

## Caribbean Workshop on School Health Promotion Policy Toronto, Canada, March 25-27, 2009

### Background

Investing in school health is a prerequisite for effective learning in a productive society. By recognizing the relevance of the school setting for preventing disease and promoting health at early age in life, policy makers and health and education specialists depend upon existing information to design effective programs. Since 2003, an increasing number of countries in the Americas are collecting periodic data through the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS).

The purpose of the GSHS is to monitor the prevalence of important health risk behaviors and protective factors among students 13 to 15 years of age to:

- Help countries establish priorities, develop programs, and advocate resources
- Allow to make comparisons across countries
- Establish trends in the prevalence of health behavior and protective factors by country
- Evaluate school health policies and programs.

The 10 GSHS core questionnaire modules address the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among children and adults worldwide:

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Alcohol and other drugs use | ✓ Sexual behaviors that contribute to HIV infection, other STI, and unintended pregnancy |
| ✓ Dietary behaviors           | ✓ Tobacco use  |
| ✓ Hygiene                     | ✓ Violence and unintentional injury  |
| ✓ Mental health               |  |
| ✓ Physical activity           |  |
| ✓ Protective factors          |  |
| ✓ Respondents demographics    |  |

There is a critical mass of English-speaking Caribbean countries already implementing the GSHS. As of October 2008, seven<sup>1</sup> countries have already implemented the GSHS and eight<sup>2</sup> additional countries and overseas territories in the process of implementing the GSHS in 2009.

As standardized data from the GSHS becomes available additional opportunities can be created to build upon the momentum created as result of the CARICOM Regional Summit of Heads of Government on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) held in Trinidad and Tobago in September of 2007. As part of the Port of Spain (PoS) declaration, the Heads of Governments of

---

<sup>1</sup> Cayman Islands, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago,

<sup>2</sup> Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Dominica, British Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Suriname, St. Kitts and Nevis.

the CARICOM agreed on a comprehensive approach and partnerships as critical to success, and mandated, *inter-alia*, to “re-introduce physical education in schools where necessary, provide incentives and resources to effect this policy and ensure that our education sector promote programs aimed at providing healthy school meals and promoting healthy eating”, and “to ban the sale, advertising and promotion of tobacco products to children. Subsequently, policy priorities established by the CARICOM were taken to other forums in the Region”, e.g.: Agriculture Ministers, private sector (Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce), and civil society organizations.

Also under the CARICOM initiative, the Caribbean Education Sector Coordinator (*EduCan*) Network was created in 2006. *EduCan* coordinators from 14 countries provide a coordinated and sustained response to HIV/AIDS and health by Caribbean education sectors. WHO/PAHO's collaborating center EDC serves as ongoing secretariat for *EduCan*. Working as partners, PAHO and EDC are aiming at strengthening collaboration between Health and Education sectors at the Caribbean by bringing together GSHS national coordinators working at the Ministries of Health and *EduCan* coordinators from the Ministries of Education. Several other initiatives are also underway in the Caribbean targeted at youth and school aged populations, such as CARICOM/HFLE, and programs by CIDA, CDB, World Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat, reflecting the high level of interest in this critical age group

On May 2008, PAHO and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) gathered in Montreal for the annual meeting of the CARMEN Observatory on Chronic NCDs. The purpose of the meeting - entitled *Mobilizing for Action*- was to articulate and define next steps for specific projects within *PAHO's Regional Strategy and Plan of Action on an Integrated Approach to the Prevention and Control of Chronic Diseases including Diet, Physical Activity and Health*. As part of the conclusions, school health was selected as one of the priority areas along with fruits and vegetables, physical activity, salt, and health services.

## Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to facilitate policy dialogue to on the implementation of the policy directions in the POS Declaration on prevention and control of chronic diseases especially as it relates to schools, e.g., improve the quality of school meals, increase levels of physical activity, and strengthen curriculum on subjects of good diet and physical education in the Caribbean. In order to advance the CARICOM's agenda on school health, a 2 ½ day sub-regional meeting is proposed to bring strategic partners together to promote concerted action. The output will also go to the Health and Education Ministers special meeting of the CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in April 2009. In particular, existing data from GSHS countries at the Caribbean will be used to facilitate policy dialogue and identify good practices for school health programming supported by health and education sectors, international cooperating organization, and donors. Strengthening the strategic alliance between health-education and community development will be a desired outcome

### Specific objectives of the meeting

- Analyze existing GSHS data related to dietary behaviors, physical activity and other health related risk and protective factors among school children across the Caribbean;
- Facilitate dialogue among strategic partners for concerted action to make further progress towards commitments related to school health established in the CARICOM Declarations of Port-of Spain and Georgetown
- Draft a plan proposal with strategic recommendations to advance and better monitor progress in school health and nutrition indicators in the Caribbean and other risks for NCDs. If appropriate, prepare a draft policy brief for the special COHSOD of health and education ministers
- Strengthen the strategic alliance between Health-Education and Community Development and other relevant stakeholders.

