

REGIONAL YOUTH MEETING REPORT

CARIBBEAN YOUTH VOICES IN HEALTH
ADVOCACY SPACES
HEALTHY FOOD POLICY ACTION

20
24

Feb 7 - 9



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	_____	02
Key Messages	_____	03
Background	_____	04
Meeting Goal & Objectives	_____	06
Day 1 Presentations	_____	07
Day 2 Presentations	_____	15
Day 3 Presentations	_____	20
Feedback & Next Steps	_____	26
Annex 1 - Meeting Agenda	_____	27
Annex 2 - List of Participants	_____	29

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- Ms. Kabira Foster, *Youth Advocate, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition, HSFB*
- Mr. Taahir Bulbulia, *Advisor to the Subcommittee of the HSFB Lead Advocates, Barbados*
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DAY 1

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?



ADDICTIVE

and can evoke strong cravings.



"Our palettes have been colonized"
"Limited availability of fresh fruits and vegetables"

WHAT DO OUR CARIBBEAN FOOD ENVIRONMENTS LOOK LIKE?



"Pervasive and persistent marketing of UPPs"
"Food insecurity due to our geographical location"

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ADDRESS UNHEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENTS?

Advocates should seek out ways to COLLABORATE with other CSOs and government ministries

MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



FOUNDER COMES FROM THE LEADERSHIP ADVOCATE

Advocate for healthy nutrition policies



TRANSPARENCY and ACCOUNTABILITY!

READY TO SHARE YOUR PASSION?

DEMAND THE WORLD YOU WANT AND WORK HARD TO ACHIEVE IT!



- Contact stakeholders AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE
- FOLLOW UP consistently
- Remain CALM and POSITIVE
- Always have a BACKUP PLAN

DAY 2

Rights-Based Advocacy

Ensures that laws, policies, and practices respect and protect our human rights

BENEFITS

- Aims for accountability
- Seeks systemic change
- Empowers individuals & communities
- Involves active participation

Governments have a legal responsibility to protect all rights, especially health



What Are Some Barriers to Healthy Food Policies?

Industry Interference

When corporate companies try to influence & block progress on health interventions & policies



Conflict of Interest (COI)

When a vested interest can unduly influence the action of an official or agency, through monetary or non-monetary benefits to the official or agency

How to Spot Industry Interference?

- Industry:
- Disputes existing research to muddy the waters
 - Emphasizes personal or parental responsibility
 - Forms associations to lobby against health policy
 - Uses corporate social responsibility activities to promote their unhealthy products

What Can Youth Advocates Do?

- ✓ Expose industry tactics
- ✓ Demand that governments be transparent
- ✓ Demand that governments make policy decisions based on the best available, COI-free, scientific evidence

Try Journey Mapping

Put the person as the centre of the health problem

Map their real life experience

BARRIERS
POLICY
ADVOCACY ASKS



DAY 3

Advocacy Resources



Digital Advocacy 101

Digital Advocacy is the use of online and mobile tools to:

- engage a target audience
- inspire them to take action
- wield power to achieve a specific policy goal

Identify your primary & secondary target audience

IDENTIFY KEY MESSAGES

Be RELEVANT.
Be TIMELY.
Be CLEAR.

Use Your Unique Voice

If you're talking to everyone, you're talking to no one

Take advantage of Canva Templates!

Communication & Public Speaking

Communication is a PROCESS not just an event



Barriers to Communication

- jargon
- emotions
- prejudices
- expectations
- taboo topics

Be honest about your barriers & work on them.

Be early to interviews.

Prepare! Prepare! Prepare!

Media Advocacy



- Make connections with media houses & journalists
- Prepare press releases with audio quotes
- Use health days & events to your advantage

BACKGROUND

The Way Forward – You(th) Advocacy!

Urgent action is needed by multiple stakeholders to raise the alarm about the need for a healthy environment for all, particularly the need to implement and strengthen relevant healthy food policies. Youth have a critical role to play in this call to action. Youth are members of schools and wider communities where healthy (or unhealthy) habits are formed and grow. Youth now have the ears of policymakers and voices in policymaking spaces through Youth Parliaments and similar fora – they can advocate for change that will impact generations to come. As changemakers, young people can share their lived experiences and perspectives and influence their environments and policy, and they can also hold policymakers accountable to their promises to shape healthier food environments in the Caribbean.

Caribbean Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces - Virtual Workshops

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) and Healthy Caribbean Youth (HCY) in partnership with the Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network (JYAN), the Jamaica Health Advocates Youth Arm (JHAYA) and the youth advocates from the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition hosted a virtual workshop series - Caribbean Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces. The workshop series to bring awareness to the importance of healthy food environments and healthy food policies in building a healthier Caribbean among Caribbean youth, and strengthen the coalition of youth advocates from across the region who are demanding change to transform food environments in their local territory.

The first installment of the workshop was held in September/October 2022. The two-day workshop introduced attendees to the issue of childhood obesity and NCDs in the Caribbean and the power of rights-based advocacy and healthy food policies in improving health outcomes. Attendees also learned about the importance of youth voices in health advocacy and brainstorm advocacy activities that they can execute in their local communities to push for healthier food environments. The second installment of the workshop was held in December 2022. The one-day workshop aimed to reconnect with attendees, recap workshop 1, revisit the concept of SMART Activities and invite attendees to brainstorm and co-create workshop 3 agenda.

The third and final workshop in the series was held in April 2022. The 2-day workshop focused on providing advocates with the tools to advocate. The workshop explored unique aspects of our Caribbean culture that can impact advocacy efforts, key strategies for effective advocacy, the difference between raising awareness and driving advocacy, planning and executing youth-driven digital advocacy campaigns and tips for media engagement. Workshop #3 was developed to specifically support the recipients of the HCC Small Seed Grant Opportunity who will develop and execute activities locally in support of healthy food policies.

Virtual Youth Forum - Letter to the CARICOM

As a follow up from the April 2023 workshop, the organizing partners invited the Caribbean Regional Youth Council (CRYC) to host a virtual forum for youth to discuss their concerns and solutions related to nutrition and healthy food policies, mental health, climate change and their synergies. The primary objective of the forum was to develop a list of key concerns and solutions to share with the CARICOM Secretariat ahead of the 45th Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community that was held from July 3rd - 5th 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago. The forum, which was held on July 7th 2023, brought together nearly 40 youth and allies from 10 territories.

Following the forum, HCC/HCY, JYAN, HFJ, HSFB and CRYC prepared a letter which outlined youth's proposed solutions to address nutrition, mental health and climate change concerns. This letter was reviewed by forum attendees and shared with the CARICOM Secretariat ahead of the Heads of Government meeting.

