW Chief of Education:

- 5.1 provided an update of the First Emergency Response (FER) portfolio and its strategic priorities in 2024, including:
- a) an overview the current FER budget (where US\$ 24.7 million (42%) of the US \$58.6 million is either disbursed or committed);
 - b) streamlined applications, quicker decisions and internal processes for faster FER approvals, highlighting that in 2023, approving funds for acute emergencies was six weeks faster than for protracted crises;
 - c) dedicated funding for Anticipatory Action pilot programmes in Pakistan and Somalia to address climate-related education disruptions;
- 5.2 provided an update on the Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) renewals, highlighting:
- a) that 2024 is a significant year for MYRP renewals as half of the MYRP portfolio is up for renewal;
 - b) the increased capacity in the Secretariat's Education team, now with three new programme managers on board dedicated to support different countries and quality assurance processes;
 - c) the efficiency in response and programme management thanks to previous systems in place and enhanced coordinated efforts of partners at the country level;

5.3 shared early reflections on MYRP renewals, particularly lessons from scoping missions including:

- a) the high appetite from partners on understanding how ECW allocates resources (being shared openly around a composite index);
- b) a more targeted approach looking at country needs, priorities and strategic commitments;

5.4 shared an update on reducing the MYRP portfolio size, highlighting the following:

- a) As part of the MYRP design discussions in Ecuador and Peru, the MYRP Development Committee has agreed to a final phase of the MYRP, following which ECW will exit from both countries. MYRPs for these countries have been advised to include robust exit and sustainability strategies.
- b) Driven by country led discussions, Iraq will submit a year top up to enable a smooth exit strategy
- c) Independent assessments are underway in Burundi and DRC with the technical engagement of the Education Technical Reference Group and Gender Reference Group;

5.4 shared key programmatic components related to advancing ECW's Strategic Plan commitments including:

- a) adopting a consortium model in renewed MYRPs in 2024 to enhance programme delivery. This approach fosters collaboration, joint programming and localization by incorporating local partners. It also advances the humanitarian-development nexus;
- b) efforts on anticipatory action preparedness pilots and environmental impact assessments;
- c) adopting a comprehensive protection, gender and inclusion approach to tackle the root causes of violence affecting children's learning and education.

In discussion, the ExCom:

5.5 emphasized the importance of engaging partners at the community and national level and localized initiatives such as early warning systems in schools and school feedings programmes;

5.6 called for adequate funding for civil society organizations to conduct high-level advocacy in holding governments accountable for education policies;

5.7 raised potential risks related to the overall affordability of investments and urgent responses without thorough planning and analysis, and suggested the importance of mapping grantees and cost-effective benefits from investments;

5.8 recalled UNICEF's dashboard that keeps track of all funding and where it goes.

In response, the Secretariat:

5.9 highlighted the importance of joint programming models and a holistic approach to education, citing ECW's efforts harnessing the key strengths and comparative advantages of partners;

- 5.10 stressed the role of ECW in rapidly responding to refugee and internally displaced populations affected by crisis, and working with ministries of education;
- 5.11 explained the elements and process for funding decisions below the US\$ 3 million mark, which is documented in a decision paper outlining the following:
- a) needs analysis
 - b) funding available
 - c) funding gap
 - d) added value of funding in a specific emergency context

The process is conducted by a technical team and the decision paper is then submitted to the ECW Executive Director for approval.

6. Remarks by Minister Svenja Schulze

Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany Svenja Schulze briefly joined the meeting. The Minister expressed gratitude to ECW Executive - Director Yasmine Sherif for her dedication and stewardship in leading global response efforts in education in emergencies and protracted crises. Despite acknowledging the difficulties posed by conflicts worldwide, she remained optimistic about achieving educational goals and emphasized the critical importance of providing education, especially to vulnerable children. She commended the ECW Secretariat for engaging more stakeholders and mobilizing resources for quality education in crisis situations. She stressed the significance of transparent governance structures and effective funding prioritization, highlighting the upcoming GPE Board meeting as an opportunity for collaboration and resource alignment. Ultimately, she advocated for constructive cooperation between organizations like ECW and GPE to address funding shortages and ensure progress towards education targets.

7. Bridging the Resource Gap and Financial Sustainability

The session was led by ECW's Chief of Partnerships and Chief of Finance and Operations.

The ECW Chief of Partnerships:

- 7.1 encouraged boldness in finding solutions for bridging ECW's funding gap, and expressed confidence in reaching US\$1 billion soon, which covers two-thirds of the resources needed for the new Strategic Plan;
- 7.2 shared efforts to navigate the challenging funding landscape by:
- a) engaging donors such as Australia, Japan, Spain and the Arab Gulf;
 - b) seeking top-ups from existing donors;
 - c) targeted advocacy around key moments, e.g. UNGA as an opportunity to engage non-traditional donors;
 - d) using research and data in driving innovation and partnerships;

7.3 stressed the importance of nurturing innovative finance and invited Switzerland's representative to the ExCom meeting Diepak Elmer to speak on the Swiss experience on innovative financing:

The representative highlighted that the impact financing for developing countries currently represents less than 10% of total impact financing but expressed optimism about its potential to grow rapidly. He mentioned a forthcoming sustainable mixed asset fund to be launched by cantonal banks in Switzerland, emphasizing that it is not merely a matter of corporate social responsibility but a business initiative for the bank. The fund aims to generate annual proceeds, with 2% earmarked for donation to ECW, while targeting individuals and institutions with philanthropic inclinations who also seek capital preservation and modest returns. While its success hinges on investor interest, especially given its unique model lacking historical precedent, the representative viewed the partnership with the Swiss cantonal banks as promising and fruitful.

7.4 cited the commitments and ongoing partnerships with UK Special Envoy Helen Grant, Denmark's Minister of Finance Nicolai Wammen, and the Lego Foundation, amplifying ECW's global advocacy efforts and broadening its political and private sector networks.

The ECW Chief of Finance and Operations:

7.5 presented ECW's financial framework and highlighted the following:

- a) adjustments made after the high-level financing conference;
- b) regular reviews of financial plans, noting the challenge of balancing multi-year commitments;
- c) current progress towards the US\$ 1.5 billion target and the funding gap of around US\$ 600 million;
- d) expenditure figures for 2023 and the agreed budget for 2024, along with plans to manage spending within agreed limits;

7.6 recognized the importance of risk management in financial sustainability, whereby surplus funds are reserved to act as buffer against potential funding shortfalls;

7.7 offered to provide detailed financial reports to ExCom members who require them.

In discussion, the ExCom:

7.8 commended the Chief of Finance and Operations and the Secretariat for keeping the operational costs at 6% and emphasized that cost efficiency is important in increasing donor commitments;

7.9 proposed exploring merging the upcoming HLSG meeting with a high-profile fundraising event in the margins of the UN General Assembly in September, with the goal of unifying key messages on resource mobilization;

7.10 proposed assessing the value of high-level funding events compared to targeted outreach to donors and reviewing the effectiveness of appeals as a resource mobilization mechanism, whether they achieve their targeted outcomes or justify the return of investment;

- 7.11 recognized the example of the Swiss cantonal banks, and suggested exploring similar models with other banks offering climate, environmental and social development funds;
- 7.12 proposed tailoring ECW's investment case to specific actors being targeted and getting more perspectives and analyses on increasing engagement from other actors like foundations;
- 7.13 noted the experience of the LEGO Foundation and the trend of increasing donor interest in children's holistic needs.
- 7.14 noted Denmark's contribution to the ECW Climate Appeal leading to COP28;
- 7.15 noted the key role of civil society organizations in program implementation, the funding challenges they face, and the necessity of coordinated efforts to foster partnerships that support ECW;
- 7.16 sought clarification on the scenarios and actionable insights about adapting and handling different financial situations on reaching the target of US\$ 1.5 billion.

In response, the ECW Chief of Partnerships:

- 7.17 stressed the importance of political leverage and targeted approaches in sustaining partnerships and navigating challenges, citing examples where government intervention prevented pullouts;
- 7.18 emphasized the need for creativity in engaging donors and advocate for multi-stakeholder collaboration amidst changing political dynamics and competing priorities;
- 7.19 emphasized that appeals are effective when they follow a framework indicating clear moments, alignment with donor interest, and advocacy linkages to education;
- 7.20 advised that building strategic partnerships are more important than one-time gifts to ensure sustainability for civil society and grassroots organizations.

