



ACCELERATING THE REMOVAL OF ULTRA- PROCESSED PRODUCTS FROM CARIBBEAN SCHOOLS

THE FOOD IN OUR SCHOOLS MATTERS

July 4-5, 2023

Courtyard Marriott Hotel | Bridgetown, Barbados

CONCEPT NOTE & PROGRAMME

PARTNERS: Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) | Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA)

SUPPORTERS: CIBC First Caribbean COMTRUST | Sagikor Life Inc.

Background

This meeting: *Accelerating the removal of ultra-processed products from Caribbean schools* represents a reconvening of face-to-face meetings of Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) member organisations and partners. The aim of the meeting is to support harmonised regional acceleration of robust evidence-informed policies which regulate the availability and marketing of ultra-processed products in school settings, by bringing together diverse stakeholders, including those from government, civil society and academia. This meeting precedes a second meeting hosted by the HCC immediately following on July 6-7, 2023. The second meeting: *Mobilising for 2025 – A Caribbean Civil Society NCD Forum* aims to bring together HCC member civil society organisations (CSOs) and key stakeholders to discuss non-communicable disease (NCD) (including mental, neurological and substance use disorders – MNSDs)¹ prevention and control priorities.

The Caribbean has some of the highest adult obesity rates in the world and an emerging crisis of overweight and obesity is facing up to 1 in 3 children in the region². Childhood overweight and obesity not only are associated with serious complications in childhood and adolescence, but they also track into adulthood, placing individuals at higher risk for NCDs. Like many other small developing states and low- and middle-income countries, the Caribbean region has experienced a nutritional transition driven by globalisation and trade liberalisation, resulting in a culture of diets characterized by excess consumption of ultra-processed foods high in fat, salt and sugar fueling skyrocketing rates of obesity and diet-related NCDs. Children from this region consume more sugar-sweetened beverages than anywhere in the world and more than triple the global average. Dramatic increases in overweight and obesity in recent decades has been driven by overconsumption of ultra-processed foods high in sugars, fats and salt. In response, there is an increasing momentum across the region towards the implementation of policies which restrict or altogether ban the availability of unhealthy foods and beverages in schools.

Regulating the availability and marketing of foods in school settings is one of a package of evidence-informed policy recommendations (including taxation of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) and front-of-package nutrition warning labelling) promoted by PAHO/WHO and CARPHA (6 Point policy package, 6PPP) to tackle obesogenic environments. The HCC [Civil Society Action Plan 2017-2021: Preventing Childhood Obesity in the Caribbean](#) (CSAP) further endorses these global and regional recommendations. CARICOM Member States at the highest levels have also acknowledged the scale and severity of the problem and the need for an urgent response. In 2016 at the 37th Regular Meeting of CARICOM Heads of State and Government, a pledge was made *“to address issues such as banning advertisement of potentially harmful foods which specifically target children”*. One year later at the 38th CARICOM Summit, in the 10-year anniversary of the Port of Spain Declaration, Heads of State and Government *“noted with concern that obesity in children represented the greatest threat to the health of future generations with the level of overweight and obesity being more than 30% in both primary and secondary school populations in many Member States...and urged the promotion of physical exercise in school-age children”*. In 2018, at the 39th Summit, CARICOM Heads of State and Government endorsed a number of priorities for the 3rd UN High Level Meeting on NCDs including: *“implementing policies geared to preventing childhood obesity, including health-promoting school environments and front-of-package (FOP) labelling”*. The [2023 Bridgetown Declaration on NCDs and Mental Health](#) noted that Ministers of Health *“Remain deeply concerned that SIDS show the highest rates of childhood and adult obesity worldwide and that the challenge in ensuring healthy diets and effectively responding to NCDs in SIDS is significantly constrained by high dependence on imported*

¹ “NCDs” throughout this document includes MNSDs (mental, neurological and substance use disorders).

