

MEETING MINUTES
**INCLEN Board of Trustees Meeting
Fudan University, Shanghai, China
June 16-17, 2019**
Participants

Board Members: Nirmal Kumar Ganguly (NKG) - Acting Chairperson & Presiding Officer; Virander Singh Chauhan (VSC); C N Raghupathi (CNR); Jiyao Wang (JW); K S Ghosh C (SGC);

RAB Members: Francois Chapuis (FC) and Hesham Fathey El-Sayed (HES)

Special invitees: Jiu Lia (JL); Manish Soneja (MS); Tigist Bacha (TB); Dhite Bayu Nugroho (DBN)

Regrets:

Board Member: Marcel Tanner (MT) and KS Reddy (KSR)

RAB members: Carlos G Restrepo (CGR) and P Tugwell (PT)/ Laura Sodowski (LS)

Young Scientists: Fernando Suarez Obando; Lawrence Mbuagbaw

Secretariat:

Narendra K Arora (NKA); Manoj K Das (MKD); Sanjay Aggarwal (SA), Anirban Chatterjee (AC) and Gaurav Banyal (GB)

Selection of Acting Chairperson

NKA informed the group of last minute inability of Chair MT to attend the meeting due to some health and personal reasons. The present BOT members were requested to identify the working chair in absence of Marcel Tanner (Chairperson, INCLEN BOT). Board members unanimously nominated N K Ganguly (NKG) as the Acting Chairperson for the BOT meeting.

Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting was called to order at 9:30 Hrs on June 16, 2019 by Acting Chairperson.

All participants were requested to sign on attendance, conflict of interest and a non-disclosure agreement.

1. Chair's Welcome

- The Acting Chairperson (NKG) welcomed all the Board Members, RAB members, Young scientists from the regional network and Secretariat members to the INCLEN Board and RAB Meeting. The Chair also welcomed Regional Advisory Board (RAB) members (FC and HES) and Young Scientist from the network (JL, MS, TB, and DBN) as observers and special invitees to the Board meeting.
- Apologies were received from Board members including Marcel Tanner (MT) and K S Reddy (KSR), who were unable to attend this year's meeting.
- NKG thanked JW, China-CLEN and Fudan University for hosting the Board meeting and for making the arrangements. He specially appreciated the support from Vice President Fudan University for making the China-CLEN meeting happen on June 14-15, 2019 and BOT/RAB meeting tagged to it.

- NKG highly appreciated the research efforts being undertaken by the China-CLEN CEUs/CERTCs and vibrant network engagement showcased through the participation and presentations on the projects and activities being undertaken by these units during the China-CLEN forum (June 14-15, 2019). He also suggested the other regional CLENs to understand and appropriately replicate the model in their respective regions/countries.
- Meeting agenda was reviewed and accepted. Some modification in the agenda with shifting the work plan and executive sessions to second day was proposed.

2. Review of last meeting minutes

- The INCLEN BOT Meeting on August 15-16, 2018 was reviewed and approved.

3. Action taken report

NKA presented the actions taken on previous year's board decisions.

3.1 IIGH activities

3.1.1 *Program Portfolio*: As per the advice of the Board in 2018, the following activities were undertaken

- Program Portfolio targeted focus: As per guidance of Board, the new projects with focus on environmental health, antimicrobial resistance and one health, digital health and artificial intelligence, and perinatal bereavement were developed and submitted.
- Project status: In last one year, 6 projects were completed, 11 projects are ongoing and 36 new proposals were developed and submitted to various funding agencies. Out of these 10 projects have been funded and initiated, 2 proposals accepted in pipeline, 15 new proposals are still under review and 9 proposals were rejected.