In response, the ECW Chief of Finance and Operations:

- 7.21 shared that the ECW Secretariat has implemented a cautious staffing plan in line with its Strategic Plan, staggering implementation due to capacity and resource constraints and time needed for hiring;
- 7.22 shared that funding allocation to MYRPs are based on a composite model considering available funding, crisis severity, donor actions, children's needs, existing commitments, and expected outflows;
- 7.23 emphasized rigidity in allocation to ensure adherence to agreed budgets and avoiding overspending;
- 7.24 thanked Denmark for their initial funding under the ECW's Climate Appeal and emphasized ECW's commitment to standardizing its approach to measuring climate funding and integrating climate considerations consistently into its data systems.

8. Review of Progress against the Management Responses to Evaluations

8.1 The ExCom co-chairs introduced the agenda item and explained that this item highlights that henceforth the annual reporting of ECW's management responses to the three evaluations will come to ExCom for endorsement.

The ECW Deputy Director:

8.2 presented an overview of the progress against the management responses to the evaluations, which included the following:

- a) ECW's rigorous approach to delivering agreed actions and how the evaluations are driving current priorities;
- b) a summary of the 29 recommendations across the three evaluations, indicating actions that are completed, in progress, transitioned or off track;
- c) notable completed actions such as raising ECW's ambition and mobilizing funding; stronger investments windows; advancing programmatic priorities (e.g. increased focus on gender and inclusion); and more capacities and accountabilities;
- d) notable actions in progress such as the nexus coherence and localization; targeting those left furthest behind; refining investment windows; strengthened data and learning; and ensuring organizational fitness;
- e) challenges and focus areas such as localization-focused request for proposals; piloting in new in-country advocacy and resource mobilization approach; and strengthened accountabilities of grantees;
- f) the Secretariat's deliberate efforts to enhance team diversity and improve representation from the Global South;
- g) a structured monitoring system in place to track each recommendation's progress, with regular updates scheduled. The emphasis is on maintaining accountability and ensuring actions do not remain stagnant;

8.3 shared next steps, emphasizing that the Secretariat will continue to report annually on progress in implementing all management responses, focusing more substantively on the organization evaluation for future updates.

In discussion, the ExCom:

8.4 commended the ECW Deputy Director for the excellent background paper, especially for the transparency and thoroughness of the progress review and for sharing details on the automation tool used to measure progress;

8.5 ask for further information about how ECW monitors, tracks, and responds to Secretariat staff well-being and job satisfaction. This includes understanding the tools that are used and what frequency;

8.6 acknowledged ECW's efforts to promote psychosocial well-being in programmes and for Secretariat staff. There is a concrete request to report back to ExCom well-being and job

satisfaction levels (e.g. aggregated results from the different well-being and job satisfaction items/scales);

- 8.7 encouraged further synergy and collaboration between ECW and GPE, and followed up on the information note/paper on effective approaches and ways of working with GPE, and the timeline of its completion;
- 8.8 proposed forming a reference group to dive into the details of the management responses to the evaluations;
- 8.9 proposed integrating holistic learning outcomes (beyond reading proficiency and test scores) into routine programming; clarifying the status of targets related to disability inclusion in the Strategic Plan; and improving data on the global impact of investments, particularly concerning children reached;
- 8.10 highlighted the importance of representation from the Global South within ECW and sought clarity on whether recent improvements were due to policy changes or external factors;
- 8.11 asked for further information on the funding allocations and criteria related to the frequency and reach of FERs; suggested that further discussion on this issue is deferred to a future ExCom or appropriate reference group meeting;
- 8.12 expressed support for future evaluations on gender equality and empowerment, and strengthening data and evidence on education in emergencies through the finance observatory;
- 8.13 emphasized localization as a critical area needing more attendance and highlighted the importance of local partnerships in MYRP implementations, advocating for 25% funding allocation to local partners as a minimum standard;
- 8.14 inquired about the process of finalizing the hosting agreement;
- 8.15 commended ECW's work on refugees, with particular thanks to the Senior Education Manager Eddie Dutton for his leadership in the Refugee Reference Group;
- 8.16 commended ECW for the positive developments in climate-related efforts and teacher support; requested for more detailed information on ongoing work in teacher support linked to localization efforts.

