Advocacy for Healthy School Environments: Insights from Jamaica

GLOBAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

Nothing sweeter than a healthy lifestyle

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Heart Foundation of Jamaica
BACKGROUND HFJ

• Formed, as a non-governmental, non-profit organization (NGO), in 1971 by the Lions Club of Kingston.

• Member of the InterAmerican Heart Foundation, the Framework Convention Alliance, the Healthy Caribbean Coalition and the World Heart Federation
BACKGROUND HFJ

Vision
Jamaicans to have a longer and better quality of life through the prevention and control of cardiovascular disease.

Mission
Promote a healthy lifestyle leading to the prevention of cardiovascular disease
Promoting Heart Health in Jamaica through:
  • Screening
  • Advanced Cardiac Services
  • Health Education and Training
  • Health Promotion and Advocacy
PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

- Medical Services
- Pharmacy
- Biomedical Laboratory
- Emergency Cardiac Care programme
  - National Resuscitation Council of Jamaica
  - American Heart Association
- Tobacco Control
  - Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control
- Schools Health Education Programme
- Obesity Prevention
  - HCC/HFJ Childhood Obesity Prevention Project
  - Global Health Advocacy Project
GLOBAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

• Building public awareness and promoting policy change amongst decision makers in regards to the role of proper nutrition in enhancing the development of a healthy and productive country in keeping with Jamaica’s Vision 2030 goal of “building a healthy and stable population”.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Raise public awareness of the health impact of sugar consumption and build public support for sugar sweetened tax (SSB) via public education campaigns

2. Build support of policymakers and other key stakeholders in support of sugar sweetened tax and other policy priorities

3. Form a Coalition of key organizations...

4. Counter industry opposition...

5. Develop, implement timely mass media campaign(s)
One in two (54%) of Jamaicans aged 15 and over are overweight/obese. ¹

1 in 3 Jamaicans aged 15 and older has hypertension and 1 in 8 has diabetes. ²

Rates of obesity among children aged 13-15 has increased by almost 70% in the past 7 years

More than two thirds of students (13-17) drink carbonated soft drinks one or more times per day. ³

Source:
1 & 2 Jamaica Health & Lifestyle Survey III
3 National Council on Drug Abuse. 2017. Global School-based Student Health Survey
POLICY PRIORITIES

1. Sugary drinks tax
2. Front of package labelling
3. Marketing of sugary drinks to children
4. Support for healthy food in schools
PARTNERING ACTIVITIES

• Ministry of Health Jamaica Moves

• Advocacy- other NGOs, Faith based, Civil Society, Schools, government

• Caribbean Institute of Health Research (CAIHR)

• National Food Industry Task Force (MOH)

  1. Product reformulation
  2. Food marketing
  3. Food labeling
  4. Communication & advocacy
Ministry of Health Jamaica Moves

- Co-branding

- Settings approach
  - Jamaica Moves in Schools
    - 100 pilot schools
    - Age appropriate health screening
    - Physical activity
    - Healthy nutrition

- Jamaica Moves in Communities and Workplaces
ADVOCACY

- Sensitization meetings with civic groups, adolescent groups, faith based organizations, ministries, departments and agencies and NGOs - 89

- Sensitization meetings with MPs, ministries, departments and agencies – 3
- National Food Industry Task Force meetings – 6
- Major launch meetings – 5
- Sensitization meetings with NGOs/FBOs, Children’s NGOs, Consumer groups – 8
- Community group & other health fairs, OBs and other events – 19
- Symposiums & conferences – 12
- Journalism Training – 2 sessions
- MOH meetings and Jamaica Moves events – 16
- Schools, colleges and adolescent groups – 18
ADVOCACY

• Media and social media coverage

• Dissemination of key fact sheets, documents and display at meetings
Key messages

Our children have a right to be healthy

Read your labels
How much sugar?
Healthy alternatives – Drink Water Instead

Self efficacy
Moderation/portion sizes
Policy for sustainable gains
# MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGN
GOALS/OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 – Stage Setting</th>
<th>Phase 2 – Amplifying the Message</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Communicate how harmful sugary drinks can be.</td>
<td>1. Increase awareness of the harms of sugary drinks.</td>
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<td>2. Illustrate how many teaspoons of sugar is present in common drinks.</td>
<td>2. Build self efficacy to change consumption of sugary drinks.</td>
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<td>3. Emphasize that water is a healthier option.</td>
<td>3. Promote water consumption and physical activity.</td>
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MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGN
Phase 1 – Journey/Rosie
November 2017

Sweet drinks for the day equal more than 50 teaspoons of sugar

ARE YOU DRINKING YOURSELF SICK?
You are probably having sweet drinks that equal more than 50 teaspoons of sugar a day.
This may bring on obesity which could lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease or even some cancers.

Drink water instead!

