**What is Industry interference?**

Industry interference refers to strategies employed by corporate companies to shape, influence and block progress on health interventions and policies.

**Why is it a problem?**

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease, kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all deaths globally.¹

NCDs are the leading cause of death in Jamaica; in 2015, an estimated seven out of ten Jamaicans died from the four major NCDs - cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic lower respiratory disease.² These illnesses are largely preventable.

An unhealthy diet, including the overconsumption of foods high in fat, salt and sugar, can increase the risk of developing NCDs. Among the indisputable causes of the NCD pandemic are multinational companies, who undermine healthy diets by encouraging over-consumption of highly processed, unhealthy food and sugary drinks for profit.³

Academics, health advocates and the World Health Organization (WHO) have begun to refer to the challenge these industries present as “commercial determinants of health” which are “factors that influence health which stem from the profit motive.” While people can change their lifestyles, many have limited control over their exposure to the activities of transnational corporations such as marketing of unhealthy foods.

**Stakeholder engagement is important but….**

While there are times when it is appropriate and important to work with all stakeholders, allowing industry to delay or defer progress will result in millions more premature and preventable deaths and disabling diseases. Research shows that letting industry drive policy solutions usually leads to ineffective or weakened policy.

**How do you spot industry interference?**

Industry interference comes in many forms and through several methods:

- Promoting junk science
- Disputing existing research to muddy the waters
- Threaten job losses
- Promoting self-regulation/voluntary guidelines
- Emphasizing personal or parental responsibility/fault
- Coordinated campaigns
- Challenging existing legislation
– Pressuring politicians
– Undermining reputable health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO)
– Bringing or threatening lawsuits to deter and intimidate
– Marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children
– Deceptive claims which lead consumers to believe their products are healthier than they are
– Using front groups and associations such as farmers
– Forming associations and groups to lobby against health policies
– Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities to access high-level officials including
  - Assisting vulnerable groups in times of crisis, natural disasters or public health emergencies by providing their branded products or cash donations
  - Sponsorship of sporting, youth and school events
– Conflicts of interest

**Conflict of interest**
A conflict of interest can occur when a vested interest has the potential to unduly influence the action of an official or agency through monetary or material benefits to the official or agency or non-monetary or non-material influences.

Conflicts of interest can exist at all levels – international and national – in academia and policymaking bodies, in institutions and among individuals. Examples include:
– appointments on influential boards
– imbalance of stakeholder representation during decision making
– endorsement of unhealthy food products by professional associations and policy makers.
– donations to campaign financing

**What can we do about it?**
– Recognize and highlight examples of industry interference and conflict of interest in the context of the food our nation eats
– Ensure health policies are based on sound research
– Develop conflict of interest policies
– Protect the policy making process from interference from commercial interests
– Encourage government to establish rigorous testing protocols and requirements for unhealthy foods/food high in fat, salt and sugar and foods with claims