² HCC Civil Society Action Plan 2017-2021: Preventing Childhood Obesity in the Caribbean. <https://www.healthycaribbean.org/civil-society-action-plan/>.

food, medicine and diagnostic devices, commercial influence and trade-related challenges” and have committed to a number of regulatory measures, including school food policies.

Several Caribbean countries have taken steps to ban or restrict unhealthy foods and beverages in school settings, including Bermuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and Barbados. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced school closures and shifted priorities, placing these types of measures on hold. In 2022, as normality returned and face-to-face schooling resumed, countries began to refocus their attention on regulating the school food environments. Barbados recently launched its School Nutrition Policy, which bans all SSBs and sweetened beverages (non-caloric sweeteners) in schools, and Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries have signalled their interest in proceeding with similar restrictions. Healthy school environments are critical to the reduction in consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages amongst children and adolescents. There are important lessons to be learned from Bermuda, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and other Caribbean countries which have attempted to introduce these types of measures or are currently planning or contemplating strong school food policies.

There are also important wider environmental considerations, including the simultaneous implementation of supportive food policies such as [front-of-package warning labelling \(FOPWL\)](#), which serves as a foundational policy, in that it identifies those foods which should be subject to regulation due to excess or high levels of sugars, fats and sodium (as defined by the [PAHO Nutrient Profile Model](#)). Finally, other key actors, including civil society and young people, working closely with Ministries of Education and Health, have played a central role in supporting the introduction, implementation, enforcement and monitoring of healthy school food policies which aim to remove ultra-processed products from school settings. This meeting seeks to explore the factors which have contributed to the successes and challenges of these measures, with a view to supporting accelerated and harmonized CARICOM-wide implementation.

Meeting Goals, Objectives & Expected Outcomes

Goal

To support harmonised regional acceleration of robust evidence-informed policies which remove ultra-processed products from Caribbean school settings, by bringing together diverse stakeholders including those from government, civil society and academia.

Objectives

1. To share and document regional experiences and lessons learned in the implementation of regulations banning or restricting the availability and marketing of ultra-processed products (including SSBs - sugar sweetened beverages) in school settings.
2. To discuss strategies to accelerate CARICOM-wide removal of ultra-processed products from schools through the implementation of regulations banning or restricting the availability and marketing of these unhealthy products in school settings.
3. To develop a regional roadmap that supports the accelerated CARICOM-wide removal of ultra-processed products from schools through the implementation of regulations banning or restricting the availability and marketing of these unhealthy products in school settings as part of a wider package of healthy food policies.

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased awareness, understanding and documentation of regional experiences and lessons learned in the implementation of regulations banning or restricting the availability and marketing of ultra-processed products (including SSBs - sugar sweetened beverages) in school settings.
2. Consensus on strategies to accelerate CARICOM-wide removal of ultra-processed products from schools through the implementation of regulations banning or restricting the availability and marketing of these unhealthy products in school settings.
3. Draft regional roadmap to support the accelerated CARICOM-wide removal of ultra-processed products from schools through the implementation of regulations banning or restricting the availability and marketing of these unhealthy products in school settings as part of a wider package of healthy food policies.

Participants & Beneficiaries

Representatives of Ministries of Health and or Education and civil society organisations in countries which have implemented or are planning to implement regulations banning or restricting the availability and marketing of ultra-processed products in school settings. Other key stakeholders include representatives of academia, young people, people with lived experience of NCDs, and regional organisations including PAHO and CARHPA.

Sponsors

This meeting is supported through funding from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA).

Supporters

The work of the HCC would not be possible without the ongoing support from Sagikor Life Inc. and COMTRUST (CIBC First Caribbean).