3.1.2 *International Collaborative Research Projects*: During last one year, 3 new multi-country proposals were developed and one such project is already ongoing:

- Improving case management in childhood pneumonia submitted to Unitaid (WHO) involving Ghana, Ethiopia, India and Nepal.
- Antibiotics resistance transmission within one-health framework submitted to European Union-JPIAMR (India, Ethiopia and Netherlands)
- Artificial Intelligence for predicting non-adherence and susceptibility pattern to treatment of tuberculosis, submitted to BRICS secretariat (India, South Africa and Brazil)
- Global vaccine safety multi-country collaboration on maternal immunization safety being funded by WHO/P95 (Ongoing at 25 sites across seven countries)

3.1.3. *National network consolidation and expansion*: During last one year, four new intra-country multi-institution proposals were developed with involvement of new institutions.

- India Iodine Survey involving 36 Institutes
- One Health Antibiotics resistance surveillance involving 7 institutes
- Development and piloting of perinatal bereavement support services involving 10 institutes
- Health impacts of improved solid waste management involving 2 institutes

3.1.3 *Expand funding base*: Funding base has been diversified with addition of new projects funded by Wellcome Trust, MRC-UK, DBT/BIRAC- India, Grand Challenges Canada, ICMR, WHO and Johns Hopkins University (primary funding from BMGF and Pfizer). Also CSR funds were explored and one grant from SRS Lifesciences was secured.

- 3.1.4 *Capacity building:* There are 2 PhD students enrolled. 11 Interns from various institutes have (SRM university, TISS, IIMR, PHFI, Jamia Hamdard University and Amity University) have completed internship.
- 3.1.5 *Developing digital repository:* The digital repository of the completed projects at IEO are available on website. The access to the repository can be given to CLEN members on request.
- 3.1.6 *Land procurement:* Put on hold and shall be discussed during the meeting.

3.2 RAB and Network Activities

- 3.2.1 *Rotation of members of the RAB:* The membership for RAB is to be discussed and decided.
- 3.2.2 *Change of CLEN representation on BOT:* The membership for representation on BOT is to be discussed and decided.
- 3.2.3 *Induction of Young Researchers on the RAB:* 18 Young Researcher names were recommended by RAB members/Network
- The nominations included 6 from INCLEN-Africa; 5 from IndiaCLEN; 2 from INCLENAsia; 2 from LatinCLEN; 1 from CanUSACLEN; 1 from ChinaCLEN; and 1 from EuroMedCLEN.
 - The criteria used for selection was as mentioned in the BoT-2018 (noted in the minutes): age < 45 years, willingness to work for the network and invest time, have participated/led at least one funded research project, evidence of publications during last 5 years, preferably in peer-reviewed, indexed journals, preferably 5 years of association with network, and regular employee/faculty at any Medical Institution
 - 6 Young Researchers from the network identified including Liu Jia, Manish Soneja, Tigist Bacha, Dhite Bayu Nugroho, Fernando Suarez Obando and Lawrence Mbuagbaw. The nominee from EuroMed CLEN could not be finalised as he was not a regular employee/faculty at any Medical Institution.
 - 4 Young Researchers (IndiaCLEN, ChinaCLEN, INCLEN Asia and INCLEN Africa) attended the RAB meeting. A brief introduction of all the nominated Young Researchers was given and introduced to Board.
- 3.2.4 *Progress on the strategic action plan for network:* RAB to update on the progress and plan of action on June 17, 2019
- 3.2.5 *Reengineering network:* The activities undertaken in this direction were:
- Efforts to collaborate within the network at country and global level
 - Efforts to expand collaboration beyond network and non-health institutions within India and outside India
 - Induction of young scientists from the CLENs for taking leadership in collaborative projects
- 3.2.6 *Creating network of DHSS sites:*
- IEO has established two DDESS sites in India (Palwal, Haryana and Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh).
 - The third DDESS site in India under preparation (Shillong, Meghalaya, North East India)
 - With the completion of ongoing census round, INCLEN shall be eligible for applying to INDEPTH for membership

3.3 Regulatory compliances

- 3.3.1 *Financial Management process:*
- Quarterly statutory audit was done in 2019 along with monthly internal audit; Complementarity was ensured between both auditors.

