

“The Future Talks”

COVID-19 and NCDs in the Caribbean: The Legacy - Policy Environment



Kimberley Benjamin
Law Student | Hugh Wooding Law School
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The role of a strong regulatory environment to prevent and manage NCDs

A strong regulatory environment includes a suite of legal, regulatory and other measures which are:

- ✓ Evidence-based
- ✓ Multi-sectoral
- ✓ Cost-effective
- ✓ Rights-based
- ✓ Targeted to population as a whole

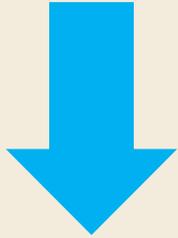
Modifiable shared NCD-risk factors and environmental-risk factors



- ✓ **Fiscal measures**, e.g. increasing excise taxes on **tobacco**, **alcoholic beverages**, **unhealthy foods**, subsidies on healthy foods
- ✓ **Improving labelling and Labelling controls** e.g. use of **FOPL**, health warnings on **tobacco** and **alcohol** products
- ✓ **Bans/Restrictions on the sale and marketing of tobacco, unhealthy foods and beverages** (especially to children and in schools)
- ✓ **Bans on trans fat**
- ✓ **Measures to reduce salt in foods** e.g. disclosure requirements, promoting product reformulations
- ✓ **Bans/Restrictions on tobacco and alcohol advertising, promotion and sponsorship**
- ✓ **Measures which address the built environment**

Example: The Importance of a Strong Regulatory Environment

- In 2016, Chile implemented the **Law of Food Labelling and Advertising (Law No. 20,606)** or the “**Super 8 Law**” which addresses **front of pack labelling (“FOPL”)**, **banning the sale of unhealthy foods at or in the vicinity of schools and restricting advertising aimed at children.**



Average per capital daily volume of high-in beverage purchases **declined by 27 mL/capita/day.**

- “**This observed decrease is greater than purchase changes that have been observed following implementation of single, standalone policies** in Latin America, such as a sugar-sweetened-beverage tax.” (Lindsey Smith Taillie et al, 2020).



The Rights of the Child and the Role of Government in relation to those rights

Rights of the Child

- ❑ **Convention on the Rights of the Child** ("CRC")
- ❑ **CRC Article 24:** "the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health..."

Role of Governments

- ❑ **15 CARICOM Member States** and **4 Associate Members** have ratified the CRC
- ❑ **General Comment No. 15 (2003)** from the Committee on the Rights of the Child



The Role of Government in relation to children's rights

General Comment No. 15

47. States should also **address obesity in children**, as it is associated with hypertension, early markers of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, psychological effects, a higher likelihood of adult obesity, and premature death. **Children's exposure to "fast foods" that are high in fat, sugar or salt, energy-dense and micronutrient-poor, and drinks containing high levels of caffeine or other potentially harmful substances should be limited.** The marketing of these substances – especially when such marketing is focused on children – should be regulated and their availability in schools and other places controlled.

RESPECT — **PROTECT** — **FULFIL**



Implementation of a comprehensive policy package

The Caribbean today

- ❑ **Bans/restrictions on the sale of SSBs in schools** exist in Bermuda (2006), Trinidad and Tobago (2017), The Bahamas (2019), Jamaica (2019) whilst Grenada, Guyana and Belize have announced similar intentions.
- ❑ **Taxes on SSBs in 3 of 20 CARICOM States** imposed in Barbados (10%), Bermuda (75%) and Dominica (10%). Antigua and Barbuda (2019) and St. Kitts and Nevis (2019) expressed an intention to tax SSBs.
- ❑ **Other secondary policies** present in some CARICOM states.

Some limitations to a comprehensive policy package

- ❑ Restrictions on **marketing** of SSBs (and **unhealthy foods**) are not included;
- ❑ **Bans/restrictions on unhealthy foods** have not been included in the majority of policies (only The Bahamas);
- ❑ **Limited regulation**, if any, of the **environment in the vicinity of the school**;
- ❑ **SSBs taxes still not high enough (20%) in all instances and were not coupled with other interventions**, such as FOPL or bans on the sale/marketing of SSBs in schools.

Risks & Opportunities

Risks

- ❑ **Effect on States' trade and investment obligations**, e.g. violations of the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreements (**Art. 2.2**).
- ❑ **Conflict of interest**.
- ❑ **COVID-19 economic challenges**.

Opportunities

- ❑ Greater opportunity of reaching/coming close to various global targets, i.e. 25 by 25; SDG 3;
- ❑ Engagement with several stakeholders, including children, parents, the media, academic researchers, CSOs, NGOs and private sector, as appropriate.

The Importance of the “Built” Environment



The **environmental risks** to health include **pollution, land use patterns, work environment, climate change, inter alia.**

The “built” environment impacts:

- ❑ **physical activity:** the layout and design of roads, urban design and the presence of suitable parks or other spaces can promote or hinder physical activity;
- ❑ **access to healthy foods,** in terms of the location and type of foods;
- ❑ **mental health;** and
- ❑ **climate change.**

A **comprehensive NCD prevention and management policy package** should therefore also address access to safe outdoor spaces like parks for exercise, reduce exposure to environmental hazards and pollution.

Improving the “built” environment is essential to achieving SDG 3 (health) and is also linked to SDG 7 (energy), SDG 11 (sustainable cities) and SDG 12 (consumption and production).

“Build Back” Better Recommendations

- ❑ **Youth:** greater and **more meaningful involvement of youth, including PLWNCDs at the national level** in decision-making processes and policy formulation during and post-COVID-19.
- ❑ **Government:** implement a **comprehensive policy which addresses both COVID-19 and NCDs; health should be included in all policies going forward together with greater multi-sectoral collaboration** (trade, tourism, agriculture, environment, education, etc.); **invest in building legal capacity to revise and implement health laws and health-related laws; incentivise the creation of more home and school gardens;**
- ❑ **CSOs:** **leverage the narratives of PLWNCDs** during COVID-19 to **advocate for NCDs to be included as part of the COVID-19 response** and for the implementation of health-in-all policies going forward;
- ❑ **Academia:** regional tertiary educations, such as the University of the West Indies should **include Health Law within the curriculum.**

