

Sugar Reduction Advocacy for National Liaison Officers

FDI

Shanghai,
September 2025

Dr Rob Beaglehole



Advocacy is a political process by an individual or group which aims to **influence** public policy





It's a deadly health risk - but the food and beverage industry fends off regulation

SUGAR, *the new* TOBACCO

BY HELEN SIGNY

THERE'S AN INDUSTRY selling a product that is bad for one's health.

A generation ago that industry was tobacco and its product was cigarettes. Today it is the food and beverage industry and its product is sugar - sugar that is being added to food and drink. After 20 years working in tobacco control, Jane Martin, executive manager of the Obesity Policy Coalition, a policy think tank of the Cancer Council Victoria, has taken up the battle against sugar in our food and drinks. She charges that the food industry has borrowed the corporate playbook of the tobacco industry to fend off regulators.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

Tactics

- Provide **solutions**
- Be **proactive** and **opportunistic**
- Create a profile and have spokespeople
- Advocacy **skills**
- Strong **partnerships**
- **Politically** astute, neutral and bipartisan



Plan for small wins and long-term gains

- Advocacy can take a **long time** to generate an outcome
- 40 years to get to where we are in tobacco control
- **Celebrate** the small wins otherwise you may get disheartened



DIABETES DRINKS





NEW ZEALAND

Our amputation shame: Thousands of NZers lose limbs to diabetes

30 Apr, 2019 11:00am

🕒 17 minutes to read



Key message



Know your topic



Know your key messages



Know what you want as a policy outcome



Have partners aligned with you



Know your opposition





The Nelson Mail

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2014

**HOSPITAL
BANS
SUGAR
DRINKS**

**PROJECTS AXED
IN TASMAN BUDGET**

From 11 October 2016,
no sugary drinks will be sold
or served at WHO Headquarters





Vision 2030

Translating global commitments into practical policy solutions



USE the toolkit
to TRANSFORM oral
health policies in your
country



What is included?

Snapshot of the key developments in the global oral health landscape.

Guidance around your role as an advocate.

Facts and figures to contextualize the oral disease burden.

Step-by-step guide to help you plan and carry out strategic advocacy campaigns.

Advocacy opportunities and partnerships that can be leveraged.

Sample calls to action that provide concrete measures that governments can implement.

Case studies that have resulted in positive development and change.

Additional resources to help inform and support your advocacy activities.



World Health Organization

*“Not one single country has managed to turn around its obesity epidemic. This is not a failure of individual will-power. This is a **failure of political will to take on big business**”.*



- Q1: What are the key **challenges** for implementing bold sugar reduction policies? How can you overcome these challenges?
- Q2: What can be the key sugar reduction advocacy **strategies** in your country? Will it differ for different socio-demographic groups?
- Q3: What **steps** can NDAs take (advocacy, research and implementation support) to facilitate sugar reduction in their country?

Case study: Norwegian Dental Association

Promoting oral and general health: Norway's move to ban marketing of unhealthy foods to children

In a progressive move to promote oral and general health, Norway prohibits marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks to children under 18. Learn more through this insightful interview



Who else was involved in this advocacy effort, and what motivated the Norwegian Dental Association to join this effort?

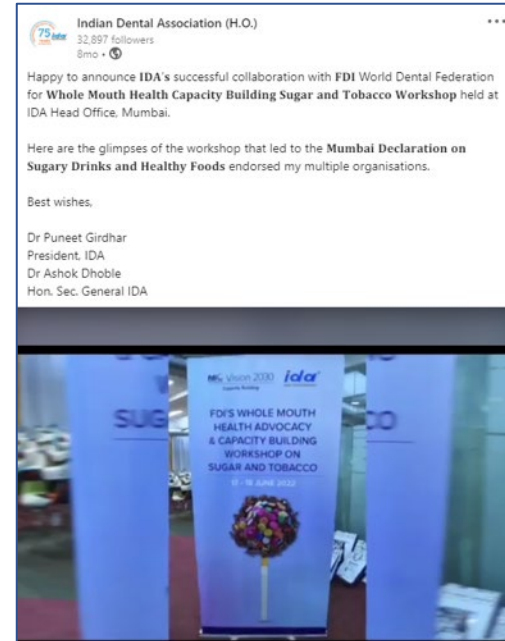
When this ban was discussed ten years ago, the health organizations were unprepared for the strong opposition, the lobbying, and the harsh debate that followed, with both ridicule and scaring tactics from the industry. We were not going to let that happen again, so this time we teamed up to form an alliance and work together with some of the most influential organizations and professionals in the field. Together with the Norwegian Dental Association and the Norwegian Health Association, we had different allies like UNICEF, Save the Children Foundation's youth organization, the Norwegian Cancer Society, The Consumer Council, and Geitmyra Culinary Center for Children. We argued from different perspectives, but with the same conclusion: We need to ban this marketing.