ARE YOU DRINKING YOURSELF SICK?
You are probably having sweet drinks that equal more than 50 teaspoons of sugar a day.
This may bring on obesity which could lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease or even some cancers.

Drink water instead!
Phase 2 – Dad Knows Best
February 2018

YOUR CHILDREN COULD BE DRINKING THEMSELVES SICK.
Just because they’re alive, doesn’t mean sugary drinks aren’t damaging their health.
Sugary drinks are a big reason for the obesity crisis in Jamaica.

Drinking too many sugary drinks can bring on type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and tooth decay.
Drink water instead!
Phase 3 campaign
“Cut out those sugary drinks”

But week after week, year after year, the effects of all that sugar add up.

Sugar drinks can destroy your children’s teeth by causing painful tooth decay.
And weak bones, an obesity which could lead to Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and even cancer.

Sugar drinks are high in empty calories and have no or low nutritional value.

Are your children drinking themselves sick?
Cut out those sugary drinks at home and at school.
Drink Water instead!
Health NGO support to date....

1. Association of Anaesthetists in Jamaica, AAJ
2. Association of Consultant Physicians of Jamaica, ACPJ
3. Association of General Practitioners of Jamaica, AGPJ
4. Association of West Indian Gastroenterologists, AWIG
5. Caribbean Cardiac Society, CCS
6. Caribbean College of Family Physicians – Jamaica Chapter, CCFP
7. Caribbean Institute for Strategic Planning and Research in Oral Health, CISPROH
8. Healthy Caribbean Coalition, HCC
9. Heart Foundation of Jamaica, HFJ
10. Jamaica Association for Health Education and Promotion, JAHEP
11. Jamaica Association of Professionals in Nutrition and Dietetics, JAPINAD
12. Jamaica Association of Public Dental Surgeons, JAPDENS
13. Jamaica Cancer Society, JCS
14. Jamaica Dental Association, JDA
15. Jamaica Emergency Medicine Association, JEMA
16. Medical Association of Jamaica, MAJ
17. Nurses Association of Jamaica, NAJ
18. Paediatric Association of Jamaica, PAJ
Support for restriction of sugary drinks in Jamaican schools
An open letter to the Government of Jamaica

As leading organizations committed to public health in Jamaica, we strongly support the recent decision by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information to restrict sugary drinks in schools and health facilities in January 2020. This is an important measure to fight the growing obesity rates in Jamaica.

We congratulate the Government of Jamaica for taking the lead in addressing obesity and promoting healthy eating and drinking habits among its citizens. This will contribute to the better development and balanced of our children based on nutritional guidelines, limiting consumption and sales of high sugar products in schools and public places.

We must also encourage the companies that have taken measures to reformulate their products to reduce sugar content.

The evidence is clear that excess sugar intake causes increased risk of diabetes, liver and kidney damage, heart disease and nutrition-related cancers. We need to turn the tide on the growing obesity epidemic in Jamaica, especially among children.

The obesity epidemic among Jamaican children

The obesity epidemic among Jamaican children has worsened over the years. The 2018 National Health Survey reported that 15% of children aged 5-19 years were overweight and 6% were obese. The prevalence of obesity among children in Jamaica is higher than in many other countries in the region.

At the same time, over two-thirds of Jamaican teenagers (ages 15-17 years) consume one or more commercially soft drinks per day. This is especially concerning as excess sugar intake is primarily harmful in liquid form. Studies show that one sugary drink a day increases the likelihood of being overweight by 50% for children.

Obesity-related non-communicable diseases are a top health concern for Jamaicans.

A recent survey-based on that Jamaica are very concerned about the health effects of sugar drinks on their children and their own health. Families and communities have reason to be concerned and demand better options for their children.

It is vital to protect our children’s health and to create healthy school environments.

In places where children spend most of their day, such as schools, healthy environments for children’s minds and bodies are necessary. Easy access to unhealthy foods and sugary drinks, along with aggressive marketing of these products, leads to higher consumption of unhealthy foods.

Schools that have restricted the sale of highly processed food and sugary drinks have improved food environments and healthier students.

This has been shown to be effective in several countries and cities around the world. In the Caribbean, both Trinidad & Tobago and Bermuda have introduced legal changes to restrict sugary drinks in schools with the aim of reducing obesity rates.

Every child has a right to be healthy. As a country, we must work to ensure that children have nutritious foods and information to keep them healthy.

Tackling obesity and related diseases requires a comprehensive set of measures, including policy actions, limiting sugary drinks from school settings and ensuring access to healthy foods in schools with healthier food environments. Once again, we thank the government of Jamaica for putting our children first. They are the future of this country and their health is our top priority.

We stand committed to support the government in the development and implementation of the forthcoming policies.

CONCERN ABOUT THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC IN JAMAICA.