Of note, the youth wanted Heads of Government to specifically prioritize the following actions given **the fast approaching global deadlines**, such as the 2025 NCD deadline:

- Implement comprehensive School Nutrition Policies: Develop regulations concerning the sale and marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages in schools and their surroundings, supported by front of package nutrition warning labeling on all packaged products.
- Introduce or strengthen local mental health legislation: Ground the legislation in international guidance, best practices and human rights norms and focus on strengthening school and community-based mental health and psychosocial support services to better support the mental health of Caribbean children and youth.
- Meaningfully engage CARICOM Regional Youth Ambassadors and the CARICOM Regional Youth Council: Involve them in local and regional decision-making spaces including CARICOM Heads of Government Meetings.

On July 3rd 2023, the organisations as well as youth who attended the forum and other allies took twitter by storm in another effort to directly communicate their asks to Heads of Governments and other critical regional bodies using the hashtag #youth4CARICOMhealth.

In an ongoing effort to mobilize youth support and engagement for healthy food policies, the partners hosted the first in-person youth regional meeting - Caribbean Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces - Healthy Food Policy Action.

This meeting was funded through the Healthy Caribbean Coalition's grant with the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAi).

MEETING GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL

The goal of the three day meeting is to build capacity and momentum among Caribbean youth to advocate for the implementation of Healthy Food Policies.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.To strengthen the regional coalition of young people calling for healthy food environments, especially in policymaking spaces
- 2.To build awareness among youth advocates of the importance of rights-based advocacy, healthy food policies, conflicts of interest and industry interference
- 3.To strengthen key skills needed to effectively support youth driven advocacy
- 4.To develop an action plan that supports youth-driven advocacy in support of the high-in octagonal front of package nutrition warning labelling and banning or restricting the availability and marketing of these unhealthy products in school settings

The meeting programme can be found in Annex 1 .

PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

The regional youth meet gathered a diverse group of **61 participants** representing **13 countries**.



Day 1

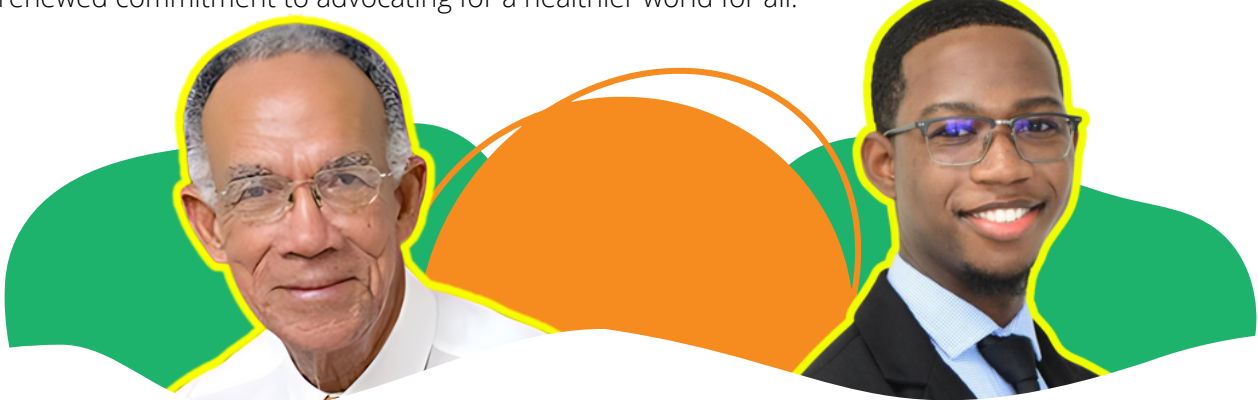
Opening Remarks

Moderated by: Ms. Danielle Walwyn
Advocacy Officer, HCC



Sir Trevor Hassell, *President, HCC*, praised the significant contributions of Caribbean youth in the non-communicable disease (NCD) response during his opening remarks. He highlighted the crucial role that young people play in addressing the socio-economic and health crises caused by NCDs. Sir Hassell urged the youth to demand and work towards a world where healthy eating is easier and more affordable, schools actively promote health, and public health policies protect people from the harmful effects of unhealthy food marketing and sales. He emphasized that the commitment and actions of the youth are vital in driving policy changes and creating a healthier future for the Caribbean.

Mr. Pierre Kevin Cooke Jr., *Youth Technical Advisor* at the HCC, emphasized the importance of youth involvement in health advocacy, stating, "There should be nothing for us, without us." He highlighted that HCC's work acknowledges that everyone is a stakeholder in their health, reinforcing the collective responsibility in promoting well-being. Through the Healthy Caribbean Youth, young people are equipped with the tools, information, and skills to become effective health advocates. Mr. Cooke underscored the conference's goal of fostering regional collaboration to protect the right to health and build an optimal living environment. He urged participants to demand a healthier world, stressing that the current generation has the power to create a better future for themselves and the generations to come. Mr. Cooke called for recognition and respect for the right to health of all people, including the vulnerable youth, and implored attendees to leave the conference with a renewed commitment to advocating for a healthier world for all.



Sir Trevor Hassell,
President,
Healthy Caribbean Coalition

Mr. Pierre (Kevin) Cooke Jr
Technical Advisor,
Healthy Caribbean Coalition

Day 1

Presentation: Let's Get It Straight: Ultra Processed Products Are Addictive

Presented by: Dr. Alexandra DiFeliceantonio,
Assistant Professor, Fralin Biomedical Research
Institute at Virginia Tech Carilion



In her presentation, **Dr. Alexandra DiFeliceantonio**, discussed the potential for highly processed foods to be considered addictive substances, based on established scientific criteria. She referenced the Yale Food Addiction Scale 2.0 [1,2] and highlighted the prevalence of food addiction, citing studies that show 14% of non-clinical adult samples and 12% of non-clinical child samples exhibit signs of food addiction.[3]

Dr. DiFeliceantonio compared the addictive potential of nicotine to that of certain foods, emphasizing similar criteria: compulsive use, psychoactive effects, reinforcing nature, and strong cravings. [4] She supported her points with various studies, including those demonstrating that children with overweight and obesity work harder for cookies than for fruit [5], and that rodents prefer sweet tastes over cocaine.[6] She also addressed the neural signatures of food and drug cravings, drawing parallels between the two.[7,8]

In her concluding remarks, Dr. DiFeliceantonio stressed the critical need for ongoing research to pinpoint the specific characteristics that render certain foods addictive. She pointed to factors such as high glycemic index, combinations of fat and carbohydrates, and ultra-processing as potential culprits. Dr. DiFeliceantonio advocated for explicit comparisons between ultra-processed and minimally processed foods to gain deeper insights into their physiological and brain effects. She passionately urged for a more thorough investigation into how these elements contribute to the addictive nature of certain foods, highlighting the importance of understanding this phenomenon to better address and mitigate food addiction.

