



HIAP SERIES

## Non-Communicable Diseases: A Case of Profit-Driven Epidemics

(Healthy people and healthy profits? Elaborating a conceptual framework for governing the commercial determinants of non-communicable diseases and identifying options for reducing risk exposure, by K Buse, S Tanaka, and S Hawkes Globalization and Health 201713:34)



### RECOMMENDATIONS



**Establish health units in pertinent national government agencies** that would review and clear policies based on an assessment of its impact on health.

**Develop standards and guidelines** to manage conflicts of interest in public health policy development.

**Embed Health Impact Assessment (HIA)** as a pre-requisite in any decision-making activity, as much as possible.

### KEY FINDINGS

**1. Population demand for unhealthy commodities** is shaped by their availability in the market, increasing population’s exposure to NCD risk.



**2. A collective and coherent policy response** across sectors - anchored on the right to safe, healthy, and nutritious commodities, is essential to provide a policy space to address the commercial determinants of “profit-driven epidemics”. The government should assert its sovereign right to intervene to ensure that public health remains paramount over market/commercial interests.

**3. Conflicts of interest are inherent in any public-private partnerships**, thus independent and impartial accountability mechanisms are necessary in the development, implementation and evaluation any national strategy developed to address NCDs.

### RESULTS

**Mechanisms by which industry seeks to influence public regulation, public evidence and public opinion:**



Direct lobbying of decision-makers



Discrediting opponents



Using ostensibly independent front organizations, e.g. research institutes, trade associations



Using legal instruments to protect interests such as bilateral investment treaties



Strategic use of research, funding academics and public health bodies

	Self Regulation	Hybrid Regulation	Public Regulation
<b>Characteristics that are needed to safeguard public health for which the public health community should advocate for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate targets that are transparently set and SMART (specific, measurable, attributable, realistic, and time-bound)</li><li>• Independent monitoring through oversight body</li><li>• Transparent reporting</li><li>• Sufficient scope for impact, e.g. include the leading corporate players and cover a significant proportion of the risk of exposure and the market (ideally applied globally to reduce cross border</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manage conflicts of interest: ensure that safeguards are in place to avoid potential or actual conflicts of interest or reputational threats to the public sector</li><li>• Assess alternatives to ensure that the same objectives can't be achieved more quickly and effectively through other means</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate targets that are transparently set and SMART (specific, measurable, attributable, realistic, and time-bound)</li><li>• Inclusive target-setting</li><li>• Manage conflicts of interest: ensure that safeguards are in place to avoid potential or actual conflicts of interest or reputational threats to the public sector</li><li>• Ensure independent monitoring, reporting, remedial action</li></ul>
<b>Caveats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Usually implemented by industries in response to threats of public regulation but: (1) No evidence of effectiveness  (2) Voluntary, uneven implementation thus potentially inequitable</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Usually with inherent conflicts of interest, specifically on the possibility of industries shaping health policies that will protect profitability and their market</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most favoured by public health experts but: (1) Hinged on the national government's capacity to assert its authority in enforcing the regulatory measures  (2) Diminished policy space due to international treaties and commitments that may go against public health interests</li></ul>