The main aim in stage 1 was to fight obesity. As mentioned above, NDA was highly motivated to join, before being invited on board. It is our current opinion that the only way to improve oral health in the long term, is to see oral health as an integrated part of general health, and to cooperate with other organizations.

Did you encounter any industry interference from companies advocating against this legislation, and if so, how did you combat this?

We heard from politicians that they were receiving calls and meeting invitations from worried actors in the industry, but few were out in the open maybe due to the great public support for this ban. In fact, raising sympathy for the right to push unhealthy food on our children is a difficult task, but we are prepared for more of this lobbying when the government presents their proposal for new regulations, and we get to the debate on the details. From the Norwegian Health Association's point of view, we hope the government follows the recent given advice from WHO on making a policy that is sufficiently comprehensive and which restricts the power of food marketing to persuade.

Case study: Indian Dental Association



Indian Dental Association (H.O.)
32,897 followers
6mo • 🌐

Dear IDA Members,

We are proud to announce IDA has join hands with FSSAI for Sugar Advocacy programme in response to the recent Mumbai Declaration on Sugary Drinks.

We will initiate the campaign from 1st November across the country for Dental professionals and public.

More details to follow.
Stay connected !!

For IDA Head office
Dr Puneet Girdhar
President
Dr Ashok Dhoble
Hon. Sec. Gen.

Logos: ida, NetProFAN, Eat Right India, Swachh Mukh Abhiyaan

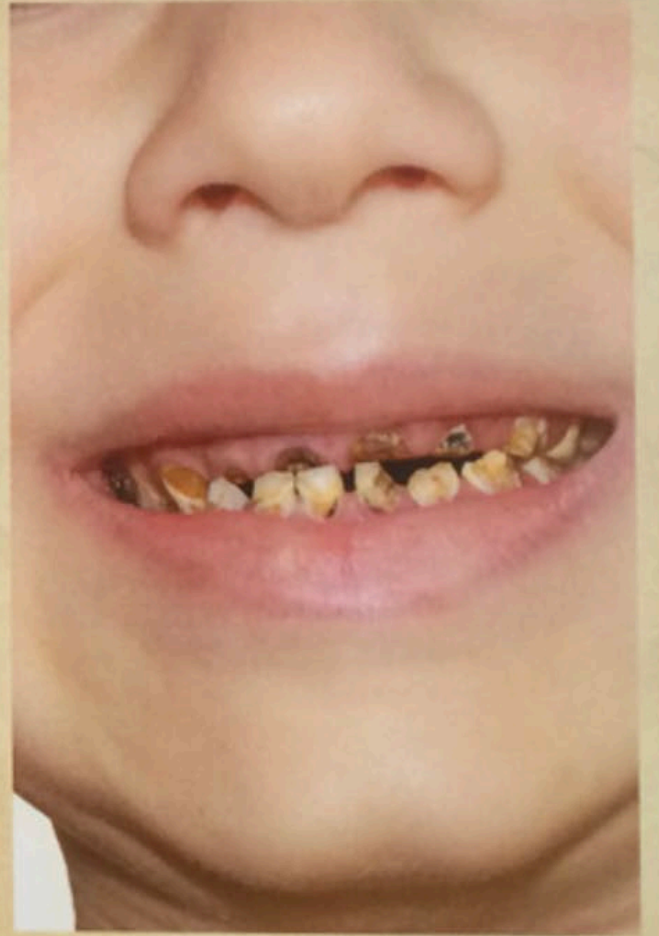
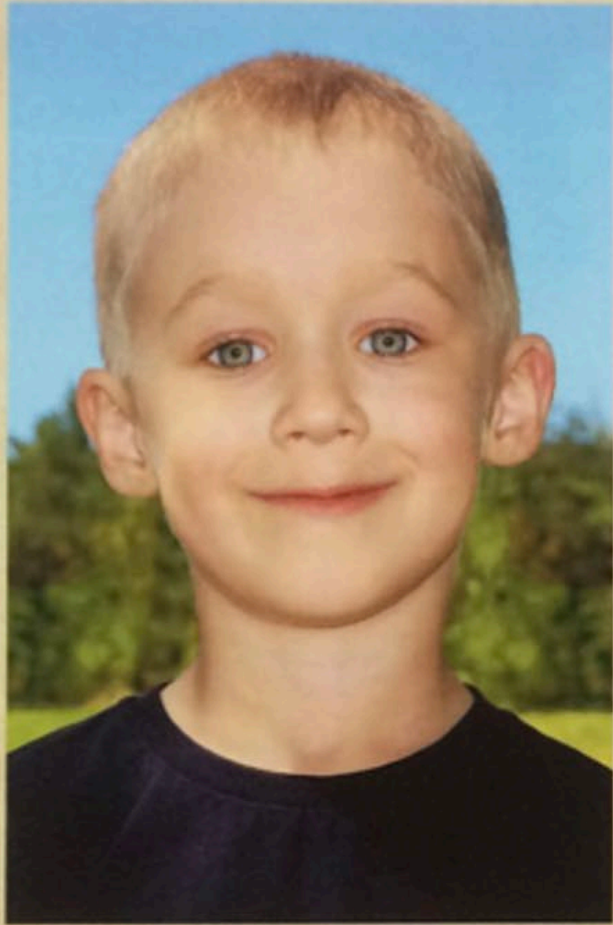
IDA advocates
Less Sugar Month
(1st - 30th November, 2022)
EAT LESS SUGAR
LIVE-LONG WITHOUT
DISTRESS

