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), within which Barbados shows significant leadership, on 15 September 2007, is one of the first political declarations to have placed NCDs on the global development agenda.

2. The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Barbados has included NCDs in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Ministries are aware of the impact of NCDs and conscious of the need for a paradigm shift from treatment to prevention. However, the UNCT still needs to develop joint programmes and prioritize multi-sectoral action to tackle NCDs more effectively.

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

4. Nutrition and unhealthy diets remain problematic and the levels of obesity are rising. There has been little to no progress 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.

“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

Key adult NCD mortality and risk factors*: NCDs cause premature mortality, significant ill health and represent a severe drain on the economy of Barbados

- Probability of premature mortality from NCDs: 16% (2016)
- 30% of adult men and 57% of adult women are insufficiently physically active (2016)
- 12% of adult men and 16% of adult women have raised fasting blood glucose (2014)
- 30% of adult men and 27% of adult women have raised blood pressure (2015)
- 14% of men and 2% of women (aged >=15 years) smoke tobacco (2016)
- 47% of adult men and 64% of adult women are overweight (2016)
- Pure alcohol per capita consumption: 9.6 litres per year (population 15+, 2016)
- 95% of adults eat insufficient amounts of fruit and vegetables (STEPS, 2007)
**Key recommendations**

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

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

3. 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.

**Adding value: actions taken following the mission**

1. Barbados was the first country to pilot test the investment-case approach in 2015.

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

3. WHO, UNDP and the MoH developed an NCD investment case, and MoH staff received training to present the investment case to the Cabinet.

4. The Non-Communicable Disease Action Plan has been costed.

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

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

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


9. 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.

10. 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.

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

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

13. Efforts are being made to introduce Front of Pack labelling and a salt reduction campaign in already in progress.

14. Amendments were made to the Road Traffic Regulations that require cyclists to wear a helmet. It was further prohibited to drive or operating a vehicle while holding and using a cellular telephone.

**Next steps**

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

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

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

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*All data are rounded WHO crude country comparable estimates taken from the WHO Global Health Observatory, who.int/gho/ncd/en, accessed 18/6/2018, with the exception of the fruit and vegetable amount data which is rounded and is from Barbados National STEPS Survey, 2007, accessed 18/6/2018.

Additional information on the status of NCDs in Barbados can be found on the WHO NCD DataFinder app.

“**The Joint UN Task Force’s mission really stimulated the in-country UN system to get behind the NCD agenda, and start working together as one to identify clear actions to support the Barbados Government.**”

Stephen O’Malley, UN Resident Coordinator

“**Barbados is committed to action to reduce premature mortality from NCDs. The Joint UN Task Force’s presence was important in highlighting our achievements, as well as critical in identifying next steps. The UN mission has catalysed UN support for NCDs, which is great news.**”

Tennyson Springer, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health