

ADVOCATING FOR SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGE TAXATION

A Case Study of Mexico



¿Te
beberías
12
cucharadas de
azúcar?

El refresco es due
la diabetes

La mayoría de los refrescos azucarados de 600 mililitros tienen 12 cucharadas
cafeteras o más de azúcar. 1 cucharada cafetera contiene 5 gramos de azúcar.
*PLOS ONE, 2013; Diabetes Care, 2010; American Journal of Public Health, 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The obesity and diabetes epidemics in Mexico are significant public health problems that impose a substantial health and economic burden on the country.

A key driver of these epidemics is the high consumption of soda and other sugary drinks by Mexican children and adults. Given the link between sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) consumption and obesity and related disease, a tax on these beverages emerged as a key target for policy intervention among health advocates. In October 2013, the Mexican legislature passed a specific excise tax of 1 peso (\$ 0.08 U.S. dollars [USD])¹ per liter of SSBs, including sodas, energy drinks, bottled teas and coffees, and fruit drinks.

As one of the first countries to pass a tax on SSBs, Mexico's experience provides key lessons for advocates interested in pursuing policy change in cities, states, and countries around the world. A case study was conducted to explore the strategies of SSB tax proponents and opponents leading up to the passage of the 2013 tax in Mexico. The passage of the tax on SSBs was achieved through strategic and targeted advocacy, primarily focused on elevating the visibility of the issue and communicating a sense of urgency with policymakers and the public. The advocacy strategy centered on two activities in particular — paid and earned media campaigns and formal lobbying — both of which leveraged scientific evidence and a rigorous understanding of the political context.

¹ Using the peso-dollar exchange rate from the date of passage of the tax.



Over the past two decades, obesity has emerged as a critical public health issue in Mexico (1,2). Currently, Mexico has one of the highest obesity prevalence rates in the world — one in three children and seven in ten adults are overweight or obese (3). Given the persistent trend of overweight and obesity, the related illnesses, disability, and death will have an increasingly adverse impact on the Mexican population. Overall, as an individual's body mass index rises, the risk of obesity-related death also increases (4). Even a small increase in weight among individuals of normal weight has implications for metabolic function, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer risk (5-8).

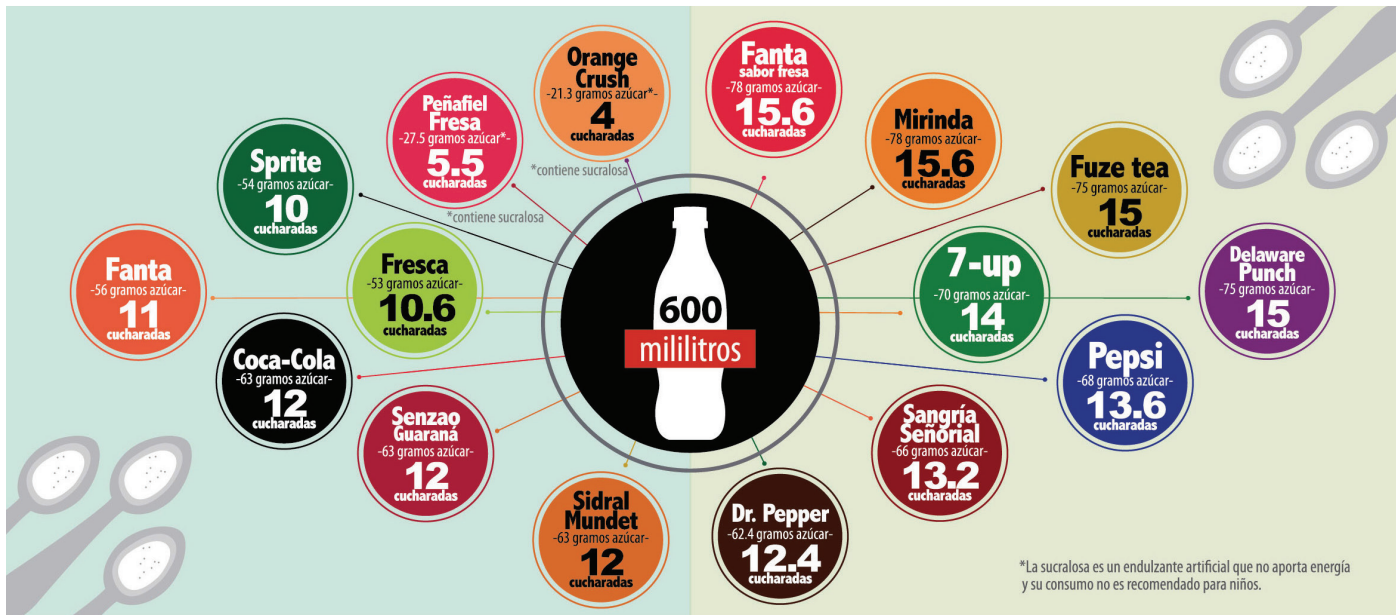
In Mexico, the toll of obesity is substantial:

- The burden of disease from obesity in Mexico is already evident. For example, obesity is a significant risk factor for diabetes and 14% of adults in Mexico have diabetes (9).
- Each year, approximately 70,000 deaths are attributed to diabetes, which is now the third leading cause of death and loss of healthy years of life in Mexico — ahead of violence, stroke, and traffic injuries (9-11).
- In addition to the significant toll on health, the dual epidemics of obesity and diabetes in Mexico contribute to more than 400 million lost working hours each year and cost the government more than \$85 billion pesos (\$5.7 billion USD) annually in treatment and indirect costs (12).

Given the rising trends in obesity and diabetes, a growing body of evidence is carefully examining the factors that contribute to these epidemics. Numerous studies have highlighted the role of sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) consumption as a key driver of the obesity epidemic (13-16). Mexico is one of the largest consumers of soda in the world, consuming more than 160 liters per person per year, with 80% of teens and 71% of adults drinking at least one full-calorie soda each day (17, 18). Between

1999 and 2012, the proportion of SSB (e.g., soda, flavored milk, or fruit/vegetable drinks) consumers in Mexico has been increasing among children and women (19). Furthermore, due to cultural and public infrastructure changes over the past decades, such as the decreasing availability of water fountains in schools, Mexicans, including children, have gradually decreased their consumption of plain tap water (20).

SSBs contain added sugar or syrups, such as sucrose and high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), that are extrinsic to the product and added during processing, manufacture, packaging, or preparation (21). These beverages include sugar-sweetened carbonated drinks (e.g., soda), sports drinks, ready-to-drink teas and coffees, less-than-100-percent fruit or vegetable juice drinks, and other beverages that contain added sugar. Studies have found that SSB consumption leads to weight gain and obesity; individuals on average do not compensate for the increased energy intake from SSBs by reducing intake of other caloric sources (22, 23). Therefore, SSB consumption increases total added sugar intake, and may contribute to a higher total intake of calories (22, 23). In addition, research has also found a direct link between SSB consumption and risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease (24-26). In 2010, an



Infographic “How much sugar does soda have?”, distributed on social media by the Nutritional Health Alliance as part of the “12 Spoonfuls of Sugar” mass media campaign. Amounts in spoonfuls for main brands on Mexican market, represented in 5gr/spoonful, according to Mexican equivalency.

estimated 45% of deaths from cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer were attributed to Mexico’s SSB consumption, the highest burden of SSB-attributable preventable deaths among the world’s 15 most populous countries (27).

In October 2013, a specific excise tax of 1 peso (\$0.08 USD)² per liter of SSBs was passed by the Mexican legislature. The legislation went into effect on January 1, 2014 and increased the average price of a liter of soda by about 10%. The tax is levied on concentrates, powders, syrups, essences, or flavor extracts added to beverages. Therefore, it applies to any beverages with added sugar, syrups, powders, or other caloric sweeteners including soft drinks, energy drinks, bottled teas and coffees, as well as fruit juices and fruit-flavored drinks with added sugar. It does not include flavored milk, mineral and bottled waters, diet sodas, or beverages registered as medicines, such as oral rehydration solutions. While a comprehensive evaluation of the tax’s effect on purchase patterns is ongoing, preliminary data from a study being conducted by the Mexican National Institute of Public Health (INSP) and the University of North Carolina (UNC) suggest SSB purchases are declining in Mexico (28). In addition, Coca-Cola sales data suggest that sugary drink sales

