



## Food & Nutrition (FaN) Project Bulletin January 2021

### Welcome Message

2020 was an unforgettable year. The FaN project team adopted new work approaches and strategies to meet today's challenges. We have applied the lessons learnt to all spheres of project engagement. In this edition, we are keen to showcase the real-world connections the project has made.

### RESEARCH

#### Caribbean Child Research Conference

On November 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), hosted the 15<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Child Research Conference. The virtual two-day event was presented under the theme: *Pandemics and Children's Rights*. Research Leads Professor T. Alafia Samuels, Dr Madhuvanti Murphy, Dr Leith Dunn, and Professor Fitzroy Henry participated in a panel discussion entitled *Promoting Child Nutrition to reduce the pandemic of non-communicable diseases*.

#### Key Takeaways

##### Healthy Eating and Active Living in Schools- Challenges and Interventions (Prof. Samuels)

- Obesity is the main underlying cause of chronic disease and premature death in the Caribbean.
- Sugar consumption, including sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), is a major contributor to the region's childhood obesity epidemic.
- For-profit tactics of multinational companies in developing countries have led to an overconsumption of highly processed, unhealthy food and sugary drinks which promote weight gain.
- Tactics like marketing junk food to children are extensive and harmful, and require industry regulation, SSB taxation, and other health promotion strategies, including physical activity and healthy diets.

##### Children nowadays doh eat dem tings! Understanding food consumption in the Caribbean (Dr. Murphy)

- Children's eating habits are influenced by (1) greater exposure to imported fruits and vegetables than to local produce; (2) marketing of unhealthy foods targeted at children; (3) family eating practices are now "grab and go" - *families rarely eat together*; (4) normalization of unhealthy fast foods in everyday life- *fast food is no longer just a treat*; (5) lack of carryover of school healthy eating initiatives at home and (6) youth perception of being invincible to negative health outcomes impacted by unhealthy foods.
- Interventions to improve healthy eating among children should focus less on forcing children to eat healthy foods, and more on (1) exposing children to healthy,

local produce in as many settings as possible and (2) educating children so they can make healthy and informed decisions about what they eat.

##### Gender, Food and Nutrition Children's Right to Health (Dr. Dunn)

- Utilize gender mainstreaming in food and nutrition policies and programmes to reduce NCD risks.
- Invest in the economic empowerment of rural women and women in agriculture to improve health and well-being of families in rural areas.
- Teach boys and girls the value of nutrition, as well as healthy cooking, eating and nutrition to reduce NCDs.
- Support children's rights to health by enabling healthy family environments.

##### The Impact of COVID-19 on Household Food Security in the Caribbean (Prof. Henry)

- **Food prices:** On average, 80% of severely affected households reported that food prices increased during the crisis.
- **Assistance given to combat COVID:** Groceries and money were the major assistance given mainly by governments. However those who needed help the most received the least.
- **Changes in the type of food consumed:** Major increase in rice and egg consumption and major decrease in vegetables, fruits, chicken, fish, and meat.
- Find out more about Prof Henry's work in our November 2020 bulletin by clicking [here](#).

**FaN Project Team Spotlight** "Dr. Waneisha Jones the FaN project's first Project Manager was recently appointed as Lecturer in Public Health in the Faculty of Medical Sciences UWI, Cave Hill Campus, but will continue to contribute to the project. Miss Catherine Brown will be the new Co-Project Manager, Catherine is no stranger to the FaN project supporting many of our data collection efforts in SKN and SVG over the past 3 years. We congratulate them both on these professional milestones."

#### Did you know?

Non-Communicable Diseases now make up 7 of the world's top 10 causes of death, prompting reaction from leading civil society organizations. To learn more about this please visit [the Health Policy Watch website](#) and for access to the most current estimates on global mortality and disability follow this [page](#).

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