The Programme

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MEETING PROGRAMME – DAY 1

JULY 4-5, 2023 | COURTYARD MARRIOTT, BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS (*times in AST*)

8.30 - 9.00		REGISTRATION
9.00 – 10.50	OPENING	MODERATOR: Mrs. Maisha Hutton <i>Executive Director, HCC</i>
9.00 – 9.10	Welcome, objectives and expected outcomes <i>(10 min)</i>	Sir Trevor Hassell <i>President, HCC</i>
9.10 – 9.30	Official Opening Welcome Remarks <i>(20 min)</i>	Dr. Ramona Archer-Bradshaw <i>Chief Education Officer</i> <i>Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, Barbados</i> Dr. Gloria Giraldo <i>Advisor, NCDs and Mental Health</i> <i>Pan American Health Organization, Barbados</i>
9.30 – 9.50	School Food Environments across the Caribbean <i>(Presentation - 20 min)</i> Presentation Objective: To provide a snapshot of current school food environment across the Caribbean and national policy responses.	Dr. Suzanne Soares Wynter <i>Clinical Nutritionist, Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR)</i> <i>*virtual presentation</i>
9.50 – 10.05	School food policies - a child rights and equity issue <i>(Chat/ Discussion - 15 min)</i> Chat/Discussion Objective: To discuss and reinforce the human/child rights and equity dimensions of school food policies.	Mrs. Nicole Foster <i>HCC Policy Advisor; Attorney-at-law, Lecturer and Head of the Law and Health Research Unit at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus.</i> Mr. Pierre Cooke <i>HCC Youth Technical Advisor</i>

10.05 – 10.20	<p>FOPWL – A foundational and enabling policy for comprehensive food policy packages including School Nutrition Policies</p> <p><i>(Presentation - 15 min)</i></p> <p>Presentation Objective: To build an understanding of FOPWL as a foundational and enabling policy among public sector and civil society actors promoting the removal of ultra-processed products from Caribbean schools.</p>	<p>Dr. Fabio da Silva Gomes <i>Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisor, Pan American Health Organization</i> *virtual presentation</p>
10.20 – 10.50	Discussion and Q&A (30 min)	Moderator
10.50 - 11.20	ICEBREAKER & HEALTH/ PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BREAK	
11.20 – 1.00	<p>HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD POLICIES - EXPERIENCES FROM ACROSS THE REGION</p> <p><i>Session Objective: To share country experiences in the removal of ultra-processed products from school settings in Bermuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados.</i></p>	<p>MODERATOR: Ms. Charity Dublin, <i>Vice President Antigua and Barbuda Diabetes Association; Nutritionist, Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Health and the Environment; Healthy Caribbean Youth Member</i></p>
11.20 – 11.35	<p>The leader of the pack: 2006 Bermuda Healthy Schools Vending Machine and Cafeteria Policy</p> <p><i>(Presentation 15 min)</i></p>	<p>Ms. Marie Beach <i>Healthy Schools Coordinator, Department of Health, Bermuda</i></p>
11.35 – 11.50	<p>Experiences of Removing SSBs from Schools in Trinidad and Tobago</p> <p><i>(Presentation 15 min)</i></p>	<p>Ms. Michelle Ash <i>Chief Nutritionist & Head of Department Nutrition & Metabolism Division Ministry of Health Special Services & Programmes, Trinidad and Tobago</i> *virtual presentation</p>
11.50 – 12.05	<p>From the Interim Beverage Guidelines to the National School Nutrition Policy – Lessons from Jamaica</p> <p><i>(Presentation 15 min)</i></p>	<p>Ms. Deonne Caines <i>Programme Development Officer, Nutrition Unit, Ministry of Health and Wellness, Jamaica</i></p>
12.05 – 12.20	<p>Early Experiences Implementing the Barbados School Nutrition Policy – Banning SSBs in schools</p> <p><i>(Presentation 15 min)</i></p>	<p>Ms. Hedda Phillips-Boyce <i>Education Officer Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, Barbados</i></p>
12.20 – 1.00	Panel Discussion and Q&A (40 min)	Moderator