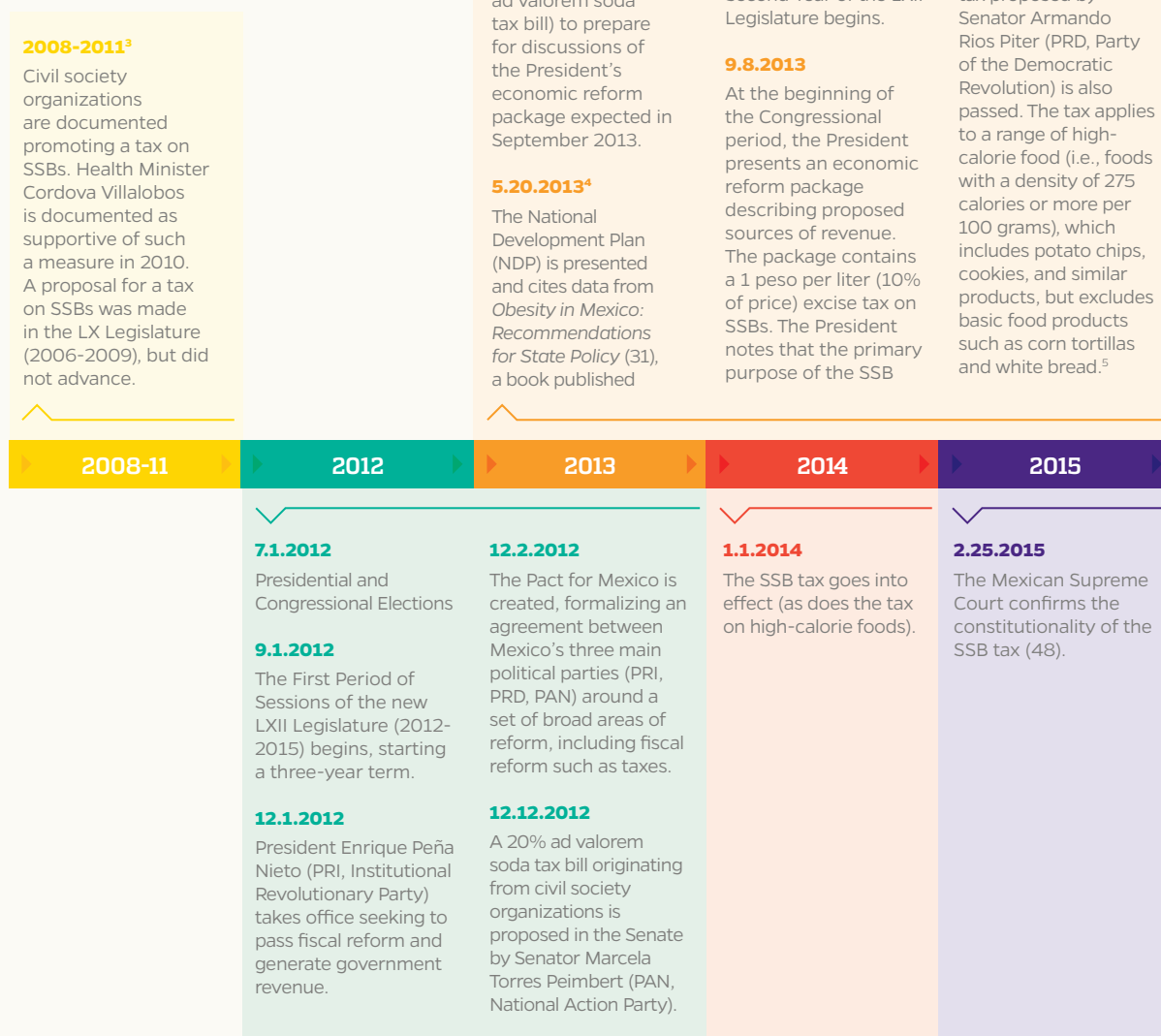
during 2014 declined, with Mexicans consuming four fewer cans of Coca-Cola per capita on average than in 2013. Coca-Cola FEMSA (Fomento Económico Mexicano S.A.B. de C.V.), the main Coca-Cola bottler and distributor in Mexico, attributes this to price increases implemented in response to the tax on SSBs (29). Public awareness of the harms of SSBs also appears to have shifted during the political debate of the tax. National opinion polls in mid-2013 and mid-2014 found that 52% of respondents reported consuming fewer sugary drinks in 2014, as well as greater awareness about the harms of SSBs as a contributor to obesity (30).

This case study focuses on the events leading up to the passage of Mexico’s SSB tax in October 2013. Specifically, this study will explore the strategies of proponents and opponents of the tax, including key arguments and tactics. The purpose of this case study is to summarize the key features of the Mexico SSB tax advocacy campaign and to highlight important lessons learned for researchers, advocates, and policymakers in other jurisdictions that are interested in establishing similar measures. Key legislative and executive events leading to the passage of Mexico’s SSB tax are summarized in **Figure 1**.

² Using the peso-dollar exchange rate from the date of passage of the tax.

FIGURE 1

Timeline of Key Legislative and Executive Events for Mexico's Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax



³ Although previous attempts to pass a national SSB tax exist, the current case study focuses on the time between the proposal of the SSB tax in December 2012 through successful passage of the tax in October 2013.

⁴ The National Development Plan, for the first time, recognizes overweight, obesity, diabetes, and hypertension as important problems in all age groups, affecting the demand for health care and the economic and social development of society. The publication *Obesity in Mexico: Recommendations for State Policy* (31) was released and distributed to key decision-makers in January 2013. It was produced by the National Academy of Medicine, the National Institute of Public Health, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico with the participation of 41 researchers from 17 academic institutes authoring peer-reviewed articles. The book illustrates the obesity epidemic's urgency and provides specific policy recommendations for the government, including a tax on SSBs.

⁵ The "junk food" or "snack" tax was not explicitly promoted by advocates of the SSB tax, and therefore, is not addressed in this study.

METHODS

Data for this case study were collected in January 2015 at the national level using a qualitative approach based on key informant interviews (n=20) and a document review (n=10).

Key informants were identified through purposive sampling and included representatives from the media, government agencies, legislators, multi-lateral organizations, national non-governmental organizations that are advocacy focused, as well as academic and medical institutions (**Appendix B**). The Ministry of Health was contacted but referred interviews to the Ministry of Finance. Members of the private sector were contacted but did not agree to participate in this study. Interviews were conducted in English with translation provided as needed. Documents were selected to complement the interview data and included research from the peer-

reviewed literature (not included in document count of n=10) and news media coverage, as well as internal documentation of advocacy campaign strategies (e.g., mass media campaign materials). Documents were translated from Spanish to English as needed. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach. A formal external review committee with expertise in government policy processes and advocacy reviewed an initial draft of the case study and provided critical feedback. The committee was comprised of four external reviewers from both within and outside Mexico who were not involved in the SSB tax advocacy process.

LIMITATIONS

This case study had some limitations.

First, opponents (e.g., beverage industry representatives) did not respond to requests to be interviewed for this study. Although proponents of the tax observed the key opponents, as well as their tactics and arguments, the scope of the opponents' strategy could be limited in this analysis. Second, in using a thematic approach to analyze the case study interview and document data, this case study does not cover every facet of the proponent's campaign in detail. Rather, this analysis seeks to highlight key themes and lessons learned from the advocacy campaign. Lastly, several interviews were conducted using simultaneous translation (Spanish-English) and

several documents were translated from Spanish to English. Therefore, it is possible that some nuance was missed in the translation process. However, where possible, clarification of key features of the discussion was provided by individuals involved in the Mexico tax advocacy process who were fluent in both Spanish and English. Despite these limitations, this case study offers a comprehensive analysis of Mexico's passage of a tax on SSBs and serves as a resource for individuals and organizations elsewhere who are interested in pursuing similar policy change.

Proponents and opponents of the tax engaged in strategic campaigns leading up to enactment of the SSB tax in October 2013.

The passage of the tax on SSBs in Mexico was fostered by strategic and targeted advocacy efforts, primarily focused on elevating the visibility of the issue and creating a sense of urgency among the public and policymakers in the context of an administration that needed to generate more revenue and faced a significant

health crisis from obesity and diabetes. This was primarily accomplished through the effective use of paid and earned media and targeted lobbying⁶, though other activities, as outlined in **Table 1**, also served important functions. **Table 1** also describes the opponents of the tax and their observed activities.

TABLE 1

Mexico SSB Tax Proponents and Opponents: Key Players and Strategic Tactics

PROPONENTS OF THE MEXICO SSB TAX

Key Players

- Civil society organizations (e.g., El Poder del Consumidor, Fundación Mídete, COA Nutrición, REDIM)
- Public interest lobbyists (e.g., Polithink)
- Academic and medical institutions (e.g., National Institute of Public Health [INSP], National Institute of Medical Science & Nutrition)
- International and multi-lateral institutions (e.g., Pan American Health Organization [PAHO] and World Health Organization [WHO])
- Some legislators (e.g., Senator Marcela Torres Peimbert)
- Some members of the executive branch of government (e.g., President Enrique Peña Nieto, Ministry of Finance)

TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Coalition building: to expand the base of supporters. A broad base of supporters can 1) pool available financial and other resources; 2) raise the visibility of the issue and propose solutions in the media, as well as with the public and key stakeholders; and 3) create greater leverage for engagement with decision-makers.

SELECT EXAMPLES

Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria (Alliance for Healthy Food or Nutritional Health Alliance) and ContraPESO (La Plataforma Estratégica contra el Sobrepeso y la Obesidad or the Strategic Platform to Combat Overweight and Obesity; literally CounterWEIGHT). (See Appendix C for a list of Alliance members during the soda tax advocacy period 2012-2013.)



⁶ The type of lobbying described in this case study is defined as a form of advocacy conducted by public interest groups that are registered as lobbying organizations. Therefore, the lobbying discussed is formal lobbying and does not include the exchange of money with decision makers.

