Draft concept note

Informal Technical Member State consultation

Risk assessment and management tools for safeguarding against potential conflicts of interest in nutrition

WHO Headquarters, Salle C, 4 February 2019

Context:
SDG17 calls for strengthening the means of implementation and revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development, through finance, technology, capacity building, trade and systematic issues. More specifically, target 17.17 calls to “Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships”. At the same time, the World Health Assembly (resolution 65.6) has called upon Member States to establish adequate mechanisms to safeguard against potential conflict of interest when forming alliances and partnerships. A conflict of interest arises in circumstances where there is potential for a secondary interest to unduly influence, or where it may be reasonably perceived to unduly influence, either the independence or objectively of professional judgement or actions regarding a primary interest.

Background:
In 2012, the Sixty-Fifth World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted resolution WHA65.6 and endorsed the comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. The resolution 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.” In decision WHA67(9) of the Sixty-Seventh WHA held in 2014, the Director-General was requested “[…] to convene informal consultations with Member States to complete the work, before the end of 2015, on risk assessment and management tools for conflict of interest in nutrition, for consideration by Member States at the Sixty-Ninth World Health Assembly”.

In response to this request, a technical consultation was convened on 8-9 October 2015 with the aim of supporting efforts to address governance gaps on conflict of interest in order to safeguard nutrition policy development and implementation at country level. The technical consultation brought together experts from different constituencies and fields, such as, nutrition, health systems, noncommunicable diseases, law, economic and social science, as well as representatives of the six WHO regions.

Following up on the outcomes of the technical consultation, the Secretariat devised a draft approach on preventing and managing conflict of interest in policy development and implementation of nutrition programmes at country level. The approach proposed a six-step methodology for Member States to consider in their engagement with individuals and non-State actors for preventing and managing conflict of interest in the area of nutrition. A public e-consultation on the draft approach was held between 11 and 29 September 2017. Member

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1 For the purpose of the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors, non-State actors are nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions (see document WHA69/2016/REC/1, Annex 5)
States, United Nations representatives and non-State actors provided comments on the draft tools, which are publicly available. Feedback was received from Member States and other stakeholders\(^2\). The Secretariat developed an amended version of the tools and submitted a report to the Executive Board at its 142\(^{nd}\) session\(^3\) in January 2018, which was noted by the Board.

At the WHA71 in May 2018, the Member States discussed report A71/23\(^4\) and the report was noted. In addition, 21 Member States, in their formal statements, commented or referred to the work of conflict of interest in Committee A on 25 May 2018. Several countries suggested to further discuss the approach and collect expectations on country needs and country experiences. Six Member States volunteered to test the applicability and practical value of the tools in their context.

Objective:
The Secretariat is organizing an informal technical consultation on 4 February 2019 for Member States to further share their experience on engaging with non-State actors in the area of nutrition. This consultation provides an opportunity for discussion among Member States’ representatives to share experiences and discuss the practicality and utility of the proposed tools.

Objectives of the consultation are:
1. To share Member States’ experiences on engaging with NSAs;
2. To share current approaches on risk assessment and management of conflict of interest.
3. To learn about country experience on the WHO tools and identify next steps in this area;

About the consultation:
This consultation will include Member States’ representatives only. The meeting will take place at WHO HQ, Geneva 4 February 2019. Interpretation services will be provided in the six UN languages. The consultation will be live cast via WebEx (via a protected link) and will be recorded for reporting purposes. A meeting report will be developed.

Proposed agenda:
09:00-10:30: Session on country experiences of engaging with NSAs
10:30-11:00: Coffee/tea Break
11:00-12:30: Session on the opportunities and challenges of engaging with NSA
12:30-14:00: Lunch
14:00-15:30: Risk assessment and management tools: the way forward
15:30-16:00: Coffee/tea Break
16:00-17:00: Next steps and closure


\(^3\) See document EB142/23 and the summary records of the Executive Board at its 142\(^{nd}\) session, tenth meeting, section 3