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Suspicion of irregularities in relation to implementing partner under the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) initiative in Syria

Reference is made to the previous report dated 11 February 2021 regarding suspicions of misuse of funds on a grant to the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) initiative under UNICEF implemented by a partner NGO in Syria. UNICEF disbursed USD 616,624 to the NGO of the total project allocation of USD 928,900 in the period 2017-2019.

A UNICEF investigation concluded that there had been misuse of approx. DKK 825,000 (USD 125,186). Because it could not be verified that the agreed services had been implemented, and the funds could not be returned by the partner NGO, it was concluded that the partner NGO had misused the funds. The Danish share of the loss funds is approximately DKK 262,890 (USD 43,815).

The incident was reported to the relevant authorities in Turkey, from where the activities were being managed, and to the authorities in northern Syria, where the activities were supposed to be implemented. A legal advice on the case determined that all avenues for recovery have been exhausted by UNICEF. Therefore, UNICEF requested ECW to apply the internal write-off procedure to the unrecoverable balance. This procedure can be used when UNICEF concludes that the cash transfer has been misused or lost and all avenues for recovery of the funds have been exhausted. The lessons learned from this case included the promotion of whistleblowing as an effective anti-fraud tool and the continued strengthening of risk mitigation activities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus regards the case as closed with a loss of DKK 262,890.