		<p>Moderator to invite Interventions from the Floor: Updates on National School Nutrition Policies</p> <p>Ms. Lisa Hunt-Mitchell Chief Nutritionist, Ministry of Health Saint Lucia</p> <p>Ms. Alicia Ferdinand Community Dietician, Ministry of Health Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</p> <p>Ms. Lydia Brown Executive Secretary Grenada Food and Nutrition Council</p>
1.00 – 2.00	LUNCH & GROUP PHOTO	
2.00 – 3.30	<p>THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SUPPORTING HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD POLICIES</p> <p><i>Session Objective: To share civil society experiences in supporting and advocating for the removal of ultra-processed products from Caribbean schools.</i></p>	<p>MODERATOR:</p> <p>Dr. Gloria Giraldo Advisor, NCDs and Mental Health Pan American Health Organization, Barbados</p>
2.00 – 2.15	<p>The Heart Foundation of Jamaica (15 min)</p>	<p>Ms. Barbara McGaw Project Manager, Global Health Advocacy Project, Heart Foundation of Jamaica</p> <p>Ms. Rosanna Pike Health Education Officer, Global Health Advocacy Project, Heart Foundation of Jamaica</p>
2.15 – 2.30	<p>The Power of Youth Voices: Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network (15 min)</p>	<p>Shannique Bowden Executive Director, Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network</p>
2.30 – 2.45	<p>Hand in Hand - from Vendors to Alternative Foods to Apps - An Experience from the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition in support of the Barbados School Nutrition Policy (15 min)</p>	<p>Ms. Francine Charles Programme Manager, Childhood Obesity Prevention Programme, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados</p>
2.45 – 3.00	<p>Building public support: Act on Facts - The Food in our Schools Matters Regional Campaign (15 min)</p>	<p>Ms. Sheena Warner-Edwards HCC Communications Officer</p>

3.00 – 3.30	Panel Discussion and Q&A (30 min)	Moderator
3.30 – 3.45	HEALTH/ PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BREAK	
3.45 – 4.15	<p>Commercial Determinants of Health, Conflict of Interest and Policy Interference in School Settings</p> <p><i>(Presentation 15 minutes)</i></p> <p><i>(Group Discussion 15 minutes)</i></p>	<p>Ms. Maisha Hutton <i>Executive Director, HCC</i></p>
4.15 – 5.15	CHALLENGES IN REMOVING ULTRA-PROCESSED PRODUCTS FROM SCHOOL SETTINGS	<p>MODERATOR: Sir Trevor Hassell <i>President, HCC</i></p>
4.15 – 5.15	<p>Moderated Open Discussion <i>(60 min)</i></p> <p><i>Session Objective: This session will bring together panellists to explore some of the key challenges in driving school food policies including: political will (engaging with policymakers), industry presence (marketing in schools, sponsorships and funding gaps), policy ownership and implementation capacity, evidence including M&E, youth engagement, vendor buy-in, public buy-in and healthy options/ identifying regulated products, procurement etc. Strategies to overcome the challenges including identifying key needs and next steps, will also be explored.</i></p>	Moderator
5.15 – 5.30	COLLECTIVE REFLECTIONS ON DAY 1 LOOKING TO DAY 2	<p>MODERATOR: Mr. Andrew Dhanoo <i>President, Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago</i></p>
5.15 – 5.30	Interactive Discussion Session (15 min)	Moderator
5.30	CLOSING	

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MEETING PROGRAMME – DAY 2

JULY 4-5, 2023 | COURTYARD MARRIOTT, BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS (times in AST)

