

Medicus Mundi International

Meeting:

Seventy-first World Health Assembly (A71/1)

Agenda Item:

12.6 Maternal, infant and young child nutrition

Statement:

We commend WHO for developing a tool to assess and manage possible conflicts of interest in nutrition policies and programmes. We want to raise 3 major concerns.

First, the tool proposed involves a number of steps. The second step, “to have a clear understanding of the risk profile of the external actor and the engagement” either requires that the non-state actor discloses, in a transparent manner, details about its operations, or it requires significant capacity in the MS to analyze potential conflict of interest issues. The non-state actor can fraudulently claim compliance with the framework and norms set by WHO in countries with less capacity to analyze CoI related issues.

Operations of NSAs who represent business interests are often camouflaged when they operate through front ‘institutes’ or ‘foundations’. There is a need to put in place robust and transparent mechanisms for assessment of potential CoI which go beyond the tool developed by the WHO. Second, WHO should recognize that MS often lack technical capacity to implement the tool to undertake analysis of such risks. We urge WHO to assist MS to build national capacity to assess the risk of involvement of external actors in nutrition policies and programmes.

Lastly, many instances of conflict of interest occur at the global level. Global public-private partnerships in nutrition policies and programmes, such as SUN, GAIN and others, influence country level policies and programmes. We urge WHO to employ a similar tool and process at the global level to limit conflicts of interest related to global initiatives.