

Sports Voice Joins the Childhood Obesity Fight

The ardent work of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados as a fearless proponent for Childhood Obesity Prevention is being described as invaluable and necessary. This the commendation of Barbados' Ambassador to the International University Sports Federation (FISU), Mr. Taahir Bulbulia, who is a passionate undergraduate student in sports management at the University of the West Indies. The University Sports Federation takes the lead on promoting sports and its development throughout universities across the globe. Bulbulia, in his role as Ambassador for FISU has recently joined the ranks of HSFB Partners and Champions for Childhood Obesity Prevention.

Bulbulia, also the Vice President of the Guild of Undergraduates at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, is becoming a strong youth voice in Barbados. He explained, "The fearless fight for a healthier Barbados is admirable! Fighting to break an engrained mindset will never be easy but we must unite to combat this pandemic of NCDs and unhealthy lifestyles in Barbados. We must break this alarming trend quickly." According to national statistics in Barbados 31 % of children are obese or overweight.

"As Ambassador, I look forward to this partnership with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados. The sporting fraternity most definitely supports the fight for a national health policy and the promotion of a more healthy and active society," said Bulbulia.

Speaking about the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition and its growing voices, Bulbulia stated, "It is important that partnerships are formed. For developmental purposes, collaborations are key to development in my opinion, and the more partnerships we can form, the better it is for a society." He further explained, "That as sports complements health and health complements an athlete, our sectors are all dependent on each other and they all connect to one another; and if we can connect around one common goal as a society and as a people this would certainly go a long way."

The young sports ambassador, highlighted statements by Barbados' Prime Minister the Hon. Mia Mottley, "All hands-on deck," Bulbulia explained, "We need all hands-on deck to fight this health crisis in Barbados, we need all hands on deck to fight this COVID-19 pandemic and similarly we need all hands on deck to fight the pandemic of Non-communicable Diseases and unhealthy lifestyles and aim for the promotion of more healthy ways of living and active lifestyles."

He further explained that community work would be critical as childhood obesity is a pandemic in itself, "As ambassador I saw it as of utmost importance to get into the clubs and communities and this is where we can offer and provide insight into what sports and healthy lifestyles are really about. This is where the work of the Heart and Stroke Foundation really comes in, and other entities in terms of development comes in, we really need to come together for the common good to battle the issues we are facing."

The World Health Organisation (WHO) deemed childhood obesity as one of the 21st century biggest global health challenges. According to the WHO, this massive health challenge requires the implementation of evidence-based policy for countries to fight the scourge of childhood obesity. These policies include: mandatory Front of Package Nutrition Labelling, banning the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and banning the sale of marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks in schools.

In 2019, an estimated 38.2 million children under the age of 5 years were overweight or obese. Once considered a high-income country problem, overweight and obesity are now on the rise in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in urban settings.