TABLE 1, PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF THE MEXICO SSB TAX continued

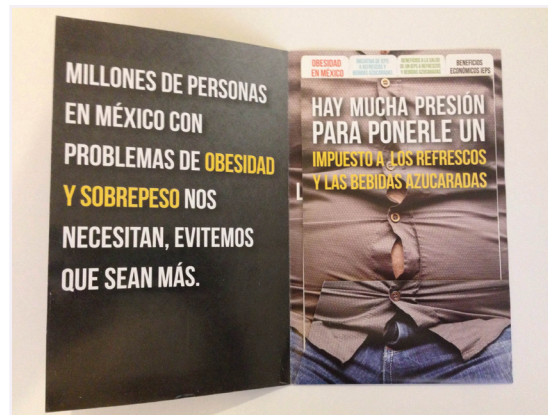
TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Lobbying: to persuade legislators to support a tax on SSBs.

SELECT EXAMPLES

- Mapping all legislators to identify allies, opponents, and those with an unknown or undecided perspective on the issue; followed by repeated outreach to confirmed and potential allies.
- Meeting with key legislative committees and executive offices, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance.
- Developing and distributing policy briefs or packets (see description and picture at right).
- Writing letters and making phone calls to key decision-makers in the legislature and executive, such as the Senate and Congressional Health Committees and the Ministry of Finance.
- Developing innovative materials (e.g. obesity stress ball props pictured below) and disseminating them to each representative in the Congress and the Senate during critical moments of debate. Each stress ball said “2 peso soda tax”; when you removed the belt, the little purple man looked overweight, and with the belt on, he looked skinnier. The other side of the ball said: “The pressure should stay here, not on your vote.”

- The policy packet says on left: “Millions of people in Mexico with problems of obesity and overweight need us, let’s make sure that there are not even more” and on right “There is a lot of pressure to put a tax on sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs)”. Inside tabs of the policy packet include information on: 1) the burden of obesity in Mexico; 2) the pending bill in Congress to tax SSBs; 3) the health benefits of a tax on SSBs; and 4) the economic benefits of a tax on SSBs.



TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

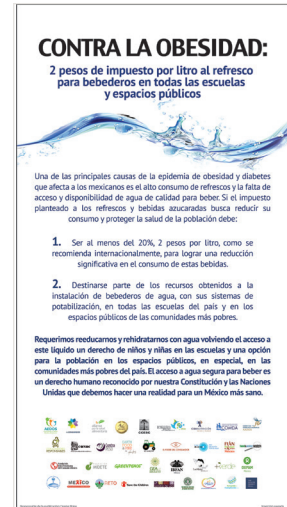
Media advocacy - paid media:⁷ To demonstrate the harms of SSBs, increase visibility of the issue, propose solutions and call government and society to action.

SELECT EXAMPLES

- Mass media campaigns — for example, the “12 spoonfuls of sugar” campaign. This campaign highlighted the amount of sugar in soda and linked soda consumption to diabetes. It had print, video, radio, and infographic components and was displayed on public transportation, billboards, radio, and online. Additional mass media campaign examples are provided in Appendix A.



- Purchase of full-page newspaper advertisements in key national dailies (e.g., *Jornada*, *Milenio*, *Reforma*, *El Universal*) — for example, in the ad to the right, a broad-based coalition (Alianza por la Salud) called for a 2 peso per liter tax and underscored that both national and international experts propose soda taxes as an effective measure to address obesity.

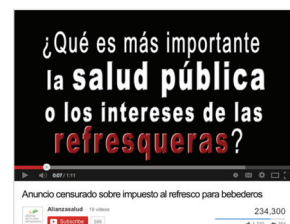


TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Media advocacy - earned media:⁸ To demonstrate the harms of SSBs, increase visibility of the issue, propose solutions and call government and society to action.

SELECT EXAMPLES

- Being accessible to the media by building relationships with journalists and being available to respond to media inquiries regarding the issue and proposed solution.
- Conducting press conferences to draw attention to the issue and foster public debate.
- Encouraging key opinion leaders who are in favor of the tax to write articles or to speak publicly in support of the tax. For example, Juan E. Pardinas, Director General of a well-recognized think tank, wrote an op-ed in a key newspaper in favor of the proposed tax during a critical moment of the debate (33).
- Responding to censorship with special social media video and magazine advertisements. The video pictured aired on YouTube and notes: “What’s more important: public health or soda industry interest?”



⁷ Media advocacy involves using mass media strategically to promote policy change (37, 38). Media advocacy campaigns typically include both paid and earned media (37, 38). Paid media can include mass media campaigns in which advocates pay to display an advertisement in a media outlet, such as a billboard, television, or print advertisement (37, 38). Earned media is unpaid coverage of demonstrations, forums, or other events considered newsworthy by one or more media outlets (37, 38).

⁸ Ibid.

TABLE 1, PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF THE MEXICO SSB TAX continued

TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Public demonstrations*: to draw attention to the issue and proposed solutions and to generate free, potentially influential, media attention.

SELECT EXAMPLES

SSB tax advocates conducted a public demonstration in October 2012 in front of COFEPRIS (Comisión Federal para la Protección Contra Riesgos Sanitarios or Federal Commission for Protection Against Health Risks) with an advocate dressed as a Coca-Cola polar bear suffering from diabetes and pouring out his soda. The action highlighted that 500,000 Mexicans had died from diabetes under the past administration and called on government to take action. This demonstration generated 41 earned media articles. For example, the article pictured appeared in a top newspaper and is titled: “More water, less soda”.



Tax advocates also conducted a public demonstration in late October 2012 in front of the Ministry of Health constructing a Day of the Dead⁹ altar dedicated to Mexicans who had died from diabetes during the past federal administration from 2006-2012. This demonstration generated 18 earned media articles including the news article below, entitled “Advocates leverage the date (Day of the Dead) to protest against diabetes.”



TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Drafting a SSB tax legislative proposal: to provide a model proposal for key advocates and champion legislators.

SELECT EXAMPLES

Advocates, working with a lawyer with expertise in fiscal policy, drafted the initial legislative proposal provided to Senator Marcela Torres Peimbert (PAN, National Action Party). Advocates also reviewed and provided comment on subsequent proposals.

* These tactics are forms of earned media activities, or actions with the intended or unintended effect of generating unpaid media coverage.

⁹ The Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) is a holiday celebrated in Mexico from October 31st to November 2nd to honor their deceased family and friends.

TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Press conferences, scientific forums, and civil society forums*: to raise the visibility of the issue and incorporate the perspectives of national and international experts and authorities.

SELECT EXAMPLES

- Advocates held a forum in the Senate with Senator Marcela Torres Peimbert (PAN, National Action Party), and civil society representatives to call for a 2 peso per liter tax.



- In October 2013, in a special forum entitled, “The Sugar Pandemic: Policy vs. Politics,” visiting expert Dr. Robert Lustig spoke to the media and legislators about the harms of sugar and soda consumption to the human organism and how the industry exercises influence to block effective public health policy.



TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Dissemination of scientific evidence*: to communicate the burden and urgency of the issue and build the evidence in areas where there are gaps.

SELECT EXAMPLES

Release of the academic peer-reviewed publication *Obesity in Mexico: Recommendations for State Policy* (31) and ensuring major media coverage and its distribution to key decision-makers. In addition, the National Institute of Public Health, in collaboration with other reputable academic institutions, published key analyses using nationally representative data illustrating the high consumption of SSBs and related health implications (e.g., 17, 34).



TACTIC AND OBJECTIVE

Public opinion polling*: to measure and publicize the public opinion.

SELECT EXAMPLES

Advocates hired a reputable independent polling agency to conduct national public opinion polls to assess public support for the SSB tax proposal. Results indicated that 7 out of every 10 Mexicans supported a soda tax if revenue was used for obesity prevention, 7 of 10 also supported the tax if revenue was used exclusively for drinking water dispensers/fountains, and 7 of 10 felt a tax would change their behavior.

* These tactics are forms of earned media activities, or actions with the intended or unintended effect of generating unpaid media coverage.

TABLE 1, PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF THE MEXICO SSB TAX continued

OPPONENTS OF THE MEXICO SSB TAX

Observed Key Players¹⁰

- Beverage and food industry
- Industry associations (e.g., Asociación Nacional de Productores de Refrescos y Aguas Carbonatadas A.C. or National Association of SSB and Carbonated Water Producers [ANPRAC], Consejo Mexicano de la Industria de Productos de Consumo, A.C. or Mexican Council of the Industry of Consumer Products [CONMEXICO])
- Associations of small store owners
- Sugar cane producers
- Beverage bottlers
- Some members of the executive branch of government
- Some members of the legislative branch of government (e.g., Senator Armando Neyra Chavez, Senator Martha Elena Garcia)
- Industry front groups
- Civil society organizations (e.g., Latin American Diabetes Association, Mexican Diabetes Federation (36))

OBSERVED TACTICS AND PERCEIVED OBJECTIVE

Lobbying: to convince legislators not to support a tax on SSBs

SELECT EXAMPLES

Lobbyists working for soft-drink companies and Mexican bottlers (e.g., FEMSA) took congressmen out to dinner at a high-end steakhouse called La Mansion (35).

OBSERVED TACTICS AND PERCEIVED OBJECTIVE

Organizing opponents to the tax: to publicly oppose the tax.

SELECT EXAMPLES

The industry engaged local store owners by distributing a poster and other incentives free of cost so that the store owners would display the poster noting “This store and its clients say NO to another soda tax.”