In response, the Secretariat:

- 8.17 acknowledged the delays in the information note/paper with GPE. The Deputy Director committed to sharing the draft of the paper for inputs from ExCom as soon as possible;
- 8.18 shared the outcomes of the ECW Staff Retreat in January and Senior Management Retreat in March, including action plans addressing staff feedback and recommendations on improving the Secretariat's organizational culture and staff well-being;
- 8.19 confirmed that learning outcomes are being integrated into MYRP programming, and that it will provide relevant updates;

- 8.20 explained how ensuring a balanced representation in ECW is important to reflect in the Operational Manual, given that improvements on representation of the Global South were largely driven by external factors;
- 8.21 shared that the next step in finalizing the hosting agreement involves ExCom representatives meeting with UNICEF to provide input and written recommendations, thus anticipating another round of revisions; and emphasized that once the hosting agreement is finalized, the Standard Contribution Agreement will be revised accordingly to align with new terms and updates;
- 8.22 proposed that individual recommendations could be discussed in separate meetings and that the Secretariat would be happy to organize an Educational Technical Group and Gender Reference Group to discuss specific details;
- 8.23 explained that reference/advisory groups exist to guide the organization's progress in implementing and responding to evaluation recommendations rather than on the evaluation process itself; and clarified that after the final evaluation report is completed, it goes to the ExCom for approval along with a management response.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS/DECISIONS

- 8.24 The ExCom endorsed the annual reporting on progress against the management's responses to the evaluations to enhance organizational learning and effectiveness.

9. ECW's Geographic Presence: Out-posting Staff¹

The ECW – Deputy Director:

- 9.1 presented the Secretariat's plans to diversify staff presence geographically in line with ECW's organization evaluation, highlighting that:
- a) currently, New York is the only official duty station; other locations like Geneva, Amman, and Copenhagen host "out-posted" staff, and do not represent official offices nor other duty stations;
 - b) strategically out-posting staff to places like Brussels and Nairobi is based on job function and regional importance;
 - c) outposted staff locations must have a UNICEF office for duty of care purposes, thus the need to move the ECW staff currently outposted in London to Brussels (given the closure of the UNICEF office in London)
 - d) increasing geographic presence does not involve creating new positions but relocating existing ones approved by the ExCom, and aims to enhance geographic diversity, reduce travel costs, and lower living expenses compared to major hubs like New York and Geneva;
 - e) the pilot phase, starting with Nairobi, will be assessed in terms of its effectiveness before further requests are submitted to the Executive Director for approval.

¹ Following the ExCom meeting, UNICEF responded to the request to outpost a position to Nairobi. They explained that there are programmatic concerns and risks for the organization for hosted funds to place staff in non-HQ field locations where UNICEF has similar programmes, and that this may create potential conflict of interest, programmatic competition, and/or undue burden to hosting country/regional offices. The request was thus rejected and thus the position will not be outposted as planned.

In discussion, the ExCom raised questions on the following:

- 9.2 the rationale behind retroactively out-posting staff (e.g. Nairobi), suggesting potential cost considerations and strategic planning in recruitment;
- 9.3 why Nairobi was chosen over other regions in Africa, probing whether this decision marked the beginning of broader geographical diversification efforts within UNICEF;
- 9.4 consultation with host country governments like Denmark and Brussels before out-posting, citing implications for fundraising and EU donor relations;
- 9.5 ECW's remote working policies;
- 9.6 cost implications and office space requirements for outposted staff, seeking clarity on UNICEF's approach and policies regarding these logistics.

