Comments on Draft One of the WHO global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national multi-sectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children

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I agree with the comments made by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, particularly those that recognize the importance of the global plan of action to strengthening health system in addressing interpersonal violence, and the emphasis on strengthening the message that corporal punishment should be prohibited and eliminated.

Besides, I also recommend to taking in account:

1. Corporal and humiliating punishment are regarded as normal cultural practices of discipline in childhood in many societies. In this context, most people, particularly politicians, policy makers, health workers, educators, and parents assume that punishment is a needed and normal element of raising children. They also assume that punishment has good effects on children and on producing obedient and respectful adults. Since they lived and accepted punishment as children with the argument of it was “for your own good,” they often, aren’t capable of challenging punishment during infancy for other generations.

2. Corporal and humiliating punishment form a big part of the roots of other types of social violence. It’s particularly relevant how cruel punishment and humiliation is used by adults in war and other violent contexts (army, guerrillas, right arm paramilitary, gangs). Those in higher positions use cruel punishment the same way they lived, suffered, and learned it as children based on messages such as: adults have the right of punishing children; children deserve punishment; if children misbehave is good to punish them, and so on….

3. In this context, it is needed a deep work on analyzing the cultural roots of the normalization of the corporal and humiliating punishment in childhood. Assuming that it is a hidden part of the structure of other types of violence, it is also needed to develop strategic interventions that make visible and unmask the real

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2 This is a common affirmation to justify punishment in many societies. It also refers to the title of one of Alice Miller’s book.
dramatic, painful and harmful effects of corporal and humiliating punishment in infancy.

4. It is also important to develop participatory research and participatory action research, designed by children and child-centered focused researchers, in order to produce reliable evidence about the reality of punishment during childhood. Particularly, research studies about, experiences, effects, magnitude, representations, and recommendations for policy makers.

5. A final recommendation is related to developing broad social marketing campaigns oriented toward challenging the normalization of corporal and humiliating punishment, and to promoting positive discipline practices as alternative ways of discipline.