## Caribbean Workshop on School Health Promotion Policy Toronto, Canada, March 25-27, 2009

### DRAFT AGENDA

#### Day One - Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009

---

#### **SESSION 1 Welcome and Overview**

8:30 – 9:00 Registration - facilitated by PHAC's support staff

9:00 – 9:30 Welcome remarks  
Barbara Legowski, PHAC  
Bernadette Theodore-Gandi, PAHO/CCP

9:30 – 9:45 Meeting overview and objectives  
Alfonso Contreras, PAHO

9:45 – 10:00 Participant Introductions

#### **SESSION 2 GSHS for a School Health Promotion response to the CARICOM Port of Spain Declaration for CNCDS** Session Chair: Barbara Legowski, PHAC

10:00 – 10:30 Finding common ground for the promotion of School Health in the Region.  
Presenter: Alfonso Contreras

10:30 – 11:00 Break

11:00 – 12:00 Vision and context for School Health in the Caribbean Community  
Presenters: Sandra Plummer / CARICOM  
Morella Joseph / CARICOM

12:00 – 13:00 School Health Promotion in response to the CARICOM Declaration of Port of

- Spain  
Presenter: TBD
- 13:00 – 14:30 Lunch
- 14:30 – 15:30 Regional Overview of CNCD data  
Presenter: Bernadette Theodore-Gandi, PAHO/CPC
- 15:30 – 15:45 Break
- 15:45 -16:45 GSHS cross-country comparison of risk and protective factors among students 13 to 15 years of age in 7 Caribbean countries  
Presenter: Leanne Riley, WHO
- 16:45 – 17:00 Wrap up.  
Do you have any questions about your travel arrangements, reservations, per diem, reimbursement, etc?  
Presenter: Lai Yin Lee Rodriguez , PHAC

## **Day Two – Thursday, March 26th, 2009**

---

### **SESSION 3 School Health Promotion Interventions**

Session Chair: Carol Boyd-Scobie, PAHO/TRT

- 8:30 – Country overviews.
- 8:30 – 8:50 Cayman Islands  
8:50 – 9:10 Grenada  
9:10 – 9:30 Guyana  
9:30 – 9:40 Questions  
Facilitator: TBD
- 9:40 – 10:00 Saint Lucia  
10:00 - 10:20 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- 10:20 – 11:00 Break
- 11:00 – 11:20 Montserrat  
11:20 – 11:40 Trinidad & Tobago  
11:40 – 12:00 Questions

12:00 – 13:00 Plenary session to Identify weaknesses and good practices for school health-related policies, skills-based health education, school-based health and nutrition services, and safe water and sanitation facilities.  
Facilitator: TBD

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

**SESSION 4 Building and strengthening strategic alliances for health promotion in schools**

14:30 – 15:15 Overview of the HFLE framework. Using the life skills approach to teaching HIV and AIDS  
Presenters: Cheryl Vince Whitman, EDC  
Arlene Husbands, EDC  
Sophia Edwards-Gabriel. MOE/Saint Lucia

15:15 – 16:00 The use of evidence for advocacy, policy formulation and program development  
Presenter: Canada

16:00 – 16:00 Break

16:00 – 16:45 Lessons learned by CFNI in assisting countries to implement school-based nutrition programs in the Caribbean.  
Presenter: Laura Richards and Christine Bocage, PAHO/CFNI

16:45 – 17:30 Open Forum - Breaking the barriers for effective partnerships.  
Facilitator: James Hospedales, PAHO

### **Day Three – Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

---

**SESSION 5 Data to Action – developing action plans and recommendations for regional action re: realizing the CARICOM PoS Declaration GSHS Group 1 Countries**

Objective: Prepare country action plans with strategic recommendations for sub regional action to advance and better monitor progress in school health and nutrition in the Caribbean in the context of the CARICOM PoS Declaration for CNCDS.

8:30 – 9:30 Country teams/working groups are provided with country fact sheets specific to

selected key areas and discuss country specific interventions/activities - action plans. During the second hour

- 9:30 – 10:30 Equal groups – education/ health representatives of one each per country/sector mixed, present their country ideas and discuss possible collaboration for common areas of concern and or common ideas for interventions
- 10:30 – 11:00 Break
- 11:00 – 11:30 Work group reports to plenary
- 11:30 – 12:00 Discussion  
Notes: Facilitated discussion to reach consensus on country and cross country action plans and recommendations for sub regional action, including involvement of other sub-regional actors in youth and school health, education and development, e.g., Caribbean Development Bank, CIDA, World Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat
- 12:00 – 12:30 Workgroup session to finalize country (individual and cross country– TCC) action plans based on discussions and input from regional/international partners
- 12:30 – 13:00 Presentation of final action plans and recommendations for sub regional action
- 13:00 – 13:30 Closing Conclusions and next steps
- 13:30 – 14:30 Lunch**
- 14:30 - Individual country meetings
- 14:30 – 14:50 Cayman Islands  
14:50 – 15:10 Grenada  
15:10 – 15:50 Guyana  
15:50 – 16:10 St. Lucia  
16:10 – 16:20 St. Vincent  
16:20 – 16:50 Montserrat  
16:50 – 17:10 Trinidad & Tobago
- 17:10 – 17:30 Review of action plan by partners to work out mechanism(s) for follow through