- Statutory audit for FY 2018-19 has been completed and tabled for ratification.
 - Patience, handholding and mentoring by CNR and VSC was highly appreciated.
- 3.3.2 *DSIR (Department of Science and Industrial Research) registration:* the registration as Scientific and Industrial Research organisation (SIRO) has been renewed till 2022.
- 3.3.3 *FCRA (Foreign Currency Regulation Act) registration:* The current FCRA registration is valid through 2021.
- 3.3.4 *Anti-sexual Harassment Report:* No case reported during last year.

3.4 Board Matters

- 3.4.1 *Board membership:* The following issues are to be discussed during the meeting
- Board membership from the RAB/network (2 nominations)
 - Independent members (2 Indian and 2 International): We have received 15 nominations from various Board members.

4. Update on Program Activities

4.1 Research activities at IEO: MKD presented the update on the program activities at INCLEN in the seven research portfolio (Annexure-1 and -2)

He informed briefly about the 11 ongoing with their status. A brief was given about the 10 new projects launched including:

- a. Global vaccine safety project,
- b. HPV and cervical cancer project in India and Ethiopia,
- c. Immunization impact on cognition,
- d. Socio-behavioral research on acceptance of minimally invasive tissue sampling for perinatal and child deaths,
- e. Evaluation of Intensified mission Indradhanush in India,
- f. Evaluation of ANMOL program in India,
- g. Improving data quality for action in immunization program,
- h. Improving district vaccine forecasting,
- i. Developing algorithm for respiratory disease identification and
- j. Antibiotic resistance surveillance under one-health framework.

Two sanctioned projects in pipeline include RCT using probiotics in preterm newborns for prevention of sepsis and disease informatics platform. He also shared the 15 new proposals under review with the funders and 9 projects which were not successful.

He also briefed about the progress made under the Childhood Pneumonia Program in India. Out of the 10 projects funder under the program, 8 have been completed and two are expected to complete soon. An external evaluation was undertaken by a three member team (Thomas Cherian, Piyush Gupta and Kurien Thomas) during April–May 2019 and the findings and recommendations were shared with BOT.

4.2 Publications attributable to INCLEN: In 2018, 38 publications were attributable to INCLEN including 22 from IEO, and 7 from Latin-CLEN, 5 from China-CLEN, 1 each from CanUSA-CLEN and India-CLEN. In 2019 till now, from IEO 10 articles have been published.

4.3 Ethics Committee: The Ethics Committee inducted 4 new members and 3 members rotated out including the member secretary. The EC met 4 times during 2018.

Discussion and Decisions (Based on action taken report and details of the program activities)

- The Board appreciated the aggressive approach adopted by IEO to attract new grants, expanding the funder base and suggested to further foster portfolio-wise leadership; identify areas that require focussed perusal and establish a mechanism for the same. Board was particularly appreciative of getting some multi-country projects funded.
- *Young Researcher membership*: Board appreciated and welcomed the Young Researchers from the network. Board hoped that the YR members shall be able to assist in rejuvenating the network and collaborate for development of new proposals. Regarding the EuroMed-CLEN nomination, FC clarified that the nominee is a PhD and staff at the university linked to projects, although the salary is being generated from projects. FC further informed that the faculty members have limited engagement with the CLEN/CEU, thus the involvement and contribution to network may not be expected from them.
- *Exploration of funding opportunities*: Board advised to explore additional funding opportunities from Chinese funders, India-Africa collaboration, and European union
- *Translation of projects*: Board advised the network members to consider use of the completed and on-going research protocols at INCLEN Executive Office in their respective regions/countries. The resources can be accessed from repository created by IEO. For the ongoing studies, the members/teams from the network can seek/explore funds from any potential source and join the study network.
- *Communication platform*: CNR suggested that INCLEN network may use the available Social communication platforms to engage and allow participation of the young scientists. The options of WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and others may be explored.
- *Environmental scan*: Board suggested that IEO continues fund environmental scan and circulate to the network.
- *Capacity building*: Board suggested for developing and launching online courses. He offered for running a 12 hour course on big-data in health. Board advised IEO to structure the internship with minimum and maximum timeframe, frame some criteria for internship and indicate how many interns can be accommodated. The internship notice can be circulated in the network for possible applications from the network. Board suggested to explore potential funding support for capacity building.
- *Demographic Health Surveillance Sites (DHSS) and Demographic Development and Environmental Surveillance Sites (DDESS)*: Board advised that the RAB and network members may be oriented on the DHSS & DDESS of INCLEN. Board also emphasized that setting of cohorts linked to environmental, geospatial and meteorological data along with health may be useful. RAB and Young Scientists may be encouraged to assist in mapping the DHSS sites associated to the CLEN and CEUs.
- *New proposal development*: Board appreciated the new proposals developed and good success rate. But Board also advised to review the reasons for refusal for the proposals not funded.
- *Research leadership*: Board suggested creating the next generation of research leadership at INCLEN to look for funding and engage with the funders in their independent capacity. Board also advised for broad-basing the PIs and attempt attracting PIs from the network through Adjunct faculty attachment options. Board requested RAB/YR members to

