



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2022

Together, let's get unhealthy foods and beverages out of our schools

1 in 3 Barbadian children is overweight or obese and 18% ate fast food 3-4 times a week and 73.3% reported drinking at least one soda a day. Foods high in sugar, fats, and sodium can lead to obesity and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The country is already grappling with 83% of deaths caused by NCDs and an economic burden of over \$BBD 60 million per year on cardiovascular diseases and diabetes alone. The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, under its Childhood Obesity Prevention (COP) Programme, launched another phase of its healthy food policy campaign entitled “Out of Our Schools” to bring attention to the issue and join the 92% of Barbadians who support having a National Policy to ensure a healthy school environment.

Following Cabinet’s approval of the School Nutrition Policy, the “Out of Our Schools” campaign aims to build support for the Policy; to continue the call for the strong implementation and monitoring of the policy and to increase public knowledge about the health harms of excess consumption of foods high in sodium, fats, and sugar. It also intends to support policy makers in the removal of unhealthy foods and beverages from schools with the support of parents and guardians. The campaign is being launched in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR), and other partners.

HSFB’s CEO Michelle Daniel said “We must act collaboratively as a country to help prevent childhood obesity and reduce the NCD burden- parents, guardians, schools, and government. Our children are the future of Barbados and in order to have a healthier society, we must protect them from health harms, like those caused by excess consumption of sugary drinks such conditions include obesity and Type 2 diabetes, which can increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. We can start by removing sugary drinks and unhealthy foods from schools.”

President of HCC, Sir Trevor Hassell, said “Children have the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Although parents and guardians have the primary responsibility of ensuring this for their children, the government has a key role to play through policy implementation. One measure the government can affect to help reduce the NCD burden of conditions that include obesity, heart disease, and stroke, is to remove sugary drinks and unhealthy foods from schools through a healthy nutrition in schools’ policy. This will enable a healthier school environment- one where our children can learn and grow optimally.”

The campaign video for “Out of Our Schools” tells the story of a school-aged Barbadian girl, Sharon, who is concerned about the prevalence of childhood obesity in her country. She highlights

the problem of unhealthy foods and beverages at schools and the risk of NCDs that threatens her peers. She then challenges policymakers, parents, guardians, the entire population of Barbados to collectively address the problem by supporting and implementing a strong healthy school nutrition policy in schools. The campaign slogan and call to action is: **“let’s get unhealthy foods and beverages out of our schools”**.

The “Out of Our Schools” campaign will run on TV, radio, in newspapers, on social media and outdoor advertising. Barbadians are encouraged to share messages about the campaign on social media using the hashtags: #OutOfOurSchools, #OuttaSchools, #ProtectOurChildren, #PolicyIntoAction, #PeopleBeforeProfits, #HealthyBarbados, #RightToHealthyFoods. They can retweet posts or comment on posts from the Instagram or Facebook page of @hsfbarbados.

Further information and stills from the campaign are available upon request.

About the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados

The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados Inc. is a non-profit organisation registered under the Companies Act 1982 of Barbados registration number 269 and under the Charities Act 1979-2 registration number 82. The Foundation was founded in 1985 as the Heart Foundation of Barbados and in 2006 embraced stroke to become the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados. It’s Childhood Obesity Prevention (COP) Programme supports obesity prevention through mass media campaigns for increased awareness of the harms of sugary drinks and promotion of policy change.

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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