**Barbados**

NCD Joint programming mission, April 2015
Investment case mission, September 2015

**Key mission findings**

1. The Port of Spain Declaration issued by Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on 15 September 2007 is one of the first political declarations to have placed NCDs on the global development agenda.

2. Ministries are aware of the economic impact of NCDs, as well as the need for a whole-of-government response.

3. The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Barbados has included NCDs in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), but still needs to develop joint programmes and prioritize multi-sectoral action to tackle NCDs more effectively.

4. There is strong support within the Ministry of Health for a paradigm shift towards prevention of diabetes and CVD rather than treatment.

5. The Government of Barbados is a leader on NCDs across CARICOM. Opportunities for ever greater leadership can come from scaling up action throughout the life course on nutrition, harmful use of alcohol, childhood obesity and strengthening health system response.

6. A robust NGO community, strong academic partners and a vibrant civil society are ready to both support the government and challenge it to spur action in the NCD crisis.

7. Nutrition should be prioritized for urgent attention as obesity levels are rising, particularly childhood obesity and other nutrition-related chronic diseases.

8. Nutrition and unhealthy diets remain problematic, and little or no progress has been achieved in: (a) removing trans-fats from the food supply; (b) enacting labelling laws; (c) leveraging trade agreements to reduce obesogenic environments; (d) regulating the nutritional content of school feeding; or (e) reducing the advertising of foods high in fat, salt and sugar to children.

9. Pricing measures to encourage healthy choices are difficult to implement due to the lack of locally available healthy products.

“The Government of Barbados recognizes that it cannot manage the ever increasing burden of NCDs by treating people with these conditions. We simply cannot afford to do this. What we have to do is prevent these diseases in the first place. Working to prevent NCDs is the best investment for our children. This is now a priority for the government and is now being taken with utmost seriousness at the highest levels of government. We therefore welcome the support of the Joint UN Task Force in helping us tackle NCDs.”

John Boyce
Minister of Health of Barbados

---

**Probability of premature mortality from NCDs:**
- **16%** (2015)
- **13%** of men (aged >=15 years) smoke tobacco (2015)
- **19%** of adult men and **33%** of adult women are obese (2014)

**39%** of adults are insufficiently physically active (2010)

**14%** of adults have raised fasting blood glucose (2014)

**29%** of adult men and **27%** of adult women have raised blood pressure (2015)

Pure alcohol per capita consumption: **6.5 litres per year** (population 15+, 2015)

**95%** of adults eat insufficient amounts of fruit and vegetables (STEPS, 2007)
Key recommendations

1. Urgent attention is needed to develop a costed action plan to deliver cost-effective population-based preventive interventions to reduce obesity, diabetes and other NCDs.

2. Urgent focus is needed on the elimination of trans-fats and a reduction of the consumption of salt and sugar.

3. A WHO FCTC needs assessment is needed to address bottlenecks in tobacco control.

4. The coverage and effectiveness of the cervical cancer screening programme needs to be assessed, and a communication campaign rolled out to dispel misinformation on HPV vaccination.

5. Multi-sectoral socio-impact assessments and a socioeconomic study aimed at building the case for investing in NCDs are being developed by UNCT in collaboration with academia, NGOs and other partners.

6. Greater cross-agency convergence of efforts is expected to be achieved with the forthcoming appointment of a national professional officer or equivalent.

Adding value: actions taken following the mission

1. The Government has imposed a 10% tax increase on carbonated high-calorie drinks.

2. WHO, UNDP and the MoH did an NCD investment case, with MoH staff receiving training to present the investment case to Cabinet.

3. The National Childhood Obesity Strategy was submitted for Cabinet approval.

4. The pace and scope of NCD-related collaboration and action by local NGOs is increasing.

5. A national UN Task Force is being established to strengthen in-country coordination on NCDs.


7. Following the meeting of the Joint UN Task Force with the cabinet sub-committee on NCDs, recommendations for costing and implementation were developed. Actions to achieve the targets set out in the strategic plan are underway. The impetus given by the Joint UN Task Force mission was key to moving forward the implementation of the strategic plan.

8. The proposed UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UNMSDF) for the Caribbean region now includes NCDs as one of the main priorities, both in the health pillar and in the other priority areas.

9. Parliament approved the Regulation (amendment of the Health Services Act) to restrict the sale of e-cigarettes and regulate the packaging and labelling of tobacco products based on the CARICOM Standard.

10. The Global Standardized Hypertension Treatment Project report was completed.

11. Interim report of the evaluation of the Sweetened Beverage Tax was shared by the University of the West Indies with the Ministry of Health.

Next steps

1. The revised Road Traffic Act that supports a national minimal blood alcohol concentration and breathalyser testing should be ratified. It is hoped that this policy can be in force by July 2017.

2. The UN will support efforts to ensure that tax revenues on carbonated drinks are channelled into health promotion.

3. The UN will create a clear agenda of action for banning trans-fats.

4. The UN will recruit a focal point to assist in coordinating actions on NCDs.

“The United Nations is committed to supporting scaling up action to tackle NCDs in Barbados. The levels of NCDs are very worrying and we are pleased that the government is taking this issue so seriously. There are clear evidence-based interventions for tackling NCDs at the population level, for example to reduce salt, sugar and fat intake. These are highly cost-effective and feasible to undertake. If implemented they can result in dramatic reductions in NCDs over a fairly short period of time. The government is now well placed to deliver on its NCD strategy.”

Dr Oleg Chestnov, Assistant Director-General, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, WHO, Geneva

“The United Nations is committed to supporting scaling up action to tackle NCDs in Barbados. The levels of NCDs are very worrying and we are pleased that the government is taking this issue so seriously. There are clear evidence-based interventions for tackling NCDs at the population level, for example to reduce salt, sugar and fat intake. These are highly cost-effective and feasible to undertake. If implemented they can result in dramatic reductions in NCDs over a fairly short period of time. The government is now well placed to deliver on its NCD strategy.”

Tennyson Springer
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health