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2. Gearhardt AN, Bueno NB, DiFeliceantonio AG, Roberto CA, Jiménez-Murcia S, Fernandez-Aranda F. Social, clinical, and policy implications of ultra-processed food addiction. *BMJ*. Published online October 9, 2023:e075354. doi:10.1136/bmj-2023-075354
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What Does our Food Environment Look Like?

Mapping the reality

Session Objective:

- Discuss concerns with local food environments

Food environments are critical spaces where children and their families interact with food. These environments include various settings such as homes, schools, neighborhoods, grocery stores, restaurants, and community gardens. They significantly influence food choices, dietary habits, and overall health outcomes.

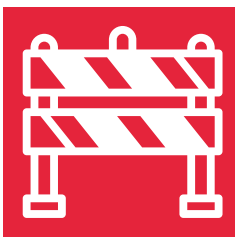
Participants were asked to share the following:

- A fact about their local food environment
- A barrier they face in accessing healthy and nutritious food.
- A facilitator that helps them access and consume healthy food.



REALITY

- “Our palettes have been colonized”
- Vendors sell foods that are easier to obtain and sell
- Health behaviors persist from childhood to adulthood
- Limited availability of fresh fruits and vegetables
- UPP in prominent packaging and placement in supermarkets



BARRIERS

- Pervasive and persistent marketing of UPPs
- Lack of education at the consumer level
- Food insecurity due to our geographical location



FACILITATORS

- Whole of society approach
- Increase investments in agribusiness
- Increase individual gardening

Day 1

Panel Discussion: Let's Chat Solutions – What can be done to address unhealthy food environments

Moderated by: Ms. Kabira Foster

Youth Advocate, Childhood Obesity Prevention
Coalition, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados



The panel discussion, titled "*Let's Chat Solutions – What can be done to address unhealthy food environments*," brought together a diverse group of experts to explore actionable strategies for creating healthier spaces, particularly within schools.

Ms. Samantha Moitt, discussed the progress of the country's Sugar-Sweetened Beverage (SSB) policy. This policy has undergone extensive public consultations involving various sectors and data collection. While it has been approved by the Cabinet, it still requires legislation for enforcement. The SSB policy in Antigua and Barbuda is unique in that it includes restrictions on the sale and marketing of SSBs within school environments. Funds from the policy will be earmarked for health promoting activities. The next steps include collaborating with schools to initiate voluntary implementation of the policy.

Ms. Hedda Phillips-Boyce, highlighted the development of the Barbados School Nutrition Policy. The policy emerged from a consultative process where the Ministry of Health and Wellness worked closely with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). An implementation committee was established to monitor, provide feedback, and promote the policy. However, challenges were encountered, particularly with vendors struggling to comply. Efforts were made to engage manufacturers to identify acceptable food items and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB) supported schools in adopting healthy fundraising policies. Ms. Boyce emphasized the importance of engaging passionate stakeholders to drive the initiative forward.



Ms. Samantha Moitt

Chief Nutrition Officer, Ministry of Health
and Wellness, Antigua and Barbuda

Ms. Hedda Phillips-Boyce

Education Officer, Ministry of
Education, Technological and
Vocational Training, Barbados

Ms. Vonetta Nurse

Nutrition Officer, UNICEF Jamaica,
Jamaica

Ms. Vonetta Nurse, discussed Jamaica's perspective, emphasizing that well-nourished students perform better academically. The School Nutrition Policy (SNP) is viewed as a catalyst for implementing other health policies, such as Front-of-Pack Warning Labels (FOPWL). Engagement and collaboration across sectors are crucial, as isolated efforts are less effective.

Dr. Fernanda Mediano, presented Chile's robust measures to reduce unhealthy food marketing. Chile introduced regulations targeting products high in energy, sugar, saturated fat, or sodium, starting with a 2016 ban on child-targeted advertising and expanding to a 6 AM to 10 PM advertising ban in 2019. This dual approach, combining child-based and time-based restrictions, significantly reduced children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing. Despite challenges with compliance and regulatory limits, these measures decreased the prevalence of unhealthy food advertisements from 90% to 15% and reduced child-directed marketing. Dr. Mediano stressed that a comprehensive ban is essential for effectively protecting children from unhealthy food marketing.

Ms. Ree-Anna Robinson, concluded the session with an intervention and emphasized the importance of meaningful youth engagement in the process of addressing unhealthy food environments. She highlighted the need to build the capacity of teachers so they can effectively advocate for the application of nutrition knowledge in schools and serve as positive role models for students. Ms. Robinson also pointed out the clear link between food and mood, underscoring the impact of nutrition on overall well-being and academic performance.



Dr. Fernanda Mediano

Assistant Professor, Pontificia Universidad
Católica de Chile, Chile

Ms. Ree-Anna Robinson

UNICEF Youth Advocate, Jamaica

Day 1

Panel Discussion & Interactive Activity: Advocacy 101

Moderated by: Ms. Michron Robinson

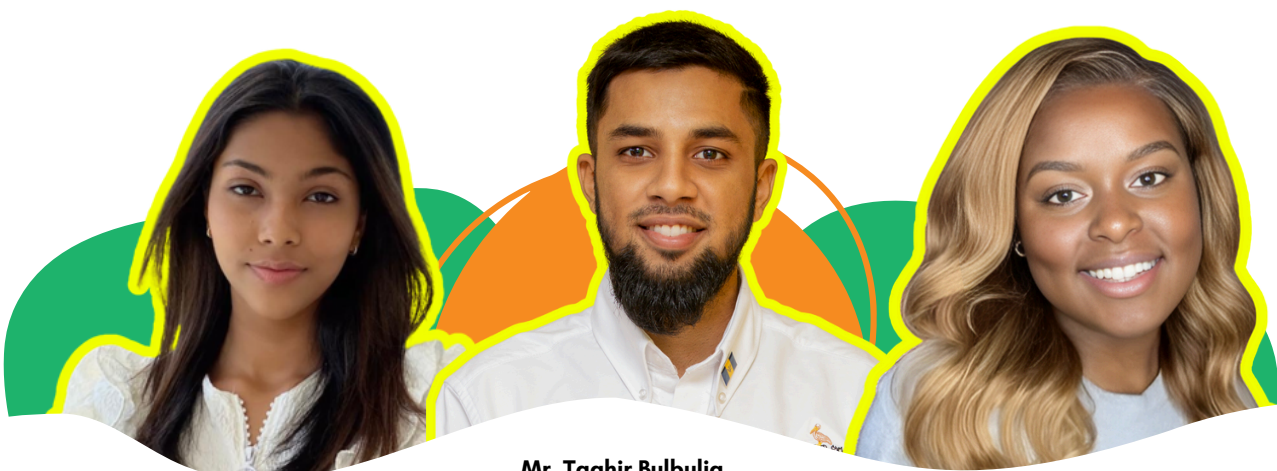
Youth Advocacy Officer, Heart and Stroke
Foundation of Barbados



