



HEALTHY CARIBBEAN POLICY BRIEF

Promoting healthy diets, food security and sustainable development in the Caribbean through joint policy action: The role of civil society

The NCD Alliance is a leader in the global NCD advocacy landscape working to create a space for civil society representation at the highest levels. The development of this Policy Brief was supported through funds from the NCD Alliance and Medtronic Philanthropy as part of the Strengthening Health Systems, Supporting NCD Action international project of which the HCC is one of three National Implementing Partners. This Policy Brief is an addendum to the CARPHA/ CARICOM Technical Brief: Promoting healthy diets, food security, and sustainable development in the Caribbean through joint policy action.

Progress in advancing multisectoral action for the promotion of healthy diets

There is growing consensus that multisectoral action and strong government leadership are needed to tackle the burden of unhealthy diets and related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). This was explicitly recognized by the 193 Member Governments of the United Nations at the 2011 High-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on NCDs and, four years earlier, by Caribbean Heads of Government at the world's first high-level summit on NCDs in Port-of-Spain. However, implementation of the diet-related policy commitments made at these meetings has been modest, and progress towards achieving the diet-related targets and indicators set out in the World Health Organization (WHO) NCD Global Monitoring Framework unacceptably slow.

Unique role of civil society organisations in promoting policy change

As representatives of the public interest, civil society organizations (CSOs) have a unique role to play in supporting governments to meet their commitments, and in holding governments and business to account. At the global level, civil society has played a central role in building momentum for a globally coordinated, state-led approach to tackling the NCD burden, and in advocating for the inclusion of nutrition and NCDs in the post-2015 global development framework.

Caribbean CSOs have contributed considerably to regional- and national-level efforts to tackle unhealthy diets and NCDs through a mix of service provision, public outreach and education initiatives, research, advocacy, and input into policy development. However, there is significant potential to further strengthen their contribution to a coordinated, multisectoral regional policy response. This will require a strong focus on building advocacy capacity among diverse civil society

actors, as well as on establishing and strengthening relationships among CSOs, and between CSOs and policy-makers.

Recommendations to strengthen Caribbean civil society's role

- Develop and disseminate targeted policy briefs that build the case for civil society's role in the regional response to unhealthy diets and obesogenic environments. Clearly articulate the specific contributions to be made by the diverse range of civil society actors operating in the region, including those with a health focus (such as cancer societies, diabetes societies, heart and lung associations, and sports clubs) as well as non-health focused groups (including faith-based organisations, parent teacher associations, youth organisations, consumer organisations, and trade unions).
- Develop advocacy tools to support civil society actors in their healthy diet and NCD advocacy efforts, build policy literacy, and strengthen the credibility of civil society actors as policy influencers for healthier food environments and as independent watchdogs.
- Identify opportunities to support greater and more strategic cooperation and collaboration between the diverse CSOs operating in the region.
- Ensure representation of a united civil society voice at all relevant regional and national multistakeholder fora.
- Ensure active civil society participation in the development and implementation of healthy diet policies and policy tools, including those relating to food labeling, food marketing, and nutrition standards in schools and other institutions.
- Actively seek out collaboration with national authorities to support governments in their leadership role, and with CARICOM and its Ministerial Councils, particularly Human and Social Development, and Trade and Economic Development, and relevant Regional institutions in health, such as CARPHA, agriculture, education, and trade to advocate for healthier food environments
- Continue to contribute to public education efforts aimed at raising awareness of the multiple drivers and impacts of unhealthy diets, and at strengthening public support for policies aimed at promoting healthy diets and healthier food environments and food security.
- Work with governments to understand the implications of trade policy and trade agreements for public health nutrition in the region, and to identify opportunities to preserve the freedom, scope and mechanisms available to implement public policies to support healthy diets and less obesogenic environments.
- Hold governments and regional organizations accountable by monitoring the implementation and impacts of policy actions, over time and in different social groups. Publicise findings widely within the region and feed into regional and global monitoring and benchmarking mechanisms, such as the Caribbean Cooperation in Health Initiative, the Port of Spain Declaration of CARICOM Heads of Government on NCDs, the WHO Global Database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA), the World Cancer Research Fund's (WCRF) Nourishing Framework, and the International Network for Food and Obesity/NCD Research, Monitoring and Action Support's (INFORMAS) Government Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI).

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