¹⁰ Opponents of the Mexico SSB tax did not respond to requests to be interviewed for this case study. Therefore, the opponents, their tactics, and objectives, as well as selected examples, are based on observations made by tax proponents.

OBSERVED TACTICS AND PERCEIVED OBJECTIVE

Paid and earned media: to question the link between consumption of SSBs and obesity; to claim the negative impact on the economy and jobs; to promote individual responsibility, physical activity and in some cases to promote their product.

SELECT EXAMPLES

- “Hablemos de Azúcar” (“Let’s Talk About Sugar”) campaign sponsored by the sugar cane producers, noting that sugar is “A little happiness every day”.



- ANPRAC’s “Conócete, Actívate, Equilíbrate” (“Know yourself, Get Active, Get Balanced”) campaign, noting that you can “Play more for many years”.



- Purchasing full-page newspaper advertisements in many main national dailies (such as *Excélsior*, *Milenio*, *La Razón*, *Reforma*). For example, paid inserts such as these appeared in national daily newspapers. One notes “Another soda tax? We’ll all pay!...No more taxes on soda.” The other notes “...We promote 4,000 sports events each year”.
- Industry representatives and associations (e.g., Chamber of Sugar and Alcohol Industry [CNIAA]) met with members of the legislature and executive to promote their perspective. These meetings generated earned media articles. For example, one article describing the meetings was entitled “Industry defends drinks” (49).
- Writing or paying for columns and editorials supportive of industry interests.



OBSERVED TACTICS AND PERCEIVED OBJECTIVE

Creation of consumer front groups: to make it appear that groups of citizens, in addition to the industry, are opposed to the tax.

SELECT EXAMPLES

A consumer front group, Centro para la Libertad del Consumo (The Center for Consumer Freedom), sponsored the advertisement below which notes, “Can you combat obesity with taxes? Yes or no on the tax on chubby people?” This group was identified as a front group for the industry because it did not exist before the tax debate and has not been active since the tax was passed, as illustrated on the group’s website: <http://www.consumidorlibre.org>.



This case study identified several elements of the proponent’s advocacy campaign that contributed to the successful passage of the 1 peso per liter tax on sugar-sweetened beverages in Mexico. These features are summarized in **Figure 2** and described below.

FIGURE 2

Summary of Key Elements of the Mexico SSB Tax Campaign



Note. This figure illustrates that at the core of the Mexico SSB tax campaign was a strong and effective advocacy strategy that was complemented by science and informed by the political and social context. The arrows indicate the concurrent interplay between advocacy and the other elements, as the advocacy efforts to promote the tax involved a strategic use of scientific evidence and an acute understanding of the social and political context.

SCIENCE

Use scientific evidence to **highlight the problem** and **design the policy solution**

The use of scientific evidence was a critical feature of the SSB tax advocacy campaign in Mexico to illustrate the magnitude of the problem and inform the selection of effective policy solutions. Building a campaign strategy that initially highlighted the problem was important to establish a rationale for action and raise the consciousness of decision-makers and the public. In Mexico, the academic community had generated significant knowledge and a strong evidence base around the issue of obesity and diabetes in the years prior to consideration of the tax (e.g., 1, 2, 17-20, 31). By collaborating with the critical mass of researchers

already working in obesity and diabetes prevention and control, advocates helped to generate additional media attention around this research.

Overall, researchers and advocates worked to publicize the burden of obesity and diabetes on the health of the population and the future of Mexican children. Euromonitor data highlighted Mexico’s status as the leading per capita consumer of SSBs (18). National data, such as Mexico’s National Survey of Health and Nutrition, Encuesta Nacional de Salud y Nutricion (ENSANUT), was useful in providing credible evidence on the scope of the obesity and diabetes epidemics (39). In addition, data illustrated dietary patterns in Mexico that were contributing to the problem. In particular, Mexico had one of the highest per capita consumption rates globally (17, 18). Overall, these data raised alarm and added support for addressing SSBs as a key driver of the dual epidemics of obesity and diabetes in Mexico.

Once evidence confirmed the scope and causes of the problem, the focus shifted to using research to design effective, targeted policy strategies. Given the high consumption of SSBs in Mexico (17-19) and the well-documented link between SSBs and obesity and diabetes (13-16, 26), soda and other sugary drinks emerged as a clear target for policy intervention. National and international experts proposed strategies to reduce SSB consumption in Mexico, including fiscal measures that could form one component of a comprehensive obesity reduction and control approach (e.g., 31, 40). The January 2013 publication of the book *Obesity in Mexico: Recommendations for State Policy* by the National Academy of Medicine, the National Institute of Public Health, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico illustrated the urgency of the obesity epidemic and served as a key resource for advocates (31). This book represents an interdisciplinary collaboration among experts in nutrition, economics, law, and other areas (31). It highlights the scope of obesity in Mexico, discusses contributors to the epidemic, and provides specific policy recommendations for the government, including an SSB tax (31, p331). Among the possible policy interventions described, a tax appeared to be a good first step based on modeling studies that estimated that a 10% increase in price could reduce consumption by 10 to 13% (41-43). One analysis suggested that at least a 20% increase in price was needed to result in a decline in consumption sufficient to have an effect on diabetes and obesity (41).

ADVOCACY

Form a broad-based coalition with strong leadership and strategic vision

Building a coalition comprised of a diverse set of organizations was important to raise the profile of the SSB tax debate among the public and to promote the tax to decision-makers in Mexico. For example, one coalition, Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria (Nutritional Health Alliance), was created in August 2012 and included members representing children's rights, water rights, development issues such as hunger, malnutrition, food systems and sustainability, the rights and issues of farmers, consumer rights, and nutrition organizations and groups working on chronic disease prevention. Although formed in 2012, several members had worked together previously on other health and human rights issues.

The coalition was powerful and effective because it brought together organizations that were already respected and trusted, well-connected, and willing to act as a single voice. The coalition members were experienced advocacy organizations and other umbrella coalitions comprised of several organizations that shared common goals. All of the members were established rights-based advocates in their respective fields and each brought a unique perspective and set of interests to the collective advocacy agenda. In bringing together key players from a broad range of health and human rights backgrounds, the Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria (Alliance) gained respect among the public and decision-makers. Therefore, the influence and trust that each member had established in diverse spheres of influence helped to promote the common goals of the Alliance in advocating for a SSB tax. See Appendix C for a list of Alliance members.

Despite the breadth of interests represented in the coalition and the participation of very experienced organizations, each member was willing to convene around a common goal. This shared willingness to promote the Alliance's overarching goal helped strengthen their collective voice around the SSB tax by keeping the overall message consistent while promoting it with a diverse set of actors. Achieving this type of collaboration around a concrete proposal was due in part to the strategic vision of the coalition's leadership. Specifically, various members of the coalition repeatedly noted that the Executive Director of El Poder del Consumidor was a critical leader within the coalition. His collaborative leadership style and vision for the coalition were essential in making sure that each member's perspective was heard and that the coalition defined a shared agenda that members could support in addressing malnutrition, obesity and diabetes in Mexico.

The coalition established a shared policy agenda with eight goals: 1) increasing the availability of water in schools and public spaces; 2) healthy food policies in schools; 3) a ban on child-targeted marketing; 4) effective food labeling; 5) food and nutrition education campaigns; 6) food security and sovereignty; 7) promotion of breastfeeding; and 8) fiscal measures on unhealthy foods and beverages. Although the coalition hoped to accomplish all of its policy goals, priority-setting was required to identify the first policy to pursue among the range of obesity prevention goals.

Given the health burden of SSBs and the potential window of opportunity to introduce a tax in a new executive and legislature, the coalition decided to pursue a tax on SSBs first among its policy goals. Once the initial policy was selected, the coalition began assembling key messages for advocacy and lobbying efforts. The coalition's strategy had a broad reach because each of the Alliance members used their extensive contacts within the legislature and media, as well as among key opinion leaders. The coalition also benefited from having members and partners that understood the Mexican political system. The political changes occurring in Mexico, such as a newly elected executive and legislature, offered a key opportunity to pursue a tax over other policy options since income and budget decision making took place on specific dates each year and fiscal reform was to be discussed in 2013. In addition, Alliance members knew that the Mexican government was interested in pursuing revenue generating policy measures, such as taxes.

Other policy options considered by the Alliance, such as nutrition labeling or child-targeted marketing regulations, may have taken longer to enact since newly elected legislators would have needed to form commissions before considering certain types of legislative proposals. Furthermore, the tax was expected by some advocates to garner more media and public attention than other obesity policy options, and as such had more potential to create a broader debate on obesity prevention. Ultimately, the coalition agreed to promote a tax in which some of the new revenue would be used for water fountains in schools and public spaces. Members of the Alliance and a lawyer with expertise in fiscal policy drafted the initial legislative proposal provided to Senator Marcela Torres Peimbert (PAN, National Action Party). It was important for advocates to craft the initial proposal to ensure that the legislation was evidence-based, would stand up to challenges by the industry (such as on its constitutionality) and would accomplish their shared goal of reducing the burden of obesity and diabetes in Mexico.

Build partnerships that leverage comparative strengths

As illustrated in Mexico, it is important that the organizations involved are adept at applying their skills and expertise in accomplishing their own goals, but more importantly, that the combined skill set of the partners works together synergistically (**Figure 3**).

