

# CARIBBEAN PUBLIC HEALTH LAW FORUM

## NEWSLETTER



## Moving Forward, Making an Impact

This is the quarterly online newsletter of the Caribbean Public Health Law Forum (CPHLF/ the 'Forum') which has been established to help increase awareness on the role and use of law in tackling public health challenges, particularly noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and their risk factors, in the Caribbean. This inaugural issue of our newsletter marks the Forum's first anniversary.

In each issue, we will outline the ongoing work of the Forum in relation to policy development as well as feature our members' vision, providing insight into their unique profiles and highlighting how their various roles align with the Forum's purpose.



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# Who We Are

Launched by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Caribbean Court of Justice Academy for Law (CAFL) on 30 June 2021, the Forum is a platform for the continued communication, collaboration and engagement of individuals and institutions working in health and/or legal affairs to advance the use of law to address NCDs risk factors.



The Forum began with 64 registered members from diverse backgrounds, including civil society, representatives of regional institutions and officials nominated by relevant national authorities of Members and Associate Members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The Forum is expected to accelerate implementation of public health measures which require legal and regulatory action, and enhance knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and cooperation across the Caribbean. Ultimately, the Forum envisages the emergence of a regional culture of using law to address public health issues.

# How We Work

Our Terms of Reference (TOR) outline our rules for management and operation, including our guiding principles and values, scope, framework, and governance structure.

OUR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE HAS FOUR MAIN COMPONENTS:



The operations of the Forum are guided by the Steering Committee which comprises PAHO/WHO, CAFL, Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), the Faculty of Law of The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus (UWI Cave Hill Law Faculty), the CARICOM Secretariat and a representative from the Plenary Group (the Chair of the Forum, as selected by the members according to the TOR). Our work and deliberations are hosted on a secure virtual platform.

# Our Mission

Promote increased awareness of the role of and best practices in the use of law to prevent and control NCDs in the Caribbean and the world and other public health challenges;

Develop improved capacity within the region to leverage advocacy for public health;

Generate increased interest in public health law among students, young attorneys-at-law, health professionals and/or civil society advocates through mentorship; and

Contribute to greater progress in attaining Caribbean public health goals and realising the right to health, including through input in the development of policies and legislation to tackle NCDs in the Caribbean.



# Highlights

**The Forum enjoyed an active first year and saw increased membership. Many of these members participated in the Business meetings of the Plenary in September 2021, November 2021 and April 2022.**

## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE PERIOD INCLUDED:

1. Selection of the Forum's Chair and Vice Chair to serve for one year. They are expected to champion the Forum's objectives and liaise closely with the Secretariat in carrying out their functions.
2. Selection of the Steering Committee's Chair and Vice Chair.
3. Finalisation and adoption of our TOR.
4. Consideration of the Forum's draft Rules of Procedure.
5. The joint hosting of a webinar with PAHO/WHO, HCC and the UWI Cave Hill Law and Health Research Unit in celebration of World No Tobacco Day 2022 (31 May) under the theme "[A Smoke-Free Caribbean: A Win/Win for Health and the Environment](#)". The overall aim of the webinar was to support CARICOM countries in achieving the goal of a 100% Smoke-Free-Caribbean by 2022; and to launch six publications (case studies and policy briefs) developed by the HCC, PAHO and the UWI Cave Hill Law Faculty.
6. Identification of the following priority areas:
  - Tobacco Control
  - Nutrition/Food Policy
  - Mental Health
  - Road Safety
  - Use of Law as a Tool for Public Health
7. Establishment of Working Groups on Tobacco Control and Nutrition/Food Policy to facilitate work of the Forum on these two priority areas based on the current needs of the Region.
 

These two Working Groups have begun deliberations on their work programmes and have selected their Chair, Vice Chair and Rapporteur.
8. Consideration by the Steering Committee of Community Papers developed by the CAFL.
9. Finalisation of the Forum's brand identity and imaging for use across various platforms.
10. Introduction of a quarterly newsletter to highlight the Forum's work and other special features.

# Meet the Members

Our newsletter will feature our membership, providing a brief insight into their roles in and vision for the Forum. In this first issue, we present some members of our Steering Committee.



## Dr Ignacio Ibarra

Legal Advisor, Health-related Law, Office of the Legal Counsel (PAHO/WHO)

### Chair of the Steering Committee

I am honoured to serve as the first Chair of this high-level, decision-making group of advisors that has worked assiduously over the last year to develop the Forum's framework in a democratic way, relying on the strength of its extremely professional multidisciplinary team.

As one of the main advocates for its creation and serving as the Regional Advisor in PAHO that encourages the use of law as a powerful tool to treat with the challenges of public health within the Americas, I envision the Forum as the best milieu for discussion and collaboration among the different stakeholders in the Caribbean, which include public health officials of the Ministries of Health, lawyers from the Offices of the Attorney General and various offices of government throughout the Region, scholars, and myriad relevant agencies, to promote engagement and collective efforts to enhance the realisation of the right to health in the Caribbean with the support of a well-harmonised and strong legal framework that can be permanently evaluated and scrutinised in a proactive way by transparent and accountable methods with active participation of the society as a whole.



## The Hon. Mr Justice Winston Anderson

Chair of the CCJ Academy for Law, Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice

### Steering Committee Member

A critical role of the CCJ Academy for Law is to act as a catalyst for development of novel ideas, new systems and nimble institutions which advance Caribbean society. The Academy was pleased to have played a catalytic role in the formation of the Caribbean Public Health Law Forum and looks forward to contributing in the Steering Committee to the continued success and regional impact of the Forum.

## Meet the Members (continued)



### Nicole D. Foster

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Deputy Dean & Head, Law and Health Research Unit, Faculty of Law, UWI Cave Hill Campus

#### Steering Committee Vice Chair

I view my role in the Forum as twofold – as a member of the Steering Committee and the current Vice Chair, I help contribute to articulating and operationalising the Forum’s mandate. As a member of the Forum itself, I am able to draw on my background in international trade and international human rights to inform discussions on how law can be utilised as an effective tool in NCD prevention and control.

My vision for the Forum is for it to be established as an important regional source of information and networking that Caribbean public health officials and governments can leverage to effectively respond to their public health challenges and truly integrate ‘health in all policies’ of the society as a whole.



### Sir Trevor Hassell

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Cardiologist, Founder and President of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition

#### Steering Committee Member

As the only regional alliance of civil society organisations working to address NCDs through strong evidence-based advocacy, the HCC is pleased to be part of the Caribbