

Case Study:

Application of the “One” UN model in Republic of Macedonia Who is Building Our Capacities?¹

Skopje, February 23rd, 2010

This case study refers to the development of a consultation process applied by UN agencies, while developing and implementing one UN joint programme, namely: “Strengthening National Capacities to Prevent Domestic Violence”, 2008-2010 in the country. This Joint programme represents the attempt to apply “ONE UN” model in the area of Domestic Violence in RM by the UN country team: UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF and UNIFEM.

The whole process of development of this initiative started in 2007 with formation of a Steering Committee initiated by UNFPA that consisted from UN country offices, governmental and civil society representatives. This Committee had a mandate to contribute in the development of a long-term programme on gender based violence. All relevant information related to the progress and results achieved in this area that were shared during the meetings of the Committee, were not considered as relevant into the later stage of the development of this programme. Especially, this refers to the information about the policy developments (National strategy for domestic violence protection), legal framework (including bylaws and protocols), initiatives for unification of the best practices etc.

¹ Case study prepared by Association “Akcija Združenska”, Skopje, Macedonia www.zdruzenska.org.mk and “Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality”- ESE, Skopje Macedonia www.esem.org.mk

Needless to say that some of these actions were supported by UN Trust fund. In addition, UN agencies have hired an external expert that had a mandate to develop framework for this future program.

After this consultation process that took place in 2007, two UN agencies have organized consultative meetings with the civil society organizations, one of them organized by UNFPA on 4th of March, 2008 and one by UNIFEM on 17th of July, 2008. The first meeting had an objective to gain information on the activities and results achieved by civil society organizations in the field of DV, and the second one had an objective to inform those CSO's on their role as implementing partners in the UN Joint programme. This was the first opportunity for CSO's to look into the Joint programme content.

Now, if we want to assess the consultations that UN agencies have undertaken in the country, they are far from a serious, systematic, strategic and professional approach while developing program that will aim at achieving significant impact in the area of domestic violence.

As a result of this highly non-transparent and non- inclusive consultation process, relevant information provided in the above mentioned meetings was completely neglected, and not mentioned in the background and justification of the Joint programme.

The UN Joint programme strategy was to introduce completely NEW LEGISLATION (one separate Law) and then all of the proposed actions were build upon this assumption, without any justification (serious analysis or indications that the current legislation is not appropriate) provided in the project document.

With this approach, UN agencies have nullified 14 years of efforts of the CSO's that till adoption of the laws for DV in 2004, were the only one, working, on this phenomenon. Secondly, they have also tried to nullify the efforts that were undertaken by the civil society and governmental organizations, after the

adoption of the laws that were related to its full operationalization and effective implementation. Besides this, they didn't take into consideration the findings from the relevant researches conducted on the prevalence of the DV in the country, as well as the analysis of the institutional response. Above all, UN agencies didn't even consider the first strategic document - National strategy for DV protection, as a document that contains priorities and actions that are identified and needed.

The most concerning fact is the intention of the UN agencies to produce analysis and report on the Macedonian institutional response to DV that will justify actions proposed in the UN Joint programme. In Macedonian case, two **experts** were hired to prepare the analysis that will prove that the legislation in the country is not appropriate and that we have to reinvent the wheel. The analysis was prepared, based on the findings gained through interviews and poorly transposing models and practices from other countries. Surprisingly enough, these experts (one coming from Vojvodina, Serbia and one national expert) have also drafted a model of the NEW LAW. As it was expected, this report also didn't take into account the history of development in this field in the country and didn't provide **ANY ARGUMENT** for proposed recommendations. What is most striking with this report is the fact that, it was prepared in late summer and was introduced in the public in early autumn 2008, almost half a year after the design of the Joint programme.

In September 2008, a National coordinative body (governmental and CSO) was formed by the Government, as a mechanism that will ensure proper implementation of the National strategy for DV protection. One of the tasks of the Body is to review and comment on the project proposals related to DV in the country and to take care whether the proposed actions are in line with the National strategy. The UN Joint programme was a subject of review during the 6 working sessions of the Body organized from September till late November 2008. The members of the Body had provided comments for the level of compliance of the UN Joint Programme with the National strategy and concrete

recommendations were provided for the purpose alignment with the priority actions foreseen in the strategy. These suggestions and recommendations were submitted and presented to the UN country team members. Unfortunately, they were not taken into consideration or incorporated into the Programme.

At the end, in late November 2008, during the International 16th Days of activism, a Contract for the implementation of the UN Joint programme was signed with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, regardless of the provided suggestions and recommendations by the National coordinative body. This program is financially supported by the Government of the Kingdom of Netherlands in amount of 2.000.000 million Euros and UN Trust Fund in amount of app. 1.000.000 million USD.

From November 2008 till October 2009, no session of the NKT was organized. It is important to emphasize that according to the rulebook for the operation of the Body, the frequency of its meetings were planned on monthly basis.

The first meeting of the Body after a break of almost a year, was organized in mid-November 2009, for the purpose of presentation of the 6 months report on the implementation of the National strategy. No document was provided for the members of the Body prior to the meeting. Not surprisingly, the document provided during the meeting was actually the 6 months report on the implementation of the UN joint program activities.

The content of the Report revealed that the main focus was given to the activities implemented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, as one of the program partners and the UN agencies that took the obligation to implement the Joint program. Therefore, the report did not contain any information about the activities foreseen within the National Strategy, nor the activities undertaken by the rest of the relevant governmental actors who had an obligation to implement the Strategy. Also, minutes from the session were not prepared and submitted to

the members of the body; even that it was obligation by the rulebook and the previously established practice.

In our opinion as members of the Body, and moreover, as committed and experienced professionals, the development of the situation was unacceptable, due to a redirection of the role and the mandate of the Body. Namely, instead of monitoring of the implementation of the National strategy, the body was assigned with a new task “implementation of the UN joint program”. Taking into account the abovementioned, we have reacted with suggestions and recommendations to the presiding authorities, namely (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs- the project partner of the UN agencies in implementation of the Joint program), and the rest of the members of the Body. We requested, without delay, a session of the body to be organized for the purpose of discussing the work of the Body up to date, and to develop clear guidelines on its further functioning in accordance to the formal mandate provided by the Government. No one replied to this request.

Another indicator of the redirection of the role and mandate of the Body was its next session scheduled for mid-December 2009. The agenda of the event titled “Technical meeting, Round Table and Workshop” was to review the Action Plans drafted for the implementation of the National strategy for 2010, as a project activity, foreseen within the joint program. The fact that the action plans for 2008, 2009 and 2010 were already prepared by the respective Ministries within the process of preparation of the Strategy 2008-2011 that took place in 2007, supported by USAID, only illustrates the tendency of UN agencies to ignore and duplicate previous activities and efforts in this area. This evident lack of minimum prerequisites for professional, effective and constructive participation in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy has forced us to refuse to legitimize such actions and not to participate in the meeting. Instead, we prepared a letter to the members of the Body containing our concerns.

The most obvious evidence of our concerns regarding the instrumentalization of the Body as an implementator of the UN joint program activities are:

- a) The minutes from the last meeting (mid –December 2009) which were titled: *“Minutes of the session of the National Coordinative Body of the Program on DV “Strengthening National Capacities to Prevent Domestic Violence”, prepared by UNDP.* This title proves the “transformation” of the Body from governmental body for implementation of the strategic document of RM, to a project implementation body;
- b) The minutes were signed by *“The President of the National UNDP Coordinative Body”.* Suddenly, the government appointed function on the Coordinator of the National Coordinative Body was transformed into President of the National UNDP Coordinative Body.

The most concerning information in the minutes is the fact that some members of the Body reacted on the lack of involvement of relevant members and requested separate meeting of the Body (without UN representatives), in order to discuss its further functioning. This proposal was refused by the Chair, and with recommendation for conclusion, the Government to be informed about the lack of cooperation with some of the members.

The application of the “ONE” UN model in the area of DV in Macedonia indicates the attempt:

- To nullify the efforts that were undertaken by the civil society and governmental institutions;
- To produce analysis and report that will justify actions proposed in the joint program;
- To instrumentalize the governmental National Coordinative Body into a body for implementation of the joint program, for the purpose of legitimizing their actions.