During promotion of the Mexico SSB tax, there was a mutually beneficial relationship between academic researchers and civil society advocates. Advocates applied research findings in the policy arena, translating evidence into clear and concrete advocacy messages, while academics connected advocates to topic area experts and added credibility to the campaign by generating and synthesizing evidence that ultimately supported media campaign messaging. In coordination with advocates, the academic community convened national and international experts to present evidence to legislators, and responded to requests for evidence from advocates. Academics benefited from a well-informed civil society that knew how to use and evaluate evidence in promoting policy change.

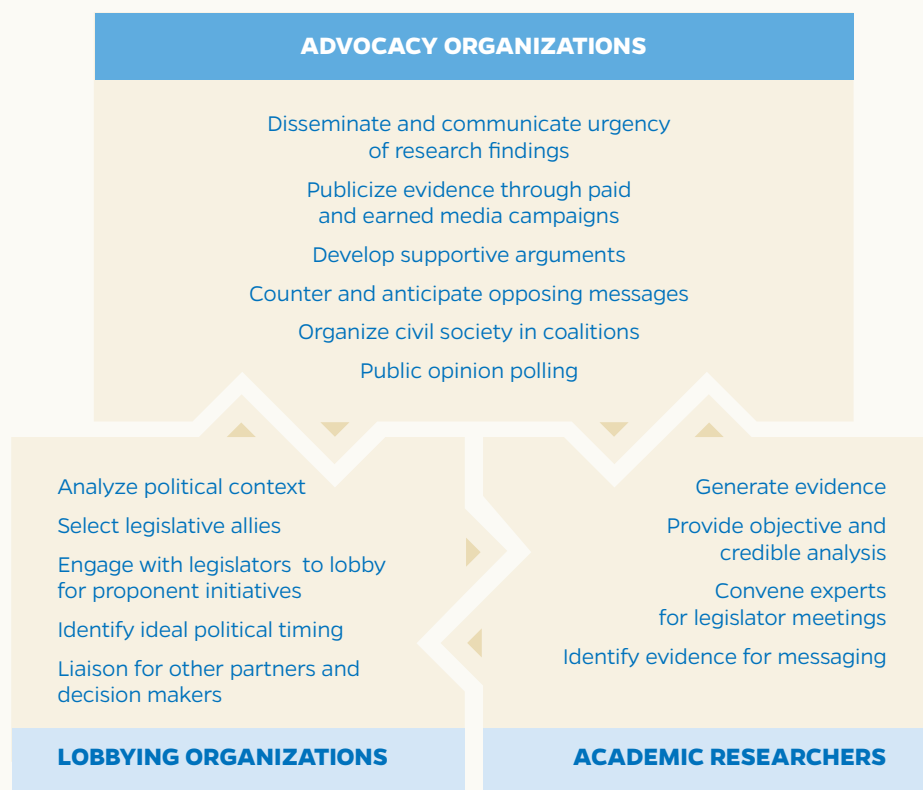
Collaboration between organizations with political acumen and those with media advocacy experience was an important feature of the campaign leading to the passage of Mexico's SSB tax. The organizations involved had a broad background in lobbying and advocacy that extended beyond public health. In Mexico, a public interest lobbying organization focused on analyzing the political context to identify key legislative allies and find the most opportune political timing to promote the tax. In addition, this organization worked to structure arguments for discussions with legislators and within the executive branch, and often served as a liaison between other advocates and key decision-makers. Within this collaboration, the media advocacy organization fine-tuned arguments in support of the tax and worked to counter opponent messages in public mediums. In turn, the lobbying group working within the legislature could use the media coverage to illustrate the wide-ranging support for the tax in meetings with legislators, and also worked to develop lobbying materials specifically designed for key decision-makers.

Develop a strong media advocacy campaign to frame public debate

A clear media advocacy strategy with key messages and arguments is necessary to frame the discussion with the public and in the legislature, as well as to pre-empt and counter opponent arguments. Media advocacy involves using mass media strategically to promote policy change (37, 38). Media advocacy campaigns typically include both paid and earned media (37, 38). Paid media can include advertisements in media outlets, such as billboard, television, or print advertisements, as well as

FIGURE 3

Engage a Complement of Partners for Policy Change



Building partnerships that leverage comparative strengths is essential in an effective advocacy campaign; each type of partner organization has a distinctive and important role to play, as outlined in Figure 3, which contributes synergistically to the overall effort.

in digital media (37, 38). Earned media is unpaid news or public affairs coverage of demonstrations, forums, or other events considered newsworthy by one or more media outlets (37, 38).

The media advocacy campaign to promote the SSB tax in Mexico was strong and focused, reaching the public as well as key decision-makers using a combination of creative paid mass media campaigns and innovative earned media tactics, which generated over 1,000 media articles in the five-month period (June 1, 2013 through October 31, 2013) leading up to the vote on the tax. The proponent’s media advocacy strategy, particularly paid mass media campaigns, was established early in the political evolution of the SSB tax debate, and emerged well in advance of opponent

media efforts, allowing advocates to frame the problem and solutions. Overall, the media strategy of proponents aimed to first create public awareness and communicate the urgency of the problem by illustrating the health and economic toll of obesity and diabetes in Mexico. Then, the campaign shifted to illustrate causes of the problem and to emphasize the role of soda consumption in these epidemics. Finally, proponents focused on the proposed solution, specifically the soda tax and earmarking tax revenue for water fountains as an emblematic prevention measure and appropriate use for the tax revenue. Therefore, advocates were savvy in knowing that framing the tax as a way to fund water fountains would be critical for gaining public support, as well as garnering broader support within the government.

Some examples of the mass media campaigns used within the proponents' broader media advocacy strategy are provided in **Appendix A**. El Poder del Consumidor (El Poder) and the Alliance designed and tested each mass media campaign, in some cases with support from the World Lung Foundation. Messaging for mass media campaigns was informed by data collected in Mexico. In addition, existing campaigns that had been effective in other countries, primarily the United States, were adapted and tested for use in Mexico. Each campaign underwent pre-testing, including use of focus groups to refine messaging. The campaigns were distributed in a variety of public spaces including public transportation, billboards, television, radio, magazines, movie theaters, and shopping centers. In addition, they were published on social media and on the websites of El Poder and the Alliance.

Several of the mass media campaigns experienced censorship. The two main television media companies (Televisa and TV Azteca) with 90% of the market share, as well as a third media company (Milenio TV), which together have the highest ranking news programs, refused to carry the advocate's mass media campaigns. One potential reason offered by interviewees for the censorship was the relationship between the media and the industry, including the media's concern about reduced industry advertising purchases. Advocates used new media, such as YouTube and Twitter, to highlight the censorship.

The earned media strategy included activities such as press conferences and demonstrations in public spaces to garner press attention and continue to engage the public in the evolving facets of the SSB tax debate. For example, an individual dressed as a diabetic Coca-Cola polar bear (evoking the company's advertising) poured soda into a bucket with a banner highlighting the deaths associated with diabetes in front of a key government office building. Additional examples of earned media activities are provided in **Table 1**.

Engage in formal lobbying tactics to obtain support

In addition to the earned and paid media component of the advocacy strategy, lobbying tactics such as effective political mapping of the players, analysis of the political context to identify key windows of opportunity, and outreach activities to build support within the legislature and executive were used to promote the Mexico SSB tax. An effective lobbying strategy requires an in-depth

understanding of the political process beginning well in advance of a legislative proposal. It is critical to begin laying the groundwork for policy change early and to have a long-term strategy to overcome opponents.

Although passage of the bill occurred quickly after the President included it within his economic package in September 2013, advocates had begun speaking publically about a 2 peso SSB tax and drinking water fountains in schools years before the President's 1 peso SSB tax proposal. As part of this, advocates had engaged in relationship building and also developed a coordinated strategy to promote the tax significantly before the 2013 tax discussions. Also, academics had published concrete and alarming data regarding obesity in Mexico several years before 2013. Advocacy tactics, including message development and political mapping were conducted immediately before and during the tax discussion, in 2012-2013, to ensure that messages and political mapping reflected the current social and political context.

Despite the benefits of a new legislature and executive as well as the timing of the annual budget process, this period of change also created a challenge in identifying and engaging proponents of the SSB tax proposal within the legislature, since the positions of the newly elected officials were relatively unknown. Stakeholder and political mapping to identify potential supporters within the legislature was conducted even before final election results were known. Advocates worked to find legislative champions, selecting Senator Marcela Torres Peimbert of the PAN political party as a key legislative ally. Senator Torres had a background in physical therapy and had seen the effects of diabetes firsthand. Once collaboration with civil society advocates began, Senator Torres was an ardent promoter of the 2012 tax proposal, as well as the subsequent tax proposal by the President.

By using effective outreach activities, such as relationship building and targeted communication, advocates also obtained support from legislators with diverse political viewpoints. Public interest lobbying group Polithink and others engaged in repeated outreach to build relationships and trust within a network of individuals in the legislature and executive. Activities during the SSB tax debate included writing letters to legislators to introduce the idea of the proposed SSB tax, meeting with key stakeholders to present information, and developing tailored communication with scientific evidence and detailed arguments supporting the tax. In addition, the lobbying strategy involved providing information to stakeholders

in novel ways, including the creative use of social media. For example, infographics were created to visually illustrate primary arguments in support of the tax, and a stress ball prop with the slogan “the pressure should stay here, not on your vote,” was developed and distributed to every legislator to illustrate in a novel way why a tax was warranted. Also, a special mass media campaign “Who’s Side Are You On?” challenged legislators in print and digital media to make their decision based on public benefits rather than private interests. Overall, repeated outreach in the moments when key decisions were being made in the legislature and executive was critical for the passage of the SSB tax.