In response, the ECW Deputy Director:

- 9.7 clarified that out-posting is about strategic placement rather than allowing staff to work from anywhere, citing the strategic placement of resource mobilization positions in donor capitals like Brussels and the placement of a Programme Manager in Nairobi to cover multiple countries in Eastern Africa and considering neutrality of operations;
- 9.8 clarified that the recommendation of diversifying ECW's geographic presence came after positions were already established in Geneva or New York, making it a retrospective process;
- 9.9 emphasized that the plan does not entail opening new offices but leveraging existing UNICEF locations, *and* explained that communication on out-posting is primarily between ECW and the UNICEF office rather than the host government;
- 9.10 confirmed that ECW can only place staff where there is a UNICEF office to ensure proper care facilities, highlighting the logistical and regulatory constraints involved in staff out-posting;
- 9.11 confirmed that ECW complies with UNICEF's teleworking policies and shared that as per the recent Staff Retreat action plan, ECW requires Secretariat staff to be in the office at least three days a week to enhance collaboration and operational effectiveness;
- 9.12 expressed the intent to evaluate the pilot phase of the out-posting before replicating elsewhere.

In addition, the ECW Executive Director:

- 9.13 shared the challenge of finding an office space in Geneva given the importance of being located there due to its centrality in global humanitarian efforts. She expressed gratitude for eventually securing an office space with the support of the Swiss government, turning Geneva into a hub for multiple education-related organizations.

After the ExCom meeting:

- 9.14 UNICEF has clarified that ECW requests for out-posting will have to be reviewed by UNICEF HR, UNICEF Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) and UNICEF Programme Division.
- 9.15 In relation to an ECW out-posting to Nairobi, the UNICEF position is that there are programmatic concerns and risks for the organization for hosted funds to place staff in non-HQ field locations where UNICEF has similar programmes, and that this may create potential conflict of interest, programmatic competition, and/or undue burden to hosting country/regional offices. The latter is particularly relevant for the UNICEF offices in Nairobi, which have recently managed a significant relocation of staff to Nairobi.
- 9.16 Given these concerns, it is not prudent for UNICEF to approve the out-posting of hosted partnership staff to non-HQ locations. The only feasible option is to outpost in an HQ location where UNICEF has established offices that can host and provide the necessary administrative support to staff, including duty of care.

10. 2024 Events and 2024-25 ExCom meetings

2024 Events

The ECW Chief of Advocacy and Communications:

10.1 presented ECW's key events for 2024, highlighting:

- a) key engagement opportunities such as #ShareTheirVoices and #AfghanGirlsVoices global campaigns;
- b) events and publications, notably the MYRP Manual Launch and 2023 Annual Results Report Launch among others;
- c) the internal planning calendar with key advocacy events from June to December 2024;
- d) planned high-level missions;
- e) engagements with global champions and youth representatives;
- f) key information on the Summit of the Future event on 22-23 September.

10.2 shared the 2023-24 results of advocacy campaigns highlighting the millions of online users reached by the campaigns, and the advertising value equivalency (AVE) of ECW's media coverage, i.e. US\$ 51.3 million in 2023, with a cumulative AVE of US\$ 150 million in 2018-2023.

In discussion, the ExCom:

10.3 commended ECW for their impressive advocacy work in supporting children in conflict and crisis settings;

10.4 highlighted and called for participation and joint advocacy in the following events:

- a) the International Day of Play on 11 June;
- b) World's Teacher Day on 4 October, emphasizing the importance of engaging with the African Union, collaborating with Educational International and partners in organizing a high-level event, and noting UNESCO's first-ever report on the global shortage of teachers;
- c) the Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, hosted by Colombia and Sweden on 7-8 November;
- d) UNESCO's stocktaking on the Global Initiative on Education in Paris on 17 June and subsequent meeting with the Secretary-General in New York on 11 July;
- e) Dedicated sessions on education in emergencies and climate change in the margins of the G20 ministerial meeting in Brazil on 31 October - 1 November; and the G20 meeting in 2025 to be held in South Africa which will prioritize education on its agenda;
- f) International Literacy Day on 8 September, stressing the importance of literacy in crisis setting;
- g) International Day for Protecting Schools from Attack on 9 September;

10.5 commended ECW's co-hosting of the recent conference on quality education held in Copenhagen, which was attended by Nordic countries and the Government of Sierra Leone and which focused on themes such as financing, partnerships, climate change, girls education, education under attack, and specific strategies for engagement across the African continent;

10.6 noted the advocacy support from Denmark particularly the Danish Parliamentary Alliance on Education in Emergencies and involvement of the Danish Finance Minister Nicolai Wammen as an ECW Champion.

