Technical consultation: addressing and managing conflicts of interest in the planning and delivery of nutrition programmes at country level

Date: 8-9 October 2015

Venue: International Labour Organization (ILO) Salle IX (R2-sud), Geneva, Switzerland

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Background

The Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly (WHA 65) indicated that global efforts to improve nutrition should focus on six global nutrition targets to be achieved by 2025 and endorsed a Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition1 (CIP) through Resolution WHA65.6.

The CIP includes action areas for Member States, WHO and other actors and recommends “to create a supportive environment for the implementation of comprehensive food and nutrition policies” and calls for Member States to “establish a dialogue with relevant national and international parties and form alliances and partnerships to expand nutrition actions with the establishment of adequate mechanisms to safeguard against potential conflicts of interest”1.

Resolution WHA65.6 also requested the Director-General to: “develop risk assessment, disclosure and management tools to safeguard against possible conflicts of interest in policy development and implementation of nutrition programmes consistent with WHO’s overall policy and practice [...]”2.

In response to this request, the Department of Nutrition for Health and Development (NHD) of the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with internal partners, established a work stream to analyse definitions and relevant issues for further discussion by Member States and reported to the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly (WHA67). The WHA67 held in Geneva in May 2015 requested the Director-General “[...]to convene informal consultations with Member States to complete the work, before the end of 2015, on risk assessment and management tools for conflicts of interest in nutrition, for consideration by Member States at the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly” (WHA67/65).

WHO is currently reviewing its Framework of engagement with non-State actors (FENSA)3 which is being internally developed to describe standards for managing risks in engagement between WHO and non-State actors. This framework was specifically requested by the World Health Assembly.

(WHA64.2) and is part of the WHO reform process started in 2011. While negotiations on the exact content of FENSA are in progress and that NHD’s work on conflict of Interests relates to the interaction between Members States and non-State actors, an alignment with WHO’s conflicts of interests approach is needed.

The work stream established by NHD on conflicts of interest focuses on the potential issues that may arise for the implementation of the CIP, particularly when engagement with non-State actors is called for and built on concepts and definitions developed in the context of the FENSA.

The Department of Nutrition for Health and Development is convening a technical consultation with experts in the area of risk assessment, disclosure, management of conflicts of interest and other areas of expertise, with the participation of Member States as observers. The consultation will be held at the International Labour Organization (ILO) Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland on **8-9 October 2015**.

**Objectives and expected outcomes**

The objectives of this consultation are:

1. to identify conflicts of interest areas associated with the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of nutrition programmes in public health;
2. to describe the current prevention and management tools already applied by some countries;
3. to present examples of country case studies surrounding conflicts of interest in nutrition from high-, middle- and low-income countries.

The expected outcomes are:

1. definitions, criteria, and indicators to help identify and prioritize conflicts of interest in the development and implementation of policies advocated by the CIP at country level;
2. a list of situations in which the development and implementation of policies advocated by the CIP involve interactions between governments and non-State actors (mainly private sector) which may lead to conflicts of interest;
3. a list of tools, methodologies and approaches that may help identify and manage conflicts of interest.

The consultation will consider examples of policy areas in which conflicts of interests have been identified and managed: the marketing of infant formula, the fortification of staple food, the reformulation of foods and the delivery of school food and nutrition programmes.

The outcomes of this consultation will inform the WHO Secretariat report to be presented to the 138th Executive Board meeting in January 2016.