



Measuring and Engaging the Business Sector Response to NCDs

THE CARIBBEAN NCD PRIVATE SECTOR FORUM

June 4th, 2015 | Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Barbados

POST FORUM BRIEF

June 15, 2015



The Meeting

On Thursday June 4th, 2015 at the Courtyard by Marriott Bridgetown in Barbados, 40 business executives representing 20 companies from diverse sectors across the Caribbean, met to discuss the issue of NCDs (noncommunicable diseases) at the '*Caribbean NCD Private Sector Forum: Measuring and Engaging the Business Sector Response to NCDs.*' The primary **objective** of the Forum was to provide an opportunity for senior business executives to discuss mechanisms for implementing and strengthening private sector-led workplace wellness programmes and outward facing community initiatives; and exploring strategies to more effectively interact with government and civil society. The **key outcomes** were:

- Sharing and exchange of knowledge and experience about role of the private sector in the multi-sectoral response to NCDs.
- Presentation of findings of a survey of wellness programmes in private sector and of the role that the sector has played thus far in the wider community in NCD prevention and control.
- Presentation of a Caribbean Private Sector Response to Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs): A Framework For Action (FFA)
- Sharing and discussion around the Statement of Support of the private sector's response to the prevention and treatment of NCDs.

The forum provided a unique opportunity for the organisations to share and discuss workplace wellness activities which ranged from isolated one-off activities to fully developed and integrated programmes. The Massy Group, one of the region's leading diverse conglomerates, presented various aspects of the Massy workplace initiative which included: risk assessment to determine priorities; the formation of workplace wellness committees; provision of Employee Assistance Programmes; in house wellness competitions; and the establishment of partnerships with insurance agencies to reduce premiums. A leading bakery in Barbados shared their journey in voluntary reformulation leading to a 20% reduction in the salt content of their whole wheat loaf of bread. Similarly, efforts to incrementally reduce sugar levels in sweetened beverages including soda, were shared by a leading regional soft drink manufacturer. The challenges of the design and implementation of policies to govern labelling in a setting where the majority of products are imported was also addressed. The role of Chambers of Commerce and Employers Confederations as drivers of workplace wellness was also explored.

Prior to the meeting an electronic, self-administered survey of the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the private sector in their response to the NCD epidemic; was sent to 54 companies selected and invited to attend the meeting. Thirty-five (35) of these companies completed the survey (response rate 65%). Key survey findings were:

- The majority 28 (80%) of companies offered worksite wellness programmes to their employees but only 13 (37%) had ever conducted a health risk appraisal of their workforce.
- Conventional health insurance, onsite disease screening, health education and occupational safety were the most commonly offered programmes and human resource personnel were largely responsible for both the implementation and evaluation of programmes.
- Lack of resources for programmes, need for cost/benefit analysis and lack of dedicated staff were thought to be the most significant barriers to implementation of worksite wellness programmes.
- When asked about the perceived role of different groups in the prevention and control of NCDs among employees and in the community, over 70% of respondents thought that individuals and their families had the largest role to play.

- Caribbean companies had been involved in health advocacy and philanthropy but few had ever participated in public/ private or private/ civil society partnerships for combatting NCDs.

A framework for action, for assisting the public sector in implementing or expanding worksite wellness programmes and expanding community involvement was presented at the meeting and the attendees discussed what would be needed to implement or expand programmes within their companies and shared ideas. A draft Private Sector Statement of Support on NCDs was also discussed with inputs to the statement gathered from the company representatives to be incorporated and finalised in the months following the meeting.