An open letter to the Government of Jamaica.

We, the undersigned organizations dedicated to public health, raise our voices to fight the growing obesity epidemic in Jamaica.

As the next step towards protecting the health of Jamaicans, we strongly encourage the Government of Jamaica to consider introducing a tax on sugary drinks as a measure to reduce the unnecessary burden of healthcare and lifestyle costs associated with obesity and related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and their deadly toll on the Jamaican population.

Excess sugar consumption, particularly in liquid form, is a major cause of obesity and its related diseases. These findings have led global health experts like the World Health Organization (WHO) to recommend a sugary drinks tax of at least 20 percent. Such a tax would increase public awareness of the health harms of sugary drinks and incentivize the beverage industry to reformulate their products and market healthier beverages.
JAMAICANS SUPPORT A TAX ON SUGARY DRINKS

A new public opinion survey commissioned by the Heart Foundation of Jamaica, found that Jamaicans are concerned about chronic disease, particularly diabetes and childhood obesity.

Approximately two thirds (64%) support a tax on sugary drinks, making it easier for parents to make healthy choices.

Nine in ten Jamaicans believe that the Government should act quickly to solve the problem of obesity. It’s time to act now.

Liquid Sugar Consumption: Major Cause of Disease and Death

Drinking just one sugary drink a day increases the likelihood of being overweight by 52% for adults and 27% for children.

Consumption of sugary drinks

51% of children (of children under 18) see a sugary drink multiple times a day, consume 3-9 per week or more at least once a day.

Jamaicans very concerned about the health effects of sugary drinks

80% of Jamaican parents (of children under 18) are concerned about the effects of sugary drinks on their children’s health.

YOUR CHILDREN COULD BE DRINKING THEMSELVES SICK.

Drink water instead!
Materials produced

Fighting Childhood Obesity with Healthy School Food Environments

- The total number of childhood obesity
  1. Globally, obesity and overweight increased by 12% between the ages of 5 and 15. In 10 years, children aged 5 to 15 in 2019, deaths due to obesity are projected to reach up to 270 million.
  2. This obesity rate among adolescents aged 10-19 percent increased by 43% from the period 2010-2017 with the rate in boys almost doubling (96% increase) and girls in girls by 47%.

- Childhood obesity and sugary drink consumption
  1. Sugars from nonalcoholic beverages (SND) are a significant contributor to the global rate of obesity and diabetes. SND is a leading risk factor for many non-communicable diseases (NCDs) especially obesity, type II diabetes, heart diseases and mortality.
  2. More than 80% of Jamaican children 1-14 years consume at least one or two drinks per day. Drinking just one sugary drink a day increases the likelihood of being overweight by 15% for children.

- Obesity in children is often linked to suboptimal childhood development and health outcomes, which may lead to increased obesity rates, diabetes, and other chronic diseases in adulthood.

- Obesity and unhealthy school environments
  1. Schools are meant to provide a healthy environment for children's minds and bodies. Children spend many hours at school and a large portion of their meals there. Schools are also an important source of food and meals, providing fruit, vegetables, and other healthy foods in a safe and nutritious environment.
  2. Providing and promoting healthy foods within and around schools contributes to better nutrition and health outcomes.

- Unhealthy school food environments present children from making good eating decisions and learning healthy food habits. Take actions to eradicate unhealthy foods and drinks near schools, along with aggressive marketing of these foods, can lead to students consuming more of these unhealthy foods.

- Bluetooth for a Healthy School Food Environment

- Access to healthy alternatives: Nutritious food should be made available at school to keep children's diets interesting and messages about healthy eating. Providing access to safe and fresh drinking water reduces consumption of sugary drinks while increasing consumption of water. A study of over 1,000 students in New York City showed that the installation of "water fountains" resulted in a 24% increase in students' consumption of water, leading to a decrease in sugary drinks.

- New policies and regulations are needed to address childhood obesity and promote healthy eating in schools. These policies should include guidelines for the preparation and serving of nutritious meals and snacks, as well as the prohibition of the sale of sugary drinks and other unhealthy foods during school hours.

- The importance of community involvement and collaboration with schools, parents, and other stakeholders in promoting healthy eating habits among children cannot be overstated. By working together, we can create a sustainable and effective approach to addressing childhood obesity and promoting health and well-being for future generations.
Dear Prime Minister

Video

Children, like me, are often given too many sugary drinks.
World Obesity Day Newspaper wrap (Gleaner & Observer)
SCHOOLS HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME
“Healthy Heart Clubs”

9 SCHOOLS

• Making Health Food Choices
• Physical Activity Day
• Water Day/Fruit Day
• Poems and activity sheets
Regional collaboration