In response, the Chief of Advocacy and Communications:

10.7 reassured the ExCom of ECW's participation and advocacy support in the various events mentioned during the discussion, and emphasized the results achieved by a team of five, particularly the cumulative AVE of ECW (in addition to the media mileage from radio and TV interviews) which indicate the organization's expansive reach in raising awareness and visibility on the education needs of children in emergency and crisis settings.

2024-25 ExCom meetings

The ECW Deputy Director:

10.7 presented the - dates for the upcoming ExCom meetings in 2024 and 2025 and proposed:

- a) holding the last two remaining ExCom meetings in 2024 virtually (27 August and 26 November);
- b) transitioning to three meetings in 2025, i.e. two virtual and one in-person;
- c) holding the in-person meeting in 2025 in a programme country.

In discussion, the ExCom:

10.8 expressed support to the Deputy Director's proposals and raised:

- a) transitioning to three meetings in 2025 will ease the workload of the Secretariat and ExCom;

- b) the importance of ensuring that the agenda of the upcoming HLSG meeting reflects the discussions in ExCom meetings, particularly on the Operational Manual, and sharing meeting documents in advance;
- c) the value of visiting schools alongside the ExCom meeting in a programme country to witness the challenges and realities on the ground;
- d) considering the locations and dates of governance meetings, e.g. ensuring that the ECW ExCom meeting does not clash with the GPE Board meeting and sharing the dates and agenda of the HLSG meetings in advance to secure the attendance of principal members;
- e) sharing ECW's annual work plan/report ahead of future in-person meetings will help facilitate productive discussions and decision-making;
- f) climate impact when choosing meeting locations in partner countries to avoid excessive carbon footprint;
- g) using the ExCom meetings, especially the in-person-meetings, to take decisions, where necessary;
- h) utilizing in-person meetings to address challenges related to financial targets and forming new partnerships, and considering a different format for future ExCom meetings, possibly dividing participants into groups to tackle specific issues and encourage innovation and collaboration.

In addition, the ECW Executive Director:

- 10.9 advocated against scheduling back-to-back meetings as it can be taxing for participants and suggested coordinating meeting schedules more effectively;
- 10.10 highlighted the importance of maintaining a virtual ExCom meeting (ideally for an hour or less) before the HLSG meeting for necessary preparations and adjustments;
- 10.11 emphasized the need for flexibility to hold ad hoc meetings when urgent issues arise, fostering a strong and responsive group dynamic;
- 10.12 encouraged engagement from finance ministers and private sector connections to enhance support and broaden partnerships for ECW's initiatives.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS/DECISIONS

10.13 The ExCom was amenable to holding all remaining ExCom meetings in 2024 virtually, and transitioning the frequency of ExCom meetings to one in-person meeting and two virtual meetings a year starting in 2025. This meeting frequency and modality will be reflected in the revision of the ECW Operational Manual.

11. AOB and Close

The ExCom co-chairs:

11.1 acknowledged the online participation of Japan, represented by Naoko Arakawa, who

- a) thanked ECW for its collaboration with Japan and facilitating education funding for Ukraine;

- b) emphasized Japan's prioritization of education cooperation as crucial for achieving human security, particularly as a member of the UN Security Council and co-chair of the Group of Friends for Education;
- c) shared Japan's active engagement in high-level events in New York and preparation for the TICAD ministerial meeting in Tokyo, aiming to collaborate closely with ECW and the education sector.

11.2 informed the ExCom that ECW has formally applied to be part of the GPE Board, and will soon join the GPE's UN constituency by the next GPE Board meeting;

11.3 summarized the key discussions and main points of the meeting;

11.4 reminded the ExCom about the thematic sessions on 30 May;

11.5 closed the meeting by thanking all meeting participants for the rich and productive discussions, with particular thanks for the special participation of Minister Schulze and representatives from the Global Campaign for Education Germany.

Annexes

Annex A: [List of Participants](#)

Annex B: [Meeting Documents](#)

Annex C: [Powerpoint Presentations, 29 May](#)

Annex D: [Powerpoint Presentations, 30 May](#)

Annex E: [Safeguarding Thematic Session recording](#)