We are proud to announce IDA has join hands with FSSAI for Sugar Advocacy programme in response to the recent Mumbai Declaration on Sugary Drinks.

Dr. Puneet Girdhar
President, IDA
Dr. Ashok Dhoble
Hon.Sec.General, IDA

#sugaradvocacy #ncd #sugarmeat #commonfactor #sugar #ida

Stay Connected for more details.



Understanding policy makers perspective

- Who are the **key** policy actors
- Are they **open** to research, data and new ideas?
- What is the **relevant** legislation/policy framework?
- What are the **opportunities** and timing for input into processes?
- How do the political, social and economic **structures** and interests affect the room for manoeuvre of policy makers?
- Who **shapes** the aims and outputs of policy?
- Who supports or **resists** change to policy?

Call to action for NDAs:

- Adopt policy statement on Sweet Drinks
- Agitate for water only hospitals, city councils, schools, sports teams & facilities
- Local activism does make a difference

Sample advocacy plan

ADVOCACY PLAN TEMPLATE

Once you have determined your priority issue(s), goals and objectives, you will need to develop an advocacy plan. This is a strategic document which stimulates advocates to match each simple, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART) advocacy objective with the actions or steps needed to achieve them. It is important to document all actions, whether major or minor, to ensure you understand the full scope of the undertaking.

Sample advocacy workplan template⁶

Goal:

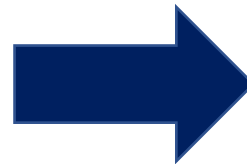
SMART Objective(s):

Possible Challenges:		Possible Solutions:	
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	

Activities	Timeline	Target Audience	Lead	Allies	Resources

Additional Information:

30



Prefilled Advocacy Plan Template

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Goal: Every ERO Member country has implemented a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages by 2030.

SMART objectives :

- By end of 2023, ERO publishes a call to action and agree on an advocacy plan for tax on SSBs.
- By ERO Plenary Session 2024, countries report back on national progress.
- By 2025, the number of ERO member countries implementing tax on SSBs has increased from 27% to 50%.
- By 2028, the number of ERO member countries implementing tax on SSBs has increased from 27% to 75%.
- By 2030, all ERO Member countries have implemented tax on SSBs.

Possible challenges		Potential solutions	
1. Lobbying by the industry.		1. A Regional Position Statement on how to address the influence of the unhealth commodity industry.	
2. Lack of political leadership.		2. Sustained evidence based advocacy and alliance mobilization.	

Activity	Timeline	Target audience	Lead	Allies	Resources
1. Identify ERO Member countries without an tax on SSBs as presented in the Global Oral Health Status Report	Q4, 2023	NA	NDAs	MoH, NCD civil societies.	ERO Secretariat as the focal point for collation
2. Publish a call to action on tax on SSBs in ERO Member countries	Q4, 2023	MoH, WHO, EU, other FDI regions	NDAs, ERO Secretariat	FDI Secretariat, WHO HQ, WHO Euro, other NCD civil societies	ERO Secretariat to facilitate the buy-in of NDAs and the drafting process.

Additional information :

Scan the QR code to get the Toolkit!