As a result of this work by public interest lobbyists in Mexico, the SSB tax had support from both legislative chambers, and from the party in power (Executive; PRI, centrist), the main opposition party (PAN, right-wing), and others including PVEM (green party, conservative) and PRD (left-wing). Proponents of the tax were also flexible in case opponents of the policy measure emerged from unexpected places. Surprisingly, the Minister of Health in Mexico was initially not in support of the SSB tax (44). However, advocates garnered support from legislators as well as others within the executive, including officials in the Ministry of Finance.

Prepare for the Opposition

Tax proponents developed a media advocacy and lobbying campaign that anticipated opposing arguments and strategies. In addition, the proponents’ campaign was sufficiently flexible to allow prompt responses to unexpected opposing arguments. Opponents of the SSB tax, including the beverage industry and others, engaged in several tactics (**Table 1**) to prevent the passage of the tax. In addition, opponents developed a range of arguments against the SSB tax.

A sample of arguments made by both proponents and opponents in the media is summarized in **Table 2**. It is important to note that not all opponent arguments were countered by advocates, just those that advocates determined had remained active in the media or legislative discussions long enough to warrant a response. A range of arguments were observed by proponents of the tax, with some recalling that one or two industry

arguments were more prominent than others. Given that industry representatives were not available to be interviewed for this case study, the opponents’ arguments provided in **Table 2** represent only those recalled or documented by the proponents of the tax.

One example opponent argument noted that the tax was tied to foreign interests, with opponents referring to the Mexico SSB tax as the “Bloomberg Tax.”¹¹ Advocates made a specific decision to ignore this argument, deeming it baseless and unrelated to the real issue; in fact, the Alliance pointed out that this tactic was a “dirty trick” advanced by the industry. Advocates focused on continuing to demonstrate that the tax was recommended by both national and international experts, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (45), a UN Special Rapporteur (46), WHO/PAHO (47), as well as national academic institutions (e.g., the National Academy of Medicine) (31), civil society organizations (e.g., those within the Alliance and ContraPESO), and others. Advocates also continued to emphasize the anticipated health benefits of the tax and clearly communicated the risks of SSB consumption to the public and legislators. Overall, advocates stayed consistent with their focus on health while maintaining transparency in their funding sources, including funding from institutions and philanthropies outside of Mexico.

Another example opponent argument was that the tax would be regressive, or that the poorest SSB consumers would pay proportionally more in taxes than wealthier consumers. In response, advocates argued that the health effects of SSB consumption, including diabetes, disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged populations. For example, advocates noted that low-income populations are most affected by diabetes and often do not have access to adequate health care to control or treat diabetes, or if they have access, do not have the resources to pay for adequate care.

Opponents also argued that the tax would have a negative economic effect in Mexico. Advocates were able to address this in part by collaborating with two networks of producer organizations (Asociación Nacional de Empresas Comercializadoras [ANEC] or National Association of Commercial Companies and El Barzón; both members of the Alliance). These organizations served as key spokespersons at a press conference where

¹¹ In 2012, Bloomberg Philanthropies began a three-year Obesity Prevention Program in Mexico to support local stakeholders dedicated to obesity prevention research and advocacy to pursue one or more of the following policies: a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages, improved front-of-package food labels, banning marketing of unhealthy products to children, and improved food in schools and other public institutions.

they highlighted that Mexican sugar cane producers would not be harmed by the tax to the extent that the industry claimed because the beverage industry had already shifted to using high fructose corn syrup instead of cane sugar, and that shift had already caused substantial harm to Mexico's sugar cane industry. ANEC is a network of agricultural producer organizations in Mexico, including producers of beans, corn, rice, wheat, and other crops. El Barzón is a national grassroots organization comprised of members representing producers of crops including sugar cane, apples, corn, beans, milk, and others. These two organizations were helpful allies of advocates and provided critical data to the public and legislators during the SSB tax debate.

In addition to countering industry arguments in the media, advocates had to respond to industry tactics within legislative discussions. For example, after the President's proposal was announced, SSB industry opponents attempted to restructure the proposal as a general tax on sugar instead of sugar-sweetened beverages. While the beverage industry tried to introduce a new general tax as a potential delaying tactic (and ultimately alienating other industries in the process) (35), advocates worked to reframe the debate as a discussion of whether the tax should be 1 peso or 2 pesos per liter by proposing new legislation with the help of Deputy Fernando Zarate Salgado (PRD, Party of the Democratic Revolution). By introducing new legislation at a key point in the political debate, advocates shifted the discussion among legislators regarding whether to support or oppose the President's 1 peso tax on SSBs to a discussion of whether to support the President's 1 peso tax or Deputy Salgado's 2 peso tax on SSBs. This action served to strategically move the discussion away from whether the tax should pass to a discussion regarding the amount of the tax.

CONTEXT

Understand the political context to capitalize on windows of opportunity

Overall, it is essential that policy proponents know the political context — the system's structure and the needs of political actors — to act on opportunities that could promote public health goals within broader government pursuits and reforms. In the case of Mexico, the government was looking for revenue sources and was facing a growing obesity and

diabetes burden. Although the President stated publicly that the rationale for the tax was health (32), most advocates interviewed for this case study suspected it was, at best, a two-fold purpose — to generate revenue in addition to improving health — with many advocates believing that the primary motivation was revenue generation. Regardless of the underlying rationale for the tax in Mexico, advocates were able to get it passed in part because they were aware of the planned political agenda for fiscal reform and they were able to use the government's public presentation of a health rationale to support their primary argument for the tax — to reduce obesity and diabetes.

The extensive political mapping conducted by Polithink and others, as well as their in-depth knowledge of the political context, allowed tax proponents to develop a strategy primed to take advantage of key windows of political opportunity. Advocates in Mexico developed a strategy that made use of the political timing of proposed fiscal reforms and the annual budget process. They knew when key actors would be making decisions, and therefore selected a policy approach and used tactics that would work around established timeframes for key legislative and executive events.

For example, the political situation in Mexico seemed particularly amenable to a fiscal measure in 2013, given that President Peña Nieto had run on a campaign platform pushing fiscal reform in the form of taxes on food and medicines as a way to generate additional revenue. Furthermore, election of a new legislature and executive in 2013 provided good political timing to act on the tax because in Mexico, the legislature and executive have a finite period of time to outline the government's revenue and budget. Therefore, proponents' tactics were tailored to the deadlines within the government's budgetary process. Finally the political context of the Pact for Mexico, an agreement between the three main political parties on reform, offered fortuitous political timing on fiscal reform — where the tax initiative was situated — among political parties with contrasting political agendas.

Identify the global community's role

In acknowledgement of the value that the country's leaders placed on their public image in the global community, advocates gained traction in their campaign by emphasizing Mexico's commitments to international

treaties and highlighting Mexico's high burden of obesity relative to other countries. In Mexico, the federal government places high importance on its image throughout the world, as well as within the Americas. Therefore, advocates pursued the SSB tax by pressuring government officials to act as a means of accomplishing their obligations under international treaties and to enhance their image in the global court of public opinion. For example, given the planned use of tax revenue to fund water fountains, government officials were encouraged to support the tax as a way to uphold their obligations to an international water rights treaty. Government officials also likely wanted to avoid political fallout from inaction on obesity. For example, both the both the OECD's Secretary-General (45) and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (46) had called on Mexico to act given that it has the highest obesity rate among OECD countries.

Advocates brought together international researchers and advocates to participate in forums about the SSB tax in Mexico, as well as to sign public declarations in favor of the tax. Specifically, advocates convened

experts who had conducted research on obesity prevention strategies and advocates, including legislators, who had promoted similar policies in other countries. The opportunity to engage with others working on similar measures was useful for designing the SSB tax proposal, and helped advocates develop messages to counter opponent arguments.

Additionally, the advocates' call for a SSB tax was strengthened by support from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), whose representatives from both PAHO headquarters in Washington, DC and in Mexico publicly supported the tax at critical moments and participated in public and legislative forums to discuss the importance of addressing obesity in Mexico (47). Maureen Birmingham, PAHO's representative in Mexico, supported the proposed SSB tax in a press conference in August 2013 by stating that the tax "is very logical based on the evidence. It's not just a law to save lives, but also to alleviate poverty, because these diseases related to obesity and being overweight, are causing poverty" (47).

Image from one of the advocacy mass media campaigns "For a Healthier Mexico"; text on the image says: "With the soda tax: Drinking fountains in schools and public spaces. Soda is sweet; diabetes isn't."