Ms. Priyanka Lalla, emphasized the empowering nature of advocacy. She highlighted its role in helping people understand their rights and options, supporting informed decision-making, and preserving human rights, freedom, and voice. Ms. Lalla called for continuous demands for policy amendments, accountability, and transparency to ensure policies benefit and improve the lives of those directly affected by regional issues.

Mr. Taahir Bulbulia, stressed the importance of public-driven policy. He argued that advocacy is crucial for protecting the most vulnerable in society and that a society's treatment of its vulnerable and minority groups is a measure of its values. Mr. Bulbulia highlighted that advocacy and policy go hand in hand, and emphasized the importance of policy implementation. He ended by noting that growth requires discomfort and continuous effort.

Ms. Tasha Mhakayakor, spoke passionately about advocacy as a tool for social change. She expressed frustration at the failure of governments and policymakers to address societal wrongs, which motivated her to channel her anger into advocacy. Ms. Mhakayakor emphasized holding governments accountable for their promises and standing up for vulnerable individuals in society.



Ms. Priyanka Lalla

UNICEF Child Rights Ambassador and
Healthy Caribbean Youth, Trinidad and
Tobago

Mr. Taahir Bulbulia

Advisor to the Subcommittee of the
HSFB Lead Advocates, Barbados

Ms. Tasha Mhakayakor

Board Trustee, Bite Back

Civil society organizations played a vital role in the discussion, with interventions from the Caribbean Regional Youth Council, Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago (DATT), Healthy Bahamas Coalition, Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ), Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB), and UNICEF Jamaica. These organizations contributed diverse perspectives and strategies for advocating health and nutrition policies, highlighting the collective effort needed to drive regional change.

The session concluded with an interactive game of advocacy charades, where participants showcased various skills including communication, networking, presenting, research, teamwork, leadership, time management, and creativity.



Day 1

Spotlight on Caribbean Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces Small Seed Grant Awardees

Presenter: Ms. Shyra Wattley

Attorney-at-law and Volunteer with Lake Health and Wellbeing, Saint Kitts and Nevis



The call for applications for the Caribbean Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces Small Grant was launched by Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) and Healthy Caribbean Youth (HCY) in February, 2023. **Ms. Shyra Wattley** successfully developed and submitted a grant proposal which focused on SSB tax and related policies.

The planning phase involved mobilizing youth advocates to assist with the project. Key activities included hosting meetings to develop the project idea, setting the agenda, selecting speakers, finalizing the guest list, and budgeting. Invitations were sent out to speakers, key stakeholders, and youth invitees. The Ministry of Health in Nevis agreed to collaborate, and venues and service providers were reserved.

The main event, a day-long symposium called "[The Sweet Talk Symposium](#)" was held on October 25, 2023.

It featured various segments:

- Welcome and Information Session: Led by youth health advocates to educate attendees about the NCD crisis and the importance of informed policies.
- Panel Discussion: Focused on the power of healthy food policies, featuring high-level stakeholders such as the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Medical Chief of Staff of Alexandra Hospital, and others.
- Fireside Chat: A conversation between Dr. Patrick Martin, Health Advisor to the Federal Minister of Health/Prime Minister, and Ms. Michele Baker, Advocacy Officer, Lake Health and Wellbeing.
- Testimonials: From individuals living with NCDs, including a young person with diabetes and a long-term dialysis patient.
- Health Activities: Health checks, distribution of health literature, and healthy beverage preparation demonstrations.

The symposium's main activities included intergenerational dialogue, youth empowerment sessions, artistic presentations, and Q&A sessions between youth and stakeholders. These activities aimed to foster understanding, collaboration, and action towards healthier food environments.

Reflecting on the project's successes, Ms. Wattley noted the effective education of young people on NCDs and the importance of policy advocacy. However, challenges included difficulty contacting busy policymakers, non-responses, and last-minute cancellations by presenters.

Ms. Wattley offered practical advice for youth engaging in similar advocacy projects: start contacting stakeholders early, follow up consistently, stay calm and positive, and always have a backup plan to handle unexpected issues.

Day 2

Presentation & Interactive Activity: Rights-Based Advocacy

Mr. Pierre (Kevin) Cooke, Jr.,
HCC Youth Technical Advisor

Shannique Bowden,
Executive Director, Jamaica
Youth Advocacy Network

Mr. Pierre (Kevin) Cooke, Jr., focussed on advocating for childhood obesity prevention through a human rights lens. He cited the document [Our Health, Our Right – A Rights-Based Childhood Obesity Prevention Agenda for the Caribbean](#), which he authored, as a key resource. His presentation introduced rights-based advocacy as a strategy for childhood obesity prevention, with the goal of advocating for legal, physical, and social environments that support health, moving away from blaming individuals.

The rights-based advocacy agenda emphasizes the right to health, outlining core pillars for childhood obesity prevention: Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support of children living with overweight and obesity, and Engagement. It calls for creating supportive environments through systemic changes rather than focusing solely on individual behaviors. Rights-based advocacy is founded on the legal responsibility of governments to protect, respect, and fulfill all rights, making it a stronger basis for advocacy compared to moral leadership alone. This approach ensures no one is left behind, emphasizing inclusion and protection for all.

Mr. Cooke noted that the right to health extends beyond well-being to include social, economic, political, and environmental factors. Childhood obesity demands urgent attention, and governments have a duty to respect, protect, and fulfill children's rights against obesity and NCDs. Youth empowerment and evidence-based policies are essential for effective action. Human rights frameworks, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international treaties, provide the legal basis for rights-based advocacy.

These frameworks assert that health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. A rights-based approach focuses on promoting and protecting human rights, empowering individuals and communities, and seeking systemic changes for fairness and equality. It involves active participation from affected groups and aims for accountability from governments and organizations.

Mr. Cooke concluded his presentation with a call to empower youth advocacy, recognizing global youth efforts in championing rights and interests and calling for enhanced support from governments, civil society, and the private sector to ensure equitable health access for all children and young people.