identify potential names of investigators from the network for taking leadership and new proposal development.

- *Research portfolio:* Board advised to consider nutrition innovation, big data analytics and explore for CSR funds. Choosing appropriate CSR partners and building capacity in the areas that can deliver the requirements of CSR activities will be required for accessing these funds and executing the programs.
- *Engagement with funders:* Board suggested initiating discussion with big funders like BMGF and others for attract future funding and put forth a case for INCLEN.
- Some RAB representatives suggested for face-to-face network meeting and support for network operations, citing the past experiences of INCLEN meetings. Board commented that there is no replacement for face-to-face meeting, but in the current situation with financial constraints, we may have to look for alternate and efficient options of keeping the network alive. Board suggested RAB and YR members to discuss and recommend the action points next day.

5. Administrative and financial issues

5.1 Finance report: SA presented the financial report of the year 2017-18 and the statutory auditor, Mr Rethinam (on behalf of V Shankar Iyer & Co) joined over teleconference. The auditor informed the Board that there were no observations and all expenditures had been done as per the guidelines and for the purposes for which the funds were meant for.

The summary financial report is: (i) income for the year – 3.16 m USD; (ii) expenditure – 2.9 m USD; (iii) variance between the projected FY2018-2019 budget and actual expenditure was almost 39% (less); (iv) out of the total grants received, approximately 90% is restricted and meant for specific project activities as per the funder and remaining 10% is unrestricted funds, mostly in the form of overhead; (v) total surplus at the end of FY 2018-18 was 0.35 m USD; (vi) projected budget for the FY 2019-20 is 4.22m USD with administrative expenditure of 0.21 m USD; and (vii) the monthly internal audit and quarterly statutory audit plan was shared with the Board.

The HR fringe benefit liabilities have been streamlined with leave encashment, and gratuity fund created with LIC of India.

Discussion and decision

- Board appreciated the turnaround from a deficit state during last three years. While accepting the uncertainties of projects and available funding with about 30% fluctuation across the years, the Board advised the management to be more aggressive with revenue generation. Board also suggested for planning the fixed expenses.
- Board suggested to explore possibility of opening an USD currency eFC account for the Trust, which may allow handling the exchange fluctuation rates better.

6. Board members nominations

NKA briefed that 16 nominations have been suggested by various Board members for possible consideration as Board members. Out of the names the Board discussed and agreed on five names for Board Member pursuing further.

7. Work plan

NKA presented the work plan for year 2019-20.

