

Healthy Caribbean Coalition
Road Map to the United Nations
High Level Meeting on
chronic diseases, 2011.



HEALTHY CARIBBEAN COALITION

"a civil society alliance for combating chronic diseases"

www.healthycaribbean.org

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Purpose of the Road Map.

The purpose of the road map is to identify a set of objectives and activities leading up to and beyond the United Nations High Level Meeting on chronic diseases, 2011, which the Healthy Caribbean Coalition will pursue in response to the challenges posed by the Chronic Non Communicable diseases (NCDs).

In order to do this the Coalition will:

- Build on comparative advantages of the Caribbean states.
- Involve other sectors beyond the health sector in the response to the chronic diseases.
- Collaborate with local, regional and international partners in its activities.

Introduction and background.

Non-communicable diseases cause approximately 35 million deaths annually worldwide and account for 60 per cent of all deaths globally. Eighty per cent of deaths from heart disease, stroke and diabetes occur in low- and middle- income countries and are estimated to reduce GDP by 1-5 per cent per annum. Chronic non communicable diseases are the leading causes of disability and death in CARICOM.

Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) convened in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on 15 September 2007 for a Regional Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) under the theme, *Stemming the Tide of Non-Communicable Diseases in the Caribbean*.

The outcome became what is known as the **Port of Spain Declaration** and seeks in part to *“reduce the burdens of NCDs by comprehensive and integrated preventive and control strategies at the individual, family, community, national and regional levels and through collaborative programmes, partnerships and policies supported by governments, private sectors, NGOs and our other social, regional and international partners”*.

At a meeting held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago in 2009, Heads of Government of the Commonwealth issued a statement specifically affirming their commitment to addressing the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and to increase the ability of our countries to respond to this emerging health crisis.

On May 13th 2010 the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of a UN resolution tabled by Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of CARICOM member states calling for the organisation of a UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2011. Over 100 countries, including USA, Brazil, Canada, Russia, China, India and the United Kingdom cosponsored the resolution, indicating that NCDs have become a global priority for world leaders and a core development issue on the global agenda.

Recognising the critically important role of civil society and the NGO community in contributing to an effective response to the NCDs, an NCD Alliance comprising of the World Heart Federation, International Diabetes Federation, the International Union Against Cancer and others has been formed, with the Healthy Caribbean Coalition being a member of the Common Interest Group of the Alliance.

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition has determined that it has a role and will contribute to the response to the NCDs at the national level through its member organisations and supporters, at the Regional level as the sole Regional civil society body established to tackle NCDs, and at the international level as a Common Interest Group member of the NCD Alliance.

About the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC).

The HCC was established in 2008, further to the Port of Spain Declaration, as a Caribbean Civil Society alliance for tackling NCDs in the areas of advocacy and coalition building, public education and media campaigns, improved provision of services, and monitoring and evaluation. The HCC is expected to support existing country level civil society organisations and networks/coalitions where they exist, and promote their development where they do not exist, and will encourage and support the

establishment and development of national Commissions for NCDs in all countries of the Caribbean.

Membership of the Coalition is open to all civil society organizations in the Caribbean with an interest in reducing the burden of NCDs.

Organizations with linkages to the tobacco industry are not permitted to join the Healthy Caribbean Coalition.

The establishment of a Caribbean civil society coalition is an important milestone in that it represents the first occasion on which civil society is mobilizing itself at the regional level around the chronic non-communicable disease health agenda. Without the support and involvement of civil society, programmes developed to tackle NCD's are not likely to be successful.

The activities of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition have been guided by outcomes of the Healthy Caribbean 2008 – a wellness revolution conference, held in October, 2008, in Bridgetown Barbados, which include the “ **Caribbean Civil Society Bridgetown Declaration: tackling the Caribbean Epidemic of Chronic Diseases**”, and the “**Caribbean civil society Action Plan for tackling chronic non-communicable disease: 2008-2011**”.

Civil society may be defined as the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions which forms the basis of a functioning democratic society. Civil society has at its disposal a variety of useful tools to mobilize society and drive change, such as advocacy, coalition building, media and public information campaigns, and monitoring and evaluation. These tools will be applied by the Healthy Caribbean Coalition to address the NCD pandemic.

Objectives of the Road Map:

1. Maintain concern for NCDs, their risk factors and determinants, at a high political level in the Caribbean and contribute to similar action at the international level.
2. Collect and disseminate information and examples of evidence – based best practice on prevention and management of NCDs, which would help increase the understanding of both the health and wider social and economic impacts of NCDs in the Caribbean with a view to stimulating positive actions and outcomes.
3. Advocate for greater regional attention to the burden and impact of NCDs including raising awareness of barriers and negative impacts of existing policies on efforts to prevent and control NCDs.
4. Build civil society capacity in CARICOM member states to advocate for the development of policies and strategies to address NCDs.
5. To be in step with other plans, such as those of the NCD Alliance, PAHO/WHO, CARICOM, the Commonwealth Road Map, and any others.
6. Monitor and hold policy makers and those that impact on health and its determinants accountable.

To achieve these objectives the Healthy Caribbean Coalition will:

- Step up Advocacy efforts around the Caribbean.
- Hold governments/policy makers accountable.
- Build capacity among health NGOs in the region and inform and educate other civil society organisations.
- Serve as a repository of information and evidence, and provide a mechanism for information sharing among civil society in the Caribbean and general public education around NCDs, risk factors and determinants.
- Represent the interests and perspectives of civil society around NCDs and act as an organisation for Regional Health Institutions to access civil society.
- Seek to positively influence lifestyle behaviour particularly in the areas of No Tobacco and population salt reduction.

- Continue to develop inter active website with Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other socialmarketing and media networks.
- Seek to partner with the private sector in the region to develop an electronic campaign to educate and inform the people of the region about NCDs, and seek support for the United Nations High Level meeting on NCDs, 2011.
- Further develop and operationalise a communication system to inform and update Heads, and Ministers of Government of the Region about major issues leading up the United Nations High Level Meeting on NCDs, 2011.
- Undertake surveys of country compliance with FCTC ratification in association with the Caribbean Tobacco Control Programme.
- Conduct surveys of salt composition in foods throughout the region with sharing of information widely and use of educational information such as videos for distribution, and display on local television stations, and distribution of educational and recipe booklets.

Key challenges:

- Informing and educating civil society in the Region about the power of civil society to bring about change in response to NCDs.
- Gaining consensus on the priority actions for the UN High level Meeting.
- Convincing civil society and other stakeholders in the region that the Healthy Caribbean Coalition represents a potentially important new Caribbean instrument for contributing to meaningful change in the region.
- Limited human and financial resources of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition in order to carry out current objectives.
- Sourcing of funds to allow for the further development of the Coalition and to increase awareness about the threats of NCDs.



Email: advocacy@healthy-caribbean.org