The session also included an interactive activity facilitated by **Shannique Bowden**, where participants matched definitions related to human rights advocacy to descriptions and scenarios. Using a word bank, participants engaged in identifying key concepts such as Human Rights, Rights-Based Advocacy, and the Right to Health, helping to deepen their understanding of these topics.

Day 2

Presentation: Industry Interference in Healthy Food Policy

Presented by: Ms. Rosanna Pike

Health Education Officer, Global Health Advocacy Project, Heart Foundation of Jamaica



Ms. Rosanna Pike, presented on the various ways industry interference undermines healthy food policy. This interference often involves conflicts of interest, where vested interests unduly influence policy through monetary, material, or non-material benefits. Such practices lead to an imbalance in stakeholder representation during decision-making, resulting in weak policies that fail to address the root causes of NCDs.

Ms. Pike noted that companies often promote high-fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) foods for profit, undermining public health efforts and creating environments where individuals have limited control over their food choices. Youth advocates were guided on how to recognize industry interference through tactics such as promoting junk science, emphasizing personal responsibility, challenging legislation, forming lobbying groups, threatening job losses, and pressuring politicians. These strategies aim to delay and weaken policies, protect corporate profits, and blame individuals for their health issues.

She also encouraged youth advocates to:

- ✔ Recognise & highlight examples of industry interference & conflicts of interest (COI)
- ✔ Help protect the policymaking process from interference from commercial interests
- ✔ Expose industry tactics to interference with policymaking processes and government capture.
- ✔ Demand that governments be transparent in their relations with the private sector and promote regulations to prevent conflicts of interest and to foster transparency
- ✔ Demand that governments make policy decisions based on the best available scientific evidence, free of conflicts of interest.
- ✔ Encourage governments to establish rigid testing protocols & requirements for unhealthy foods & food with claims

Her presentation was followed by a rich discussion on examples of conflicts of interest and industry interference that attendees witnessed across the Caribbean.

Day 2

Industry Interference in Healthy Food Policy

Presented by: Ms. Kimberley Benjamin
Attorney-at-law, Healthy Caribbean Youth Member



Ms. Kimberley Benjamin presented on several key points regarding conflicts of interest and industry interference in the context of regional front-of-package nutritional labelling standardization. Firstly, she introduced the joint report: [Public Health Decision Making in CARICOM: Strengthening the Front of Package Nutrition Labelling Standardisation Programme](#), launched by the Global Center for Legal Innovation on Food Environments Center, O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, Georgetown University in Washington D.C. in partnership with the Law and Health Research Unit at the University of the West Indies and the HCC. She discussed the identification of potential entry points for conflicts of interest and industry interference. She emphasized where and how these conflicts and interference can occur, underscoring the importance of recognizing these entry points to mitigate their impact on policy-making and public health outcomes.



To address these challenges, Ms. Benjamin recommended adopting, implementing, and monitoring governance mechanisms such as COI protocols and guidelines. She stressed the need for transparency and accountability in policy-making to safeguard the process from vested interests. Ms. Benjamin also highlighted various international and regional instruments that can be leveraged to manage COI and industry interference effectively. She cited examples such as constitutions, like the Constitution of Suriname, which mandates that trade and industry practices align with national goals, public interest, and public health.

Ms. Benjamin also referenced the WHO Decision-making Tool for preventing and managing conflicts of interest in country-level nutrition programs. This tool serves as a roadmap for implementing the World Health Organization's draft approach in the Americas, providing a structured method to address COI effectively.

In conclusion, Ms. Benjamin underscored the necessity of robust governance mechanisms to protect policy-making from vested interests. She advocated for the utilization of existing legal frameworks and international guidelines to enhance transparency and accountability in the policy-making process. This comprehensive approach, she argued, is essential for safeguarding public health and ensuring the integrity of nutritional labelling standards.

Scavenger Hunt and Healthy Food Policy Journey Mapping

Session Objectives:

- To provide an interactive, team building activity to strengthen the regional coalition of young people calling for healthy food policies
- To facilitate young people's sharing of perspectives and critical barriers to healthier food environments (using food environment mapping/journey scenario)
- To brainstorm and identify areas for local/regional action by policy and decision makers



Activity 1: Scavenger Hunt

The first activity was a scavenger hunt - a 20-minute interactive hunt required participants to find items related to healthy food policies. Once the hunt concluded, participants returned and used the found items in the next activity.



Activity 2: Healthy Food Policy Journey Mapping

Following the scavenger hunt, the session utilized a Health Journey Methodology. This approach placed the person at the center of the health problem, focusing on mapping their real-life experiences rather than hypothetical scenarios. Participants analyzed the challenges and barriers in services and policies, exploring possibilities for change.

Participants were divided into four groups based on the color behind their seats:

- **Red Group: School Environment**
- **Blue Group: Marketing of Unhealthy Foods to Children**
- **Yellow Group: Labelling and Food Choices**
- **Green Group: Access to Healthy Foods**

Each group was given a scenario featuring a character facing specific health challenges related to their assigned theme. The groups were tasked with assigning a scribe or illustrator to document their discussions. They discussed the character's journey, imagining and mapping the environment based on their knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of what actually happens.

The groups were instructed to draw the character's journey or story, incorporating items from the scavenger hunt. They also developed a list of recommendations for actions that would improve the character's journey, known as "**advocacy asks**." The facilitator guided the discussions and documented the recommendations.

Day 3

Tools Developed By Partners To Support Advocacy

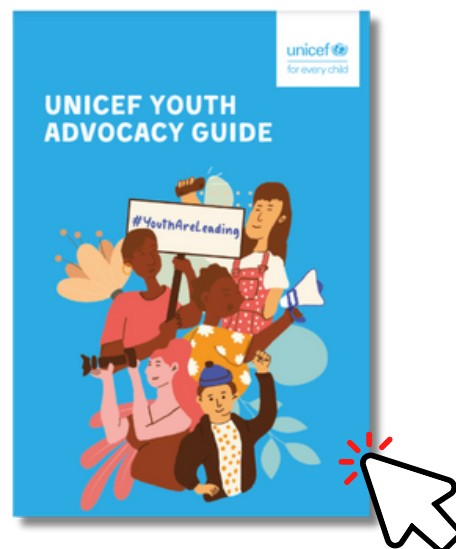
Ms. Danielle Walwyn
Advocacy Officer, HCC

Ms. Vonetta Nurse
UNICEF Jamaica

Ms. Danielle Walwyn and Ms. Vonetta Nurse shared numerous resources with attendees, which can be found below:

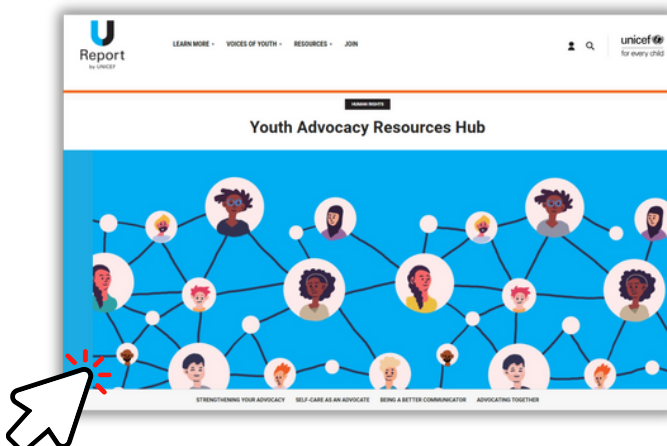
UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide

The UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide is an advocacy tool created, written, and edited by young advocates from around the world. This guide is designed to take users through the advocacy journey, helping them bring about meaningful change in their communities. It features adaptable content that can be tailored to best suit various contexts, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness across different regions and issues.



Youth Advocacy Resources Hub

The Youth Advocacy Resources Hub is a comprehensive platform aimed at strengthening the advocacy efforts of young people. It provides valuable resources on self-care for advocates, enhancing communication skills, and the importance of collective advocacy. This hub is a vital tool for young advocates seeking to improve their impact and sustain their efforts in advocating for change.





Selling a Sick Future

This policy report provides an overview of marketing strategies used to promote health-harming products. The report includes interviews with children and youth, who share their insights and recommendations on these marketing tactics. It concludes with comprehensive, forward-thinking recommendations aimed at addressing and mitigating the impact of marketing unhealthy products to young people.

Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces

The guide titled "Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces" focuses on empowering youth in the realm of childhood advocacy. It presents an overview of marketing strategies through the lens of young people, featuring interviews with children and youth on the tactics used in marketing health-harming products. The guide offers comprehensive and forward-thinking recommendations to address these marketing practices, aiming to protect the health and well-being of children.



Childhood Obesity Prevention Scorecard

The Childhood Obesity Prevention Scorecard (COPS) is a tool designed by the HCC to evaluate and promote efforts to prevent childhood obesity. It provides a systematic approach to assessing policies and initiatives aimed at reducing obesity rates among children, helping advocates identify areas for improvement and track progress in their advocacy work.

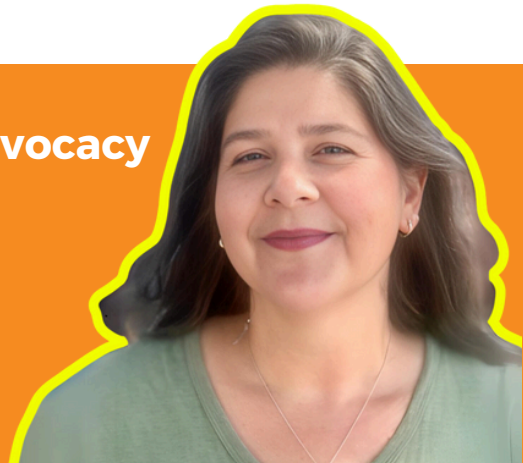


Day 3

Skill Building Activity: Digital Advocacy & CANVA!

Presented by: Ms. Jill Greenberg

Communications Consultant, Global Health
Advocacy Incubator



Ms. Jill Greenberg delivered a presentation focused on "Digital Advocacy and Content for Impact," highlighting the use of digital tools to enhance advocacy efforts, particularly in public health and policy change. Her presentation provided strategic insights and practical tips to engage target audiences effectively, inspire action, and achieve policy goals. Ms. Greenberg explained that digital advocacy involves utilizing online and mobile platforms to engage a target audience, motivate them to take action, and exert influence to achieve specific policy goals. This approach leverages digital tools to build public awareness, demonstrate the urgency of issues, and drive public advocacy.

She emphasized that building public awareness is crucial for increasing understanding of core issues among the general public. Effective communication should highlight the importance of these issues and educate the audience on why they matter. For example, raising awareness about the lack of transparency in food ingredients helps people understand the need for better food labeling.

She also noted that demonstrating the urgency of an issue involves creating content that shows the immediate need for systemic action. This is particularly important for pressing public health crises, such as childhood obesity and NCDs. Ms. Greenberg highlighted that effective digital advocacy translates public awareness into action. This involves showing support or exerting pressure for specific policy actions to resolve urgent issues. For instance, a public petition with thousands of signatures demanding FOPWL can demonstrate strong public demand to decision-makers, pushing them to act.

Ms. Greenberg stressed the importance of identifying primary and secondary audiences for successful advocacy. The primary audience consists of those directly impacted by and critical to achieving policy objectives. Secondary audiences include individuals or groups that can influence the primary audience, such as opinion leaders, media, and special interest groups. Focusing on these audiences ensures targeted and effective advocacy efforts. She outlined that creating impactful content requires clarity, relevance, and a strong call to action. Messages should convey urgency, use an active voice, and be clear about the desired actions from the audience. Utilizing one's unique voice helps resonate with the audience and make the advocacy efforts more personal and compelling.

Ms. Greenberg provided practical tips for using Canva, a graphic design tool, to create polished social media content:

Canva Tips & Tricks



Allow the image to lead and the words to support the image.



Colours evoke emotions- think about this when you are considering what you want to convey



Don't be afraid to try a different font but limit it two two different fonts



Don't worry if you're not super creative, Canva's templates are incredible

Participants then engaged in breakout groups to apply their learning to real-world scenarios geared around FOPWL and School Nutrition Policy support. They were tasked with quickly creating graphics, using the tips Ms. Greenberg provided, some of which are shown below.



In conclusion, Ms. Greenberg underscored the power of digital advocacy in achieving policy change. By effectively engaging audiences and creating compelling content, advocates learned that they can drive significant public support and pressure for critical public health policies.

Day 3

Skill Building Activity: Public Speaking Training

Presented by: Ms. Francine Charles
Programme Manager,
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados



Ms. Francine Charles delivered a presentation focused on enhancing public speaking and effective communication skills for youth advocates. This training aimed to equip participants with the necessary tools to communicate their messages clearly and confidently in public speaking settings and media interviews. Ms. Charles emphasized that communication is an ongoing process that involves the transmission and reception of messages, followed by feedback. She highlighted that effective communication is relationship-sensitive and can be verbal, non-verbal, or a combination of both. Ms. Charles identified several barriers that can hinder effective communication, including the use of over-complicated or technical terms, lack of attention or interest from the receiver, inadequate clarity in the message being conveyed, and variations in understanding due to differences in gender, race, age, religion, and values. Other barriers she mentioned were non-verbal cues being missed if communicators cannot see each other, differences in cultural backgrounds and geographical locations, preconceived notions and biases, and stress, anger, and other emotional states.