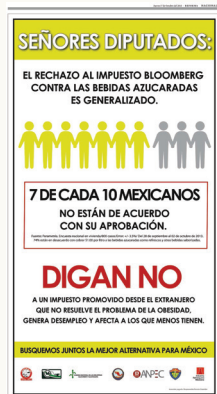
TABLE 2

Example Opponent and Proponent Arguments

PUBLIC OPINION

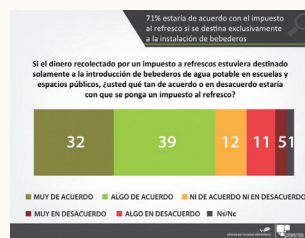
OPPONENT ARGUMENTS

- Mexicans don't support the SSB tax*
- The tax will stigmatize individual SSB consumption*



PROPONENT ARGUMENTS

- 70% of the Mexican population supports the proposed SSB tax if the revenue is used to promote health, such as increasing access to potable water in schools
- There is a significant individual cost in terms of lives lost from obesity and diabetes



ECONOMIC IMPACT

OPPONENT ARGUMENTS

- Regressive; disproportionate impact on poor*
- Individuals need a minimum of calories and it would harm the working class because SSBs are part of the basic food basket*
- Profit loss*
- 10,000 people will lose their jobs*
- We will all pay
- No more taxes
- Tax revenue will not help the Mexican economy
- Small business opposition

PROPONENT ARGUMENTS

- Obesity and diabetes disproportionately affect the poor
- Provided international examples to illustrate that the revenue generated from the tax would have a positive impact on the Mexican economy
- Being a part of the basic food basket does not necessarily mean it is a healthy product, simply that it is a highly purchased product
- Beverage industry actually does not support sugar cane producers because a higher percentage of sugar in soda is in fact high fructose corn syrup rather than 100% cane sugar



* Opponent arguments that were directly refuted by proponents.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

OPPONENT ARGUMENTS

- There is no link between SSB consumption and overweight or obesity*
- There is not enough evidence on the effectiveness of SSB taxes in reducing obesity and diabetes*
- Soda is only 6 to 10% of total energy intake and every calorie is the same so blaming a particular product is unfair*



PROPONENT ARGUMENTS

- There is a proven association between SSB consumption and overweight, obesity, diabetes, and other health risks
- Provided international examples and national economic models of elasticity of demand to illustrate that the tax would have a positive effect on health
- 6 to 10% of total energy intake is substantial and not all calories are equal. Calories from SSBs are “empty calories”



ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS TO OBESITY

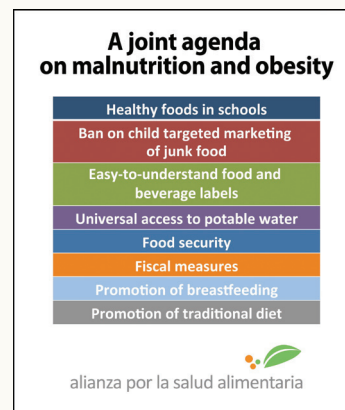
OPPONENT ARGUMENTS

- A single tax measure is not enough; obesity warrants a more comprehensive strategy*
- Focus on physical activity and get active
- Balance is needed
- Industry self-regulation works*



PROPONENT ARGUMENTS

- A tax is one of several measures needed in a comprehensive strategy to address obesity including restricting marketing to kids, improved food labeling, and others. Also, a tax is a good place to start.
- Self-regulation will not work because the industry’s goal is to make a profit not to reduce SSB consumption



* Opponent arguments that were directly refuted by proponents.

TABLE 2, EXAMPLE OPPONENT AND PROPONENT ARGUMENTS *continued*

POLITICAL COST AND STRATEGIES

OPPONENT ARGUMENTS

- Legislators will lose votes in the future if they support the SSB tax*
- Government is just using the tax to collect revenue and will not use it for health*
- Freedom of consumers to drink SSBs*



PROPONENT ARGUMENTS

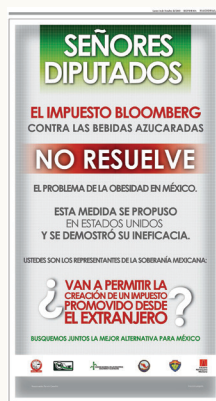
- 70% of the public is in favor of the tax if the revenue is used for children's health
- The President noted a health rationale for the tax
- Mexican's have a right to health, including the freedom to access healthy food and clean water



OTHER

OPPONENT ARGUMENTS

- The SSB tax is a “Bloomberg Tax” tied to foreign interests



PROPONENT ARGUMENTS

- The tax is a recommendation of both national and international experts



* Opponent arguments that were directly refuted by proponents.

Build on success and learn from setbacks for future advocacy campaigns

Because the SSB tax was one of several policy measures being pursued by advocates in Mexico, advocates should consider the political and social context for future obesity prevention policies. It is important for advocates to reflect on what worked and what could be improved for future policy advocacy approaches in Mexico and elsewhere. First, economic models suggest that a higher tax, approximately 20% of retail price, would be needed to have a significant effect on reducing consumption (41). Therefore, while a 1 peso per liter tax in Mexico is a step forward, 2 pesos per liter or more would be a stronger fiscal measure to reduce consumption. Also, advocates in Mexico expect the beverage industry to continue to fight the tax's implementation with legal action, as well as to attempt to counter the tax's effect on consumption by issuing coupons or special promotions to negate a price increase, as is common with tobacco marketing and promotion.

The advocates' call for the use of SSB tax revenue for water fountains in schools and public spaces was not successful in direct terms — the advocates did not achieve immediate allocation of revenue, but there were several other uses and benefits to linking the use of the tax's revenue to obesity prevention and installation of water fountains. In Mexico, the federal government does not traditionally earmark taxes. Therefore, although one version of the SSB tax legislation in Mexico noted that the tax revenue would be used for drinking water fountains in schools and public spaces, the final 2014 budget did not earmark tax revenue for water fountains. However, due to additional advocacy, legislators did allocate 1.3 billion pesos in the 2015 federal budget specifically for the installation of drinking water fountains.

When a direct earmark of funds is not possible or not successful, it is useful to consider other methods for advocating that tax revenue be used toward desired goals, in this case obesity prevention efforts. This use of revenue provides a way to garner public support for these measures, and in the case of Mexico, to increase the availability of water as an alternative to

SSBs. Although not initially included in the budget, subsequent legislation was introduced by Deputy Manilo Fabio Beltrones Rivera (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party) that required a budget allocation of \$3.5-4.2 billion pesos per year to the Ministry of Education for the provision of potable water in schools. The bill was passed and went into law in May 2014.

Although the SSB tax revenue was not earmarked for health or water programs, the advocates' focus on framing the tax as a way to reduce obesity and increase access to drinking water contributed to discussions around funding water fountains in schools. Another positive side effect of the SSB tax discussion was increasing awareness of the harms of SSBs among the Mexican population (30), which was a beneficial effect of the advocacy campaigns and political debate surrounding the tax. In mid-2014, 98% of respondents in a national poll believed that SSB consumption increases obesity risk compared to 90% of respondents in mid-2013 (30). Even though tax revenue was not earmarked for obesity prevention, the short-term effects of the tax debate on public awareness were potentially useful for future obesity prevention and control measures.

In general, passing a tax on SSBs rarely occurs in isolation of other policy measures, and it is therefore helpful to consider how the political debate about the tax may affect future policy discussions and how other policies can complement the tax and optimize its effect on health outcomes. In Mexico, the pursuit of a tax on SSBs was part of a larger, more comprehensive obesity prevention advocacy strategy comprised of several policy measures including improved school food policy, restrictions on advertising to children, and implementation of improved food labeling requirements. Therefore, the lessons learned from the tax advocacy campaign and evidence on the tax's effect on consumption will be helpful to consider in promoting other initiatives.

Overall, the experience of advocates in pursuing a sugar-sweetened beverage tax in Mexico highlights three important areas for other policy change advocates.

These lessons can guide the work of those interested in promoting similar policy change in their own city, state, or country. Depending on the social and political context, some features of the Mexico SSB advocacy campaign can be replicated, while some may be more challenging. Therefore, proponents of similar public health policy measures in government, civil society, academia, or other organizations should consider these lessons and adapt them for their unique setting.

1. First and foremost, engage organizations that have a strong background in media advocacy and strategic campaign development who are respected and recognized as legitimate defendants of the public's interest. Engaging the right players was critical to the successful campaign to pass the tax in Mexico. The skillful work of leading advocacy organizations promoting the SSB tax was the result of their extensive knowledge and experience in media advocacy and political strategy. Media advocacy work such as mass media campaigns that emphasized the role of soda consumption in diabetes and linked the tax to increasing water availability for children, were based on a significant background understanding of the evidence and of what points would garner public attention and political traction. In addition, the use of social media was a valuable way to broaden the strategy's reach, especially when campaigns were censored in traditional media. The advocacy work also involved creative lobbying tactics, such as the use of engaging visual props and infographics.

2. Second, develop a keen understanding of the scientific literature with a focus on how the evidence can inform the selection and defense of policy measures as well as message development for media advocacy and lobbying strategies. In Mexico, the national and international scientific community had already documented a strong evidence base that nourished and complemented the work of policy advocates.

3. Third, understand the political context to effectively influence policy change at opportune moments, plan in advance, and patiently wait for the right window of opportunity. Having extensive background knowledge of the structure of the political system in Mexico, including the legislative timeline and potential allies and opponents, as well as active political engagement, was essential for the successful passage of the SSB tax.

