WHO global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national multisectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children, building on existing relevant WHO work

First Discussion Paper containing Draft Zero (20 March 2015)

Comments by Switzerland, 5 July 2015

Introduction

Switzerland welcomes the WHO global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national multisectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children. We share its vision, goals and objectives and agree with the proposed actions for Member States, national and international partners, and support the WHO Secretariat in its efforts. We are also favorable regarding the proposed long-term process of engagement (10 years) of the global plan of action.

The global plan of action suggests — albeit considering the various levels of development of the health care systems across countries — the adoption of unified standards. Considering the implementation of the proposed goals, it is important to remember that Member States stand at different levels. In our view, the current draft does not yet sufficiently highlight this important aspect (see comments related to page 19). Find below our comments per chapter.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Scope

Page 1: 5. Include a reference regarding children witnessing domestic violence and a reference regarding violence between and among children and youngsters (see § 1.3.4)

1.3 Overview of the global situation

Progress in countries and gaps

Page 5: 5. Mention helplines that are put in place for women, children and youngsters by certain services.

Page 6: 7. Mention that prevention and advice or the dissemination of information targeting young parents — that are not necessarily at risk of inflicting harm and abuse their children— should be implemented by childcare services, pediatricians and maternity services.

Chapter 2. Vision, goal, objectives, guiding principles and time frame

2.5 Time frame - Questions to elicit feedback from consultations

Page 8: Are you in broad agreement with the vision, goals and guiding principles? Please provide suggestions for improving them.

Yes, overall we support the vision, goals and guiding principles of the global plan of action. However, since the global plan of action and its guiding principles remain very broad and by addressing interpersonal violence in general, developing effective measures appear to be rather difficult.
Are the proposed objectives adequate and feasible? Please provide suggestions for improving them.

This question cannot be answered for all member states in the same way. While in some countries, as in Switzerland, many measures to address interpersonal and domestic violence are in place and functional, the situation may be very different in countries where awareness of the problem is less developed.

It may be unrealistic to expect objectives to be achieved in a short period of time. We welcome your feedback on the proposed time frame (of 10 years).

We would suggest that the objectives be differentiated by country groups. In some countries, the necessary legislation may be lacking, in others, the legislation may be in place but law enforcement may need to be improved. Awareness and state of measures already in place are also different in the member state’s health systems.

Does the proposed structure for the draft zero of the global plan of action work?

It should be differentiated into stages of development of solutions to fit the member states different states of awareness and of measures already in place.

Comments B: Violence against women and girls

Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of health services and health-care providers to respond to violence

Page 11: Raise awareness in communities about available services for violence: replace services for violence by "n case" of violence. Information provided to the public is important, however, information provided to the victims is crucial and needs to be embedded in national prevention and sensitization campaigns involving different stakeholders (health, schools etc.) as well as helplines need to be made available 24/7.

Comments C: Violence against children

Objective 1: Strengthen leadership, advocacy and governance of the health system in addressing violence against children

Page 17: Develop guidelines...provide care, support and services...: it is paramount to ensure that victims continue to have access to services beyond the age of 18 as in certain countries certain services are not provided any longer beyond the age of 18.

Objective 3: Strengthen the role and capacity of the health sector in programming to prevent violence against children

Actions for the WHO Secretariat

Page 18: Collaborate with other UN partners in developing a joint strategy to address violence against children in schools...: include other international organizations such as the Council of Europe as they address such topics as well.

Questions to elicit feedback from consultations

Page 19: Are you in broad agreement with these? Are there any revisions or additions to the proposed actions?

With regards to the situation in Switzerland, the action plan positions too exclusively women and children as (only) victims of violence. In Switzerland, almost a fourth of the victims of domestic violence are male. And while 82% of all violent perpetrators (domestic or non-domestic) in Switzerland are male, so are 56% of the victims.

Which of these actions are appropriate for Member States and which are appropriate for other national
and international partners?

This depends largely on the measures already in place in each particular member state.

*Which of the proposed actions would you consider to be "core" or part of a "minimum package" to be implemented across all settings?*

Again, this has to be established by taking into account the state of awareness and measures already in place in the respective country. We would suggest that country groups are built according to sound criteria (e.g., type of legislation in place, etc.). Likewise, we recommend that the WHO develops tools (such as publications of best practices and technical guidelines) that can also be implemented by under resourced countries or countries in which gender equality remains an issue that still needs to be addressed.

*Which of these actions could be feasibly implemented with resources that are currently available and which ones would require additional resources?*

See answer to previous question.

*What challenges would you face in implementing the proposed actions to strengthen your health system's response?*

There are already many measures regarding this problem (and especially to end domestic violence) in place in Switzerland.

*What type of technical support, guidance and/or evidence would you find useful from WHO in order to implement the proposed actions?*

This would be an overview over the countries situation with the establishment of a segmentation of member states according to their state of addressing the problem.

*What partnerships will you need to build in order to strengthen your health system’s response in addressing violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children?*

There are already many measures in place regarding this issue (and especially to end domestic violence) in Switzerland. The Swiss federal government explains in his statement from the 11th February 2015 to a parliamentary motion (Prevention of domestic violence. A task for health policy, Nr. 14.40251) that the many measures already in place to address this serious problem are sufficient and that no further action (as required by the mentioned motion) is needed.

*We have proposed several global targets to monitor implementation of the global plan of action.*

- Are they feasible? Are there any others you would propose? Can you suggest how to improve these targets?
  
  We would suggest establishing a baseline per member state.

- Which of the targets would you prioritize?
  
  Cannot yet be answered, see previous question.

Chapter 5. Options for adaption and implementation

Questions to elicit feedback from consultations

Page 21: *Is it feasible to define options for adaptation and implementation of the plan at the global level?*

No, it is necessary to define specific objectives according to the member state’s needs and possibilities.

*What additional information could be provided to countries in order to guide them in adapting and implementing the plan?*

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You could remind the member states that the action plan is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 10th December 1948 and maybe also on the Convention on the Rights of the Child form 2nd September 1990.

Annex 1: Glossary of key terms

Child maltreatment

Page 22. Besides bullying, also insert into the plan of action issues related to harassment, stalking, grooming, sexting which may have dramatic consequences (such as suicide) on youngsters and children.