Ms. Charles noted that key aspects of effective communication include ensuring clarity of thought before communicating, understanding one's own communication barriers, and paying close attention to both verbal and non-verbal cues from others. She stressed the importance of being thoughtful in messaging and actively listening and observing.

In her discussion on public speaking techniques, Ms. Charles emphasized the importance of understanding who you are speaking to and the logistics of the event. She stressed the need to thoroughly prepare and practice your presentation. Ms. Charles advised dressing suitably for the occasion, ensuring that your attire does not distract from your message, and recommended arriving early to perform any necessary technical checks. She highlighted the importance of maintaining eye contact and engaging with the audience to create a connection. Ms. Charles suggested using language appropriate to the audience's level of understanding and avoiding overly complex terms.

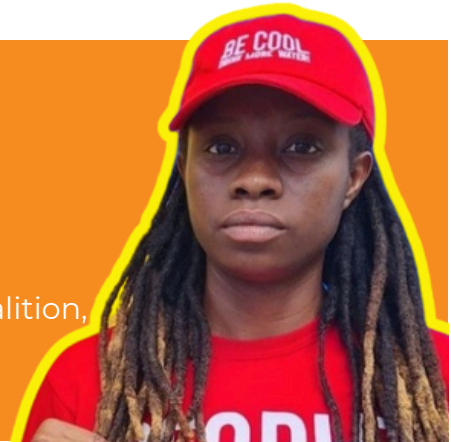
Regarding media interviews, Ms. Charles advised understanding the nature of the program, target audience, presenter, set, and interview duration. She emphasized the importance of being clear about the primary messages you want to convey, keeping your language simple, and explaining any terms or acronyms. Ms. Charles noted the need to maintain comfortable eye contact with the presenter, especially during TV interviews, and advised steering clear of conflict unless it is inherent to the show's nature. The workshop also included practical exercises such as facial and breathing exercises to help participants relax and prepare for speaking engagements. The session concluded with practice interviews with some of the attendees.

Day 3

Panel Discussion: Chatting with the Media

Moderated by: Ms. Krista Maloney

Youth Advocate, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition,
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados



The session aimed to equip participants with essential skills for engaging with the media effectively. The objectives included developing an understanding of the newsroom's realities, which influence the types of news stories released, and learning how to compose media-facing stories related to healthy food policy. Participants explored the barriers to developing investigative food policy journalism across the Caribbean and shared writing tips to prepare health awareness and advocacy articles that are ready for the news. Additionally, the session focused on exploring ways advocates can build or strengthen relationships with the media to enhance their advocacy efforts.

We asked our panellists **Mr. Ferdison Valmond**, **Ms. Antoinette Connell** and **Mr. Curlan Campbell** to share one key takeaway from their discussions.

Prepare press releases with audio quotes

Use health days & events to your advantage

Make connections with media houses & journalists



Mr. Ferdison Valmond

Public Relations and Communications
Consultant, National Coordinator –
Commonwealth Youth Climate
Change Network

Ms. Antoinette Connell

Daily Nation Editor at Nation
Publishing Company Limited

Mr. Curlan Campbell

Freelance Journalist, NOW
Grenada

FEEDBACK

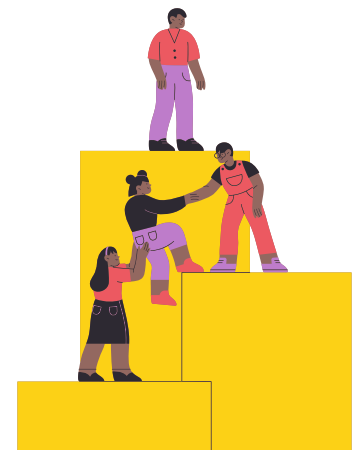


A feedback form was distributed to participants following the three-day session. Overall, the youth meeting was positively received. Below are some of the key suggestions provided:

- Include more in-person activities, cultural activities, and longer sessions in future meetings.
- Allocate additional time for planning regional activities, case-based scenarios, and practical exercises.
- Allow participants to submit ideas beforehand and dedicate time for brainstorming similar concepts.
- Provide recommendations for countries that are behind on implementing health policies and focus on building areas that need support.

Participants also shared ways they thought HCC could support them:

- *"Provide us with information on funding/sponsorship opportunities to support our work."*
- *"Continue to share your knowledge, experience and resources"*
- *"It would be nice to have access to database of contacts of allies in the region that we can reach out to in order to gain better access to information for research, for example."*
- *"More capacity building related to industry interference."*



NEXT STEPS



As a major outcome of this meeting, youth attendees voted to lead a regional advocacy activity, that would focus on School Nutrition Policies supported by Octagonal Front-of-Package Warning Labelling. This activity, titled 'Hope for the Future' aligns with global advocates' call for policymakers to invest in best practices to address NCDs ahead of the monumental High Level Meeting on NCDs scheduled for 2025.

For more information and to access photos of the regional youth meeting, please visit: <https://www.healthycaribbean.org/empowering-caribbean-youth-voices-for-health-advocacy/>

Annex 1 - Meeting Agenda

Day 1 Session	Presenters
Moderator: Danielle Walwyn, Advocacy Officer and Lead, Healthy Caribbean Youth Healthy Caribbean Coalition	
Registration	
Welcome and Opening Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Trevor Hassell, President, HCC Mr. Pierre Cooke, Technical Advisor, HCC
Virtual Presentation: Let's Get it Straight: Ultra Processed Products as Addictive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Alexandra DiFeliceantonio Assistant Professor, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at Virginia Tech Carilion
Icebreaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by Ms. Simone Bishop-Matthews, Healthy Caribbean Youth, Trinidad and Tobago
What do our food environments look like? Mapping the Reality Interactive Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by Danielle Walwyn
Movement Break	
Let's Chat Solutions – What can be done to address unhealthy food environments	<p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Samantha Moitt, Chief Nutrition Officer, Ministry of Health and Wellness, Antigua and Barbuda Ms. Hedda Phillips-Boyce, Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, Barbados Ms. Vonetta Nurse, Nutrition Officer, UNICEF Jamaica, Jamaica Dr. Fernanda Mediano, Assistant Professor, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile <p>Intervention: Ree-Anna Robinson, UNICEF Youth Advocate, Jamaica Moderated by: Kabira Foster, Youth Advocate, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados</p>
Lunch	
Advocacy 101	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Priyanka Lalla, UNICEF Child Rights Ambassador and Healthy Caribbean Youth, Trinidad and Tobago Mr. Taahir Bulbulia, Advisor to the subcommittee of the HSFB lead advocates, Barbados Ms. Tasha Mhakayakor Board Trustee, Bite Back <p>Interventions from Civil Society: Caribbean Regional Youth Council, Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago (DAT), Healthy Bahamas Coalition, Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ), Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB), UNICEF Jamaica</p>
Break	
Spotlight on Caribbean Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces Small Seed Grant Awardees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Shyra Wattley, Attorney-at-law and Volunteer with Lake Health and Wellbeing, Saint Kitts and Nevis
Day 1 Wrap Up	

