

For Immediate Release

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Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition Confirms its First Chairperson

- Suleiman Bulbulia has been confirmed as the first Chairperson of the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition and he is advocating that policy makers ensure that the National School Nutrition Policy which is now being pushed forward must have strong evidence based prescriptions as recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to confront the growing trend of childhood obesity in Barbados.
- The newly confirmed Chairperson who has been one of the key champions for the Childhood Obesity Prevention project since 2018, explained that, “the concerning statistic of 31% of children in Barbados being obese or overweight is highly disturbing. Additionally, there is an overwhelming worry that our school environments across the island are highly obesogenic, with young children often confronted with bright colours of packaging and marketing gimmicks of unhealthy food. This leaves them to the whims and fancies of the food and beverage industry.”
- He also noted a factor highlighted by the Chief Education Officer Joy Adamson at last week’s Opening Ceremony for the Stakeholders’ Consultation for Development, on the National Nutrition Policy hosted by the Pan American Health Organisation, where she said, “It is hoped that this policy addresses all facets of school life, whilst equipping students with knowledge and skills to make better decisions regarding their physical and dietary health, however Bulbulia explains, “Protecting our Children should be a requirement and priority, as our children are among the most vulnerable in our society.”

Regarding policy the coalition is calling on policymakers to ensure that the National school nutrition policy includes a ban on the sale and marketing of sugar sweetened drinks in the school environments. Most sugar sweetened drinks in the Barbados market both sodas and juices have sugar levels that are 3 times the levels recommended by the WHO.

Those in the medical and research fraternity have also been drawing attention to the fact that higher levels of childhood obesity lead to higher incidence of non-communicable disease among our children. The non-communicable disease (NCD) burden of cardiovascular disease and diabetes in Barbados is approximately \$BBD 64 million per year. 1 in 5 Barbadians has type 2 diabetes. Additionally drinking just 1 sugary drink a day increases the likelihood of being overweight by 52% for children and increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 26%.

The Coalition which is now in its second year of existence has a goal of advocating for the prevention of increasing rates of childhood obesity in Barbados. The coalition advocacy efforts are its main focus with the implementation and enforcement of WHO evidence-based policy actions to derail obesogenic environments which children are in, and Childhood Obesity Prevention (COP)-related public outreach efforts.

The Coalition comprises of a cross-section of civil society organisations (CSOs) both health based CSOs and CSO non-health interest groups, but not exclusive to those alone. The groupings of the

Coalition CSO members are faith-based organisations, sports organisations, youth and parent-teacher organisations. These groups along with committed individual members have been ensuring that even during the COVID-19 lockdown in Barbados the needs of the most vulnerable were met by the Coalition providing healthy food hampers to those with Non-communicable diseases.

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For Further Information

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