9.00 – 9.15	OPENING	MODERATOR: Maisha Hutton, HCC
9.00 – 9.15	Welcome, Interactive Recap and Overview of Day 2 (10 min)	Dr. Sonia Nixon <i>President, Grenada Cancer Society</i>
9.15 - 10.45	SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION <i>Session Objective: This session will highlight existing resources and examples from outside of the Caribbean to support the removal of ultra-processed products from schools.</i>	MODERATOR: Professor Alafia Samuels, <i>University of the West Indies</i>
9.15 – 9.30	Supporting harmonization and regulatory capacity gaps - HCC Model Legislation (15 min)	Mrs. Nicole Foster <i>HCC, UWI</i>
9.30 – 9.45	Providing Healthy Options - The Alternative Foods and Beverages List in Barbados (15 min)	Dr. Kia Lewis <i>Physician and Chair of the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition</i>
9.45 – 10.00	Barbados SSB Tax and School Nutrition Policy Joint Evaluation Planning (15 min)	Dr. Madhuvanti Murphy <i>Senior Lecturer in Qualitative Research Methods, The George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre (GA-CDRC) A Unit of the Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR), UWI</i>
10.00 – 10.15	Global Experiences: Banning ultra-processed foods in Rio de Janeiro's city schools - an experience report (15 min)	Ms. Fabíola Leal <i>Lawyer and Advocacy Analyst, Instituto Desiderata, Brazil</i>
10.15 – 10.45	Panel Discussion and Q&A (30 min)	Moderator
10.45 - 11.15	HEALTH/ PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BREAK	

11.15 – 12.30	SUPPORTING YOUTH ACTION	MODERATOR: Danielle Walwyn, <i>Advocacy Officer, HCC</i>
11.15 – 12.00	<p>Being an Ally: Driving Youth Advocacy <i>(45 min)</i></p> <p>Session Objective: This session will seek to highlight key strategies that CSOs can employ to meaningfully engage youth in their work and within their organizational structure. The session will also spotlight youth-driven advocacy work across the region in the Healthy Food Policy Advocacy space.</p>	<p>Mr. Andrew Dhanoo <i>President, Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago</i></p> <p>Shannique Bowden <i>Executive Director, Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network</i></p> <p>Ms. Michron Robinson <i>Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition Youth Advocate</i></p> <p>Mr. Pierre Cooke Jr <i>Youth Technical Advisor, HCC</i></p> <p>Ms. Charity Dublin <i>Vice President Antigua and Barbuda Diabetes Association; Nutritionist, Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Health and the Environment; HCY Member</i></p> <p>Ms. Rosanna Pike <i>Health Education Officer, Heart Foundation of Jamaica</i></p>
12.00 – 12.30	Panel Discussion and Q&A <i>(30 min)</i>	Moderator
12.30 – 1.00	THE ROLE OF PARTNERS	MODERATOR: Ms. Laura Tucker-Longsworth <i>President, Belize Cancer Society; HCC Board Member</i>
12.30 – 1.00	<p><i>(Panel Discussion - 30 min)</i></p> <p>Session Objective: To discuss the roles of various partners, their related work and provide an opportunity for attendees to share needs which could be addressed by these entities.</p>	<p>Mr. Fransen Jean <i>Food Security Officer FAO Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean</i></p> <p>Dr. Lisa McClean-Trotman <i>Communication for Development Specialist, Programme UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office</i></p> <p>Dr. Heather Armstrong <i>Head, Chronic Disease and Injury Chronic Disease and Injury Department Office of the Executive Director Caribbean Public Health Agency</i></p>

		<p>Dr. Gloria Giraldo PAHO</p> <p>Dr. Madhuvanti Murphy UWI</p>
1.00 – 1.50	CREATING A REGIONAL ROADMAP	MODERATOR: Maisha Hutton HCC Team
1.00 – 1.30	<p>Guided group work (30 min)</p> <p><i>The aim of the group work will be to discuss priorities and next steps (ie. creating network, WhatsApp group, best practices document, application of existing tools, development of tools, national/ regional campaigns, meetings, dissemination of model legislation, catalysing youth involvement through HCY, follow up meeting, reaching out to policymakers, alignment with other policies and political agendas etc.) to support expanded policy implementation articulating the roles of key sectors.</i></p> <p><i>This roadmap will be shared at the HCC NCD Forum for inclusion in the HCC Strategic Planning process.</i></p>	<p>HCC Team</p> <p>Group work</p>
1.30 – 1.50	<p>Group Feedback and Consolidation (20 min)</p>	HCC Team
1.50 – 2.00	<p>Reflections and Closing (10 min)</p>	<p>Moderator Ms. Maisha Hutton HCC</p>
2.00 - 3.00	MEETING CLOSE & LUNCH	