Day 2 Session	Presenters
Moderator: Simeca Alexander, Williamson, Advocacy Officer, Heart Foundation of Jamaica	
Welcome	
Rights-Based Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shannique Bowden, Executive Director, Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network • Mr. Kevin Pierre Cooke, Technical Advisor, Healthy Caribbean Coalition
Commercial Determinants Conflict of Interest and Industry Interference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Rosanna Pike, Heart Foundation of Jamaica • Ms. Kimberley Benjamin, Attorney-at-law and Healthy Caribbean Youth Member
Scavenger Hunt and Healthy Food Policy Journey Mapping	
Day 2 Wrap Up	

Day 3 Session	Presenters
Moderator: Shanielle Allen, Advocacy and Policy Officer, Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network	
Welcome and Recap	
Tools developed by partners to support Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Vonetta Nurse, UNICEF Jamaica • Ms. Danielle Walwyn, Healthy Caribbean Coalition
Skill Building #1 - CANVA!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jill Greenberg, Communications Consultant, Global Health Advocacy Incubator
Movement Break	
Skill Building Activity #2 Public Speaking Training (Tips and Tricks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Francine Charles, Programme Manager, Childhood Obesity Prevention Project, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados
Regional Activity Planning and Next Steps	
Meeting Wrap Up and Close	
Oistins Fish Fry	

Annex 2- List of Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organization	Country
Naomi	Cambridge	Ashley Lashley Foundation	Barbados
Nairobi	Cortez	Belize Diabetes Association	Belize
Chelsea	Antoine	Caribbean Regional Youth Council	Trinidad and Tobago
Ferdison	Valmond	Caribbean Youth Environment Network	Dominica
Tiffanie	Skeritt	CARICOM Youth Ambassador	Montserrat
Andrew	Dabiedeen	Diabetes Association of Trinidad and Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago
Sannie	Abraham	Dominica Cancer Society	Dominica
Rachel	Morrison	Global Health Advocacy Incubator	Jamaica
Olivia	Carter	Global Health Advocacy Incubator	USA
Kaj	Archer	Healthy Bahamas Coalition	The Bahamas
Danielle	Walwyn	Healthy Caribbean Coalition	Antigua and Barbuda
Dorial	Quintyne	Healthy Caribbean Coalition	Barbados
Maisha	Hutton	Healthy Caribbean Coalition	Barbados
Pierre (Kevin)	Cooke Jr.	Healthy Caribbean Coalition	Barbados
Sheena	Warner-Edwards	Healthy Caribbean Coalition	Barbados
Trevor	Hassell	Healthy Caribbean Coalition	Barbados
Xarriah	Nicholls	Healthy Caribbean Coalition PLWNCDS Advisory Committee/ Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Charity	Dublin	Healthy Caribbean Youth/ Antigua And Barbuda Diabetes Association	Antigua and Barbuda
Andicia	Tuitt	Healthy Caribbean Youth/ Antigua And Barbuda Diabetes Association	Antigua and Barbuda
Julien	Kentish	Healthy Caribbean Youth/ National Youth Ambassador Corps	Antigua and Barbuda
Ashley	Foster-Estwick	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Eden	Augustus	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Keinel	Alleyne	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Kern	Rocke	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Kimberley	Benjamin	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Christopher	Laurie	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Shay	Stabler-Morris	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Stephanie	Whiteman	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Rebecca	Cox	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Zahra	Ashby	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Barbados
Gabrielle	Edwards	Healthy Caribbean Youth	The Bahamas
Karissa	Moss	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Grenada
Renee	Thomas	Healthy Caribbean Youth/ Grenada Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases Commission	Grenada
Neorgia	Grant	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Jamaica/Usa
Offniel	Lamont	Healthy Caribbean Youth	Jamaica
Michele	Baker	Healthy Caribbean Youth/Lake Health And Wellbeing	St. Kitts And Nevis
simone	bishop-matthews	Healthy Caribbean youth	Trinidad and tobago
Rozette	scotland	Healthy Caribbean youth	Trinidad and tobago
Rosanna	Pike	Heart Foundation Of Jamaica	Jamaica
Shelly-Gae	Currithers	Heart Foundation Of Jamaica	Jamaica
Simeca	Alexander-Williamson	Heart Foundation Of Jamaica	Jamaica
Alex	Johnson	Heart Foundation Of Jamaica/ Jamaica Health Advocates - Youth Arm (JHAYA)	Jamaica
Francine	Charles	Heart And Stroke Foundation Of Barbados	Barbados
Kabira	Foster	Heart And Stroke Foundation Of Barbados	Barbados
Krista	Maloney	Heart And Stroke Foundation Of Barbados	Barbados
Khadijah	Bakharia	Heart And Stroke Foundation Of Barbados	Barbados
Khrystal	Walcott	Heart And Stroke Foundation Of Barbados	Barbados
Michron	Robinson	Heart And Stroke Foundation Of Barbados	Barbados
Darrell	Scott	Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network	Jamaica
Natalia	Burton	Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network	Jamaica
Shannique	Bowden	Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network	Jamaica

First Name	Last Name	Organization	Country
Genesisia	Pemberton	Lake Health And Wellbeing	St. Kitts And Nevis
Shyra	Wattley	Lake Health And Wellbeing	St. Kitts And Nevis
Tamasha	Gilead-Goddette	Ministry Of Health	Guyana
Melodie	Hercules	Ministry Of Health And The Environment	St. Vincent And The Grenadines
Yasmine	Polius	St. Lucia Diabetes And Hypertension Association	St. Lucia
Kareem	Smith	UNICEF Eastern Caribbean	Barbados
Africka	Stephenson	UNICEF Jamaica	Jamaica
Ree-Anna	Robinson	UNICEF Jamaica	Jamaica
Vonetta	Nurse	UNICEF Jamaica	Jamaica