• HCC CALL TO ACTION - Childhood obesity petition
• COP/CTA document for UNHLM3
• Information sharing
• Children’s Letter to Prime Minister
• Social media sharing
• News roundup
• Capacity Building
• Research (CAIHR)
• HCC CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION PROJECT
The data showed that there was a marked decrease in consumption of SSBs and considerable increase in the consumption of water at the schools.
GENERAL SUCCESS FACTORS

• Multi-stakeholder involvement (government, NGO’s, National Food Industry Task Force, Faith based organizations)

• Cobranding with MOH and Jamaica Moves
• Hiring competent staff

• Mapping of NGO partners since the beginning of the project

• Sponsorship of targeted activities to build partnerships

• Ongoing social media and media coverage- almost 4 million interactions during the life of the project

• Targeted mass media campaign
ACHIEVEMENTS

• Overwhelming public support; obesity is gaining traction as a public health threat

• Numerous presentations and capacity building events island wide (80 +) at public entities, FBOs, Civic Groups, schools, adolescent groups

• Technical assistance offered to the MOH & MOE. Worked with the MOH – restrictions of SSBs in schools in Jan. 2019, school nutrition policy

• Ministers of Health, other key players in support of SSB tax
• Continued support for mandatory front of package nutrition labelling through the National Food Industry Task Force
• Worked with the MOH to support and advocate plans to restrict certain SSBs in schools via School Nutrition Policy in Jan. 2019

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<tr>
<th>Prohibited</th>
<th>Permitted</th>
<th>Implementation schedule (maximum)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>× Sugar-sweetened beverages-</td>
<td>✓ Plain water</td>
<td>Maximum 6g/100ml - Jan. 1, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.g. carbonated beverages (such as regular soda), fruit drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, sweetened waters, and coffee and tea beverages that are above the maximum sugar concentration as set out in the implementation</td>
<td>✓ Unsweetened flavoured and infused water</td>
<td>Maximum 5g/100ml - Jan. 1, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Unsweetened juices</td>
<td>Maximum 4g/100ml - Jan. 1, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Unsweetened coconut water</td>
<td>Maximum 2.5g/100ml - Jan. 1, 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Unsweetened milk or milk products</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Unsweetened milk substitutes and milk substitute products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Sweetened beverages (including flavoured and infused water) at or below the maximum sugar concentration as set out in the implementation schedule</td>
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**POST-CAMPAIGN SURVEY**

**OVERVIEW**

- **7 out of 10** Jamaicans attributed negative health impact to sugary drinks consumption.
- **Approximately 8 out of 10** respondents are concerned about the effects of sugary drinks on their children’s health.
- **Children had a higher access to sugary drinks at school as compared to homes or other places outside the home. Over half of respondents agreed that children had most of these drinks at school.**
SURVEY RESULTS (POST-CAMPAIGN)

- **71%**
  Jamaicans support the imposition of a tax on sugary drinks as compared to
  - **64%** in the pre-campaign period. This figure moves to
  - **81%** if it included spending some of the revenue on programmes to reduce obesity, especially among children

- **83%**
  of respondents strongly support policies on the provision of healthy food and beverages in schools.

- **78%**
  Over three quarters of respondents support prohibiting the sale of unhealthy food and drinks in school.
CHALLENGES

• Food industry push back
  • Aggressive pushback
  • Erroneous information shared
  • Umbrella groups and individuals

• Sued by Wisynco for placing in image of flavored water with the words ‘CranWata’ on HFJ’s Instagram page and requested an injunction against the image being posted
CHALLENGES

• Recent statement by Prof Errol Morrison’s comments re sugary drinks, obesity and diabetes - Prime Time News - October 3rd; BATV Business News- Oct 3rd ; Beyond the Headlines, RJR News – Oct 5th; Nationwide – Oct 5th
Lessons learnt

- Concern for children impacted the support for the campaign

- Evidence base/research is critical to process

- The campaign has made remarkable traction in the public space. Public education (especially grass roots) is a key step in the overall goal of policy change for obesity prevention.

- Co-branding and endorsement of the Ministry of Health-Jamaica at all levels and this gave us very good support and coverage
Lessons learnt

• Support from local regional and international partners is critical- (e.g. Re legal challenge. Letters of support written by HCC, NCD Alliance, HLAC WHF, to the PM and Minister of Health. Letters printed in press)

• Collaborative efforts of regional NGOs in the COP fight is crucial- best practices can drive policy decisions

• Engaging the media and partnerships with other NGOs and key stakeholders is critical to advancing any national public health initiative
Next steps

• Support policies to improve the food environment for children
  • SSB tax
  • SSB restriction in schools January 2019
  • National school nutrition policy
  • Restrictions on marketing unhealthy drink and food to children

• Support FOP labeling
• Support Jamaica Moves in Schools
• Support COP efforts with regional partners and HCC
THANK YOU

#AreYouDrinkingYourselfSick
#LessSugarMoreLife