# Corporate tactics

Much is known about the tactics corporate actors use to influence government policy and regulation and to increase their sales and profits:

- **Lobbying and political donations**
- **Partnering with governments**
- **Engaging in multistakeholder platforms**
- **Funding research biased in favour of industry**
- **Co-opting health professionals and policymakers to promote industry objectives**
- **Intimidating critics**
- **Undermining legitimate science and reframing debate**
- **Promoting corporate social responsibility initiatives**

# A study of non-government organisations (NGOs)

Less is known about how to counter these corporate tactics. Our recent study addressed this gap though a narrative review of 144 studies focused on NGOs and the ways they try to influence government and corporate actors. NGOs have sought to influence government and commercial actors across many industry sectors, including:

- Extractive
- Tobacco
- Food
- Pharmaceuticals
- Alcohol
- Gambling
- Weapons
- Textiles
- Asbestos

# A framework of NGO strategies in the commercial determinants of health

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<tr>
<th>Target: Commercial actor</th>
<th>Target: Government / Intergovernmental</th>
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<td><strong>Inside strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outside strategies</strong></td>
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<td>Forming partnerships and multistakeholder initiatives</td>
<td>Monitoring and reporting on commercial practises; including developing ‘counter accounts’ to debunk industry claims, calling out industry funded groups, ‘naming and shaming’ in mainstream media and social media campaigns</td>
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<td>Holding private meetings and roundtables</td>
<td>Protests and public campaigning calling for regulation; including via mainstream media and social media</td>
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<td>Engaging with company annual general meetings and shareholders</td>
<td>Monitoring and reporting, including monitoring government compliance with international treaties and generating evidence for monitoring</td>
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<td>Collaborating other than a partnership; including via the participation in the development of industry standards, reports, CSR initiatives</td>
<td>Forum shifting debate from one policy forum to another – vertically within government and horizontally to the global level</td>
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<td>Pursuing litigation directly against industry</td>
<td>Proposing and initiating alternative sources of economic development</td>
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NGO shareholder engagement has included briefing, consulting and advising shareholders, and enabling NGOs from low income countries to speak at shareholder and company meetings in the US, Canada, Australia, and France.

In South Africa, NGO litigation against pharmaceutical firms over lack of access to HIV/AIDS treatment has resulted in companies being found guilty of abusing antitrust law.

NGO monitoring includes the development of ‘counter accounts’ to challenge industry claims and provide alternative evidence on impacts to health.

Creative use of alternative spaces include producing documentaries, the formation of an alternative International People's Health Tribunal, and holding community arts projects.

In the Philippines, NGOs have drafted mining moratoriums with local government actors, and in Bangladesh NGOs have drafted nutrition policy on infant breastfeeding.

NGOs have forum shifted to UN committees to shame Nigeria, Russia, and Ghana on extractive governance. NGOs have also forum shifted to the FCTC Conference of Parties to shame high and low income country governments for lack of FCTC tobacco control compliance.

NGOs have engaged in multistakeholder initiatives to influence corporate actors. It is important to assess the appropriateness of engagement to avoid undue influence on policy. For example, a study of a partnership between a tobacco firm and an environmental NGO found that this enabled the tobacco firm to have a greater influence on government policymaking.

Evidence generated by NGOs in monitoring and campaigning:

- Scientific studies. For example, NGOs in India conducted a study of soft drink products, identifying pesticide residue, informing a campaign against the company.
- Human Rights Impact Assessments
- Specific health evidence. For example, an NGO produced a study of cancer risks from a company pesticide, informing a boycott and media campaign.
- Local evidence - highlighted as important to support transnational NGO campaigns on the ground
- Purchasing power studies
- Public opinion polling
- Economic evidence
- Personal stories

This examination of peer-reviewed literature identified 18 ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ strategies used by NGOs to target government and commercial actors. In doing so, it offers a suite of strategies that can be used to influence policy and governance for health and health equity, depending on the appropriateness and effective prevention of conflict of interest.

Reference:


Read the paper

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