- NKA proposed 'survive to thrive model' based on the past experiences.
- *Exploring New Research Domains:* He proposed for focusing on the niche areas for development of new proposals.
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML): Based on the past experiences on projects, data warehouse infrastructure, database management and capacity, INCLEN team has developed new proposals on AI and ML with success in some. The team proposed to pursue further.
 - Geospatial epidemiology: With the DDESS and projects with linkage of GIS and internal capacity, the he proposed pursuing GIS epidemiology as a niche area.
 - Technology assessment: With the past experience of device and software development and integration (mobile cardiocograph, mobile pulse oximeter), new efforts on algorithm for lung sounds to detect various respiratory illnesses and Stereoscopic Retinal Image Screening Solutions for Tracking Chronic Illness, the team proposed pursuing further in this area.
 - Implementation research (IR): INCLEN team has completed two projects and three new proposals submitted in this. There is also collaboration with ICMR on this. The team is organising a data analysis workshop later this year. IR can be a niche area for further development.
 - Academic clinical research units (ACRU): A consortium of capacity building and support units for further clinical research is being proposed in India and INCLEN is part of the consortium. This may be an opportunity for building the capacity building program further.
- *Expanding Funding Base:* INCLEN has added several new funders and the team continues making efforts for expanding this base.
- *Exploring new partners:* The team has been looking for partners and collaborators within and beyond network and involving young scientists.
 - To maintain the global character, proactive engagement with RAB and Young Researchers, map interests of suitable researchers and engage them for developing and participating in collaborative proposals.
- *IIGH establishment and consolidation:* The team shall focus on taking IIGH agenda forward focusing on:
 - Financial core building: The management shall aggressively continue pursuing develop new research proposals, generation of the revenue and diversification in the funder base for financial core building.
 - Brand value building: The management shall also make efforts to build the INCLEN build value in India and globally.
 - IIGH establishment: The Management proposed that for IIGH permanency and develop an institutional structure, a land and building must be planned. The Management proposed acquiring land in Delhi-NCR area.

Discussion and decision

- The interested network members may be involved for capacity building in the big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning and interpretation. Suitable online and face-to-face capacity building opportunities must be explored. Similar courses for GIS epidemiology and others may be developed.
- Board suggested to explore business opportunities in health technology assessment and development and use for informing the policy and program.
- Board advised to consider INCLEN to function as an incubator for biomedical innovations and start-ups. For this IEO to seek support from DST and DBT.
- Board suggested possible inclusion of representation from network in the Implementation Research capacity building workshops.
- RAB suggested sharing the revenue generated with the network and CLENs. RAB members mentioned that the CLENs and network members have not considered revenue and fund generation as their primary motive and many of their activities are capacity building, which is not possible to quantify in money. Board observed that the current financial status and availability of overheads of INCLEN is barely able to manage the running expenditure of the Organization. The IEO therefore cannot support routine functioning of the CEUs and CERTCs. The ED (NKA) committed support for development of proposal on case to case basis. The Board strongly recommended that CLENs should consider working towards generation of funds from local/alternate sources like a federated structure for keeping the Network active.
- The YRs committed towards working for reviving their CEUs over next one year. Board advised to consider China-CLEN as a model for network vibrancy and sustenance.
- Board advised IEO to continue working towards attracting resources for multi-country projects. This will help in rebuilding the network. Recognising the diversity in challenges across the regional networks, Board advised the RAB, YRs and IEO to work together to generate collaborative multi-country research for reviving and strengthening the Network.
- Board endorsed the work plan related to research portfolio and niche areas.

8. Resolutions for administrative and financial matters

The following resolutions for administrative and financial management for the Trust were signed:

- Appointments of statutory auditor, internal auditor and legal consultant
- Authorisation to ED for bank operations, investments, hiring of office space, procurement of fixed assets or land, filing tax returns
- Change in FCRA bank account and FCRA fund application

The Chair thanked the Board members, RAB members, Young Researchers and IEO for preparing, attending, contributing and bringing enthusiasm to the meeting. Chair on record highly appreciated the support and facilitation of the China-CLEN, Jiyao Wang, Fudan University authority and staffs that made the Board and RAB meeting possible. The Board meeting was officially closed.