

Promoting health in faith-based organisations

<i>"Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers."</i>	<i>3 John 1:2. King James 2000 Bible</i>
<i>"Eat of the good things which We have provided for you."</i>	<i>Quran 2:172</i>
<i>"To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear."</i>	<i>Buddha</i>
<i>"Foods in the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction."</i>	<i>Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 17, verses 8-10</i>

What we know

An evaluation of the 2007 CARICOM Heads of Government Declaration on NCDs has reinforced the critical need for an all-of-society approach to challenging the NCD epidemic.

Across the religious spectrum, faith-based organisations are a key part of this multisectoral approach and here we suggest some of the ways in which you can use your reach and impact to really make a difference in helping the people of the Caribbean lead longer, healthier lives. Many faith-based organisations have already recognised the threat posed by NCDs and promote paths to health and wellness among followers and participate in multisectoral NCD meetings.

Several organisations across the region are running general lifestyle intervention programmes, such as the Seventh-day Adventists. Religious leaders are encouraging followers to eat better, move more and avoid stress, some are supporting fitness activities like regular walks and publishing healthy living sections in newsletters and bulletins.

In a ground-breaking event in February 2014, representatives of 26 faith-based organisations in Barbados got together and issued the Bridgetown Declaration in which it was agreed that the religious communities would use their considerable resources and influence to promote healthy living and prevent the rise in NCDs.

For more on the Declaration visit:

<http://www.archive.healthycaribbean.org/onevs/documents/DECLARATION-OF-Bridgetown-FBO-NCDS-FEB-26-2014.pdf>



What you can do as faith-based organisations

Support the national effort

- Develop and issue versions of the Bridgetown Declaration tailored to national circumstances.
- Ensure participation in National NCD Commissions and/or NCD alliances.
- Become national champions for the NCD response, engaging with the media and spreading the health and wellness message.

For your membership

- Observe Caribbean Wellness Day/Week and use this as a springboard for year-round activity.
- Arrange for group exercise activities before or after services/religious activity.
- Organise healthy eating and exercise support groups.
- Ensure that healthy food options are available and promoted during religious functions.
- Organise healthy cooking demonstrations.
- Publish healthy living sections in bulletins and newsletters.
- Have blood pressure monitors and equipment to measure weight and height on the premises to check blood pressure and Body Mass Index.

Policies and plans

- Develop written policies and programmes aimed at supporting health-seeking behaviour change.
- Use a model based on the Seventh-day Adventist health programme to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.



“In the Seventh-day Adventist church we take health promotion really seriously and I believe we can make a tremendous difference by bringing knowledge and advice about non-communicable diseases....It’s important to spread the message of health and wellness beyond my church. We are now running a general lifestyle intervention programme that touches all communities.....”

Priscilla Prevost, Health Coordinator for the East Caribbean Conference of Seventh – day Adventists.

Visit our website at www.onecaribbeanhealth.org for much more on NCDs and accelerating action in the NCD response.