It is important to underscore the role of partnerships backed up by coalitions in promoting similar policy change. While this case study found that an advocacy strategy guided by scientific evidence and the political context was important in passing the Mexico SSB tax, it was the product of several organizations working together in a thoughtful and carefully planned approach and acting without a need to take individual credit. Therefore, advocates in other cities, states, and countries considering an SSB tax or other policy measure should not expect to find all three of these critical elements in one organization. Rather, advocates should plan to collaborate as a means to use various organizations' strengths in scientific evidence, advocacy skills, and understanding of the political context in working toward policy change.

CONCLUSION

The obesity and diabetes epidemics remain a significant threat to the health of Mexicans and people throughout the world.

By passing the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, decision-makers in Mexico took an important step toward stemming the health and economic burden of obesity and related disease. The findings of this case study suggest that strong advocacy work, scientific evidence, and knowledge of the political context can be important

facilitators to policy change that promotes obesity prevention and control. Also, these findings are likely generalizable to health policy issues beyond obesity prevention. The experience in Mexico informs the work of advocates seeking to influence policy change in cities, states, and countries around the world.

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APPENDIX A

Proponent Media Advocacy Examples: Mass Media Campaigns

CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION

“First Came Obesity, Then Diabetes”

November 2012- February 2013

Graphic images illustrated the effects of diabetes, including amputations, blindness, and death. Campaign messages emphasized the association between soda and diabetes and noted the need to regulate SSBs (e.g, improved food labeling and regulation of child targeted marketing of SSBs).

CAMPAIGN EXAMPLE^a



“12 Spoonfuls of Sugar”

May 2013- August 2013

Informed consumers of the quantity of sugar in soda and linked soda consumption to diabetes.



a) Mass media campaign examples were obtained from El Poder del Consumidor (<http://elpoderdelconsumidor.org/>) and the Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria (Alliance) (<https://actuaporlasalud.org/>).

APPENDIX A continued

CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION

“For a Healthier Mexico”*

September 2013- October 2013

Called for support of a soda tax using graphic images to emphasize the relationship between soda consumption and health risks of diabetes (e.g., amputations, dialysis). Also noted that the tax revenue should be used for the installation of drinking water fountains in schools and public spaces.

CAMPAIGN EXAMPLE^a



“Who’s Side Are You On?”

October-November 2013

A campaign targeting legislators that questioned whether they were on the side of public health and children’s welfare or on the side of private interests and corporate profits.



“Don’t Harm Yourself Drinking Sugary Drinks”*

October 2013-December 2013

Highlighted the amount of sugar from SSBs consumed over the course of a day. Linked SSB consumption to negative health outcomes including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. It concluded by illustrating healthy beverage alternatives.



a) Mass media campaign examples were obtained from El Poder del Consumidor (<http://elpoderdelconsumidor.org/>) and the Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria (Alliance) (<https://actuaporlasalud.org/>).

* These campaigns were adaptations of the “Do You Drink 93 Sugar Packets a Day?” campaign, with permission from the New York City Department of Public Health and Mental Hygiene.

APPENDIX B

Key Informant Interviewee Descriptions

KEY INFORMANT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Media	National and international journalists who covered the Mexico sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) tax debate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National journalists• International journalists
Government Agencies	Representatives from government agencies and government research institutes who were involved in developing the President's economic package, conducted research on the Mexico SSB tax, or examined the obesity and diabetes epidemics and its contributors in Mexico. In addition, these representatives may have been asked to participate in forums, press conferences, or other events during consideration of the SSB tax in Mexico.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry representatives• Government research institute
Legislators	Legislators who were involved in the SSB tax debate by considering and voting on the initial tax proposed by advocates or the President's economic package containing an SSB tax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senator
Multi-lateral Organizations	Representatives from multi-lateral institutions that supported the tax and were involved in key legislative forums, press conferences, and other events during consideration of the SSB tax in Mexico.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pan American Health Organization
National Non-Governmental Organizations	Representatives from organizations involved in promoting the SSB tax in Mexico including media advocacy organizations, public interest lobbyists, academic researchers, lawyers, and others. These representatives were involved in developing the advocacy strategies and carrying out the key features of the campaign discussed in this case study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public interest lobbyists• Academic Institutions• Advocacy and rights-based organizations• Legal counsel

APPENDIX C

Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria Coalition Members

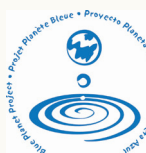
The following organizations were Alliance members during the campaigning and advocacy efforts for the SSB tax during the 2012-2013 period.*

**AlConsumidor**

A consumer rights NGO that helps consumers defend their rights by denouncing abuses by service providers and by promoting collective action, public policies and regulations

**Asociación Nacional de Empresas Comercializadoras de Productores del Campo (ANEC)**

A national association of over 250 enterprises of small to mid-scale producers working together to promote efficient, economically viable, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable agriculture

**Blue Planet Project**

Part of the global water-justice movement supporting grassroots struggles to protect democratic, community control of water, and building a movement to see the full implementation of the human right to water and sanitation



CCESC

Centro de Capacitación en Ecología y Salud para Campesinos y Defensoría del Derecho a la Salud (CCESC)

An education, training and advocacy center working with rural indigenous communities in the state of Chiapas to build women's, children's and youth capacity to enable them to know and exercise their right to health

COANUTRICIÓN
NUTRIR ES PREVENIR**Centro de Orientación Alimentaria (COA Nutrición)**

This nutrition center provides advisory services, carries out research, develops educational strategies and generates creative, innovative projects to inform and disseminate the benefits of healthy food



COMDA

Coalición de Organizaciones Mexicanas por el Derecho al Agua (COMDA)

This coalition of NGOs, networks and social movements promotes the defense, preservation, conservation, balanced access and appropriate use of water in benefit of society and the environment



CONOC

Consejo Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas (CONOC)

Composed of national and regional rural farmers' organizations, this council promotes and defends rural sustainable development and food sovereignty through public policy design, technical support, training, research and mobilization

* Source: <http://actuaporlasalud.org>



Contrapeso

A strategic platform of more than 30 civil society organizations united to influence public policy solutions to the high rates of overweight and obesity in Mexico



El Barzón

A national movement of producers, urban dwellers and financial service users that promotes agricultural and economic practices and policies to further economic competition, sustainable energy and water, food security and consumer rights



El Poder del Consumidor

An independent, non-profit that advocates for consumer rights and promotes responsible consumerism by informing consumers, promoting policies in the public interest, fostering active citizenship and exposing practices that harm public interests



FAN México (Red de Acción por el Agua - México)

This network of civil society organizations promotes the right to quality water and sanitation services, as well as water sustainability, by influencing public policy and individual and collective action at different levels



Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN México)

The Mexican section of this international human rights organization that advocates for the realization of the right to food and strives to secure people's access to the resources they need to feed themselves, now and in the future



Food and Water Watch

This non-profit organization advocates for common sense policies that will result in healthy, safe food and access to safe and affordable drinking water, by working with diverse constituencies to inform and hold policymakers accountable



Fundación Mídete

An association that fosters a culture of education, prevention and treatment of overweight and obesity in Mexico, through promoting civic, legislative, governmental and inter-sectorial initiatives to promote health as a lifestyle



Greenpeace Mexico

The Mexican member of this independent global campaigning organization that acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace



Grupo de Estudios Ambientales (GEA)

A professional association contributing to sustainable lives and solutions to socio-environmental problems in rural areas through participatory practice, local natural resource management and promotion of sustainable food systems

* Source: <http://actuaporlasalud.org>

APPENDIX C continued



The Hunger Project Mexico

The national member of this global, non-profit, strategic organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger and poverty through sustainable, grassroots, women-centered strategies and advocating for their widespread adoption



International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN México)

The Mexican chapter of this world-wide network of organizations working to reduce infant and child mortality through the protection, support and promotion of breastfeeding and best infant and early child feeding practices



Oxfam México

The Mexican member of a global confederation working to build a future free of injustice and poverty by improving living conditions and livelihoods, strengthening local organizations, and influencing governments and corporations to ensure people's rights



Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México (REDIM)

A national coalition of 63 civil society organizations that promotes a social and cultural movement and programs to enable girls, boys and adolescents to know, exercise and enjoy their rights



Semillas de Vida

This association seeks to contribute to healthy food and food self-sufficiency for Mexican peoples through sustainable agriculture and by fostering production and consumption of healthy foods, particularly Mexican varieties of maize



Sin Maíz No Hay País

A national campaign of over 300 organizations engaged in the struggle for food sovereignty and to strengthen production by small-scale farmers through favorable public policies and an inclusive, just, sustainable and solidarity project

* Source: <http://actuaporlasalud.org>

The Nutritional Health Alliance ran this paid media ad at the height of the soda tax debate in the media and in Mexican congress. October 2013.

La epidemia de obesidad la transmiten los cabilderos de las refresqueras



Senadora, Senador: ¿Ya se dejó picar?

Proteja nuestra salud con el impuesto
a las bebidas azucaradas.
Vote por 2 pesos por litro

En el sexenio 2006 - 2012, murieron 500,000
personas por diabetes. ¿Cuándo vamos a actuar?

alianza por la salud alimentaria

*The obesity epidemic is transmitted
by soda lobbyists.*

Senators, have you let yourselves get bitten?

*Protect our health with the sugar-sweetened
beverage tax.*

Vote for 2 pesos per liter.

*During the 2006-2012 administration,
500,000 people died from diabetes.*

When will we act?