










Recommendations for governments to avoid industry interference

What is industry interference?

Industry interference refers to the practices of companies that influence health policies and guidelines for their own benefit, often to the detriment of public health.

Industry uses a series of actions and strategies to exert its influence on the most diverse sectors of society. These actions and strategies are known as corporate political activities (CPAs).

The most commonly identified CPAs are:

 <p>Intimidating and defaming those who criticize</p>	 <p>Attacking and discrediting legitimate science</p>	 <p>Shaping and reshaping discussion and debate</p>	 <p>Camouflaging actions</p>
 <p>Influencing the political process</p>	 <p>Developing corporate alternatives to policies</p>	 <p>Implement partnerships and corporate social responsibility</p>	 <p>Avoiding and circumventing regulations and policies</p>





Why is it important to minimize industry interference?

When corporate interests override the public good, the consequences can be serious and affect health, the environment and social equality. The influence exerted by industry on political decisions results in measures that prioritize profit over public welfare, as evidenced by the food industry lobby, which promotes ultra-processed food products.

Furthermore, this interference compromises the transparency and accountability of government institutions, distorts priorities and favors the interests of a minority over the majority. This undermines public trust in institutions and perpetuates inequalities, especially in vulnerable communities.

To protect the common good, it is necessary to strengthen governance and control the influence of industry, ensuring transparency in decision-making processes and encouraging the participation of civil society and the academic community without conflicts of interest. By minimizing this interference, a fairer political environment is created, in which decisions are guided by evidence and the real needs of the population.



In 2006, Mexico faced a stunning case of revolving doors with the election of Vicente Fox, a former director of Coca-Cola, as the country's president. His transition from the private sector to public office raised serious concerns about corporate influence in politics. Fox's victory was seen as a reflection of the growing proximity between business interests and government decisions, sparking a heated debate about ethics and transparency in the public and private spheres. The repercussions were significant, with criticism that this intersection favored policies that prioritized corporate profits over social welfare and the country's sovereignty. The situation intensified public distrust of government and political institutions, highlighting the need for stricter regulations to prevent companies from capturing the state.



The term “revolving doors” refers to the phenomenon in which people move between positions in public organizations (such as governments and regulatory agencies) and positions in private companies, especially those that are regulated or influenced by public policies.



To help governments avoid industry interference in the formulation of health policies and in other areas, it is essential to implement a series of recommendations based on successful experiences, such as those observed in Chile, and initiatives such as those of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

These recommendations aim to establish a more transparent and accountable government in terms of governance, ensuring that public policies are formulated with a focus on the health and well-being of the population, so as to minimize the undue influence of industry.

Approaches and tools that can be adopted:

• Establish codes of conduct:

Codes of conduct are essential for regulating interactions between governments and industry. Chile, for example, has implemented codes that clearly define the limits of industry influence on health policy. These codes should be adapted to local realities and include specific guidelines on how government representatives should interact with industry representatives

• Control and supervision:

It is essential to create robust social control mechanisms to monitor compliance with these codes. Examples include regular audits of government-industry interactions, whistleblowing mechanisms that allow civil society to report cases of conflicts of interest, and transparency in government decisions by publishing information about meetings with industry representatives.

• Multi-institutional coordination:

Brazil's experience with the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) demonstrates that a multi-institutional approach, involving the government, the academic community and civil society, can be effective. This coordination makes it possible to share experiences and develop strategies adapted to local needs.

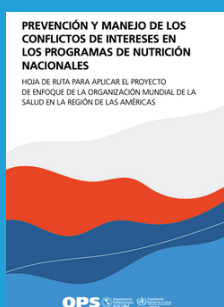


- **Collaborative networks:** the formation of collaborative networks between countries in the region can facilitate the exchange of good practices and experiences. These networks can include workshops, seminars and online platforms where different stakeholders share their experiences on how to combat industry interference. This is the case of the Latin American and Caribbean Nutrition and Health Community of Practice (Colansa) and the Healthy Caribbean Coalition.

- **Education and awareness:** it is essential to promote education about conflicts of interest and the importance of public health free from external influences. Awareness campaigns aimed at civil servants, health professionals and the general public can help raise awareness about the risks associated with industry interference.

Read Chile's Code of Ethics for the Public Service:

www.bit.ly/4b9COU8



The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Tool for the Prevention and Management of Conflicts of Interest in

Nutrition Programs is a roadmap implemented to help states identify, prevent and manage potential conflicts in interactions

with non-state actors.

The objective of the roadmap is to adapt PAHO's approach to facilitate its application in national decision-making processes, including a classification tool that increases accessibility and efficiency in the use of interactions with non-state actors.

Access the publication here:

www.bit.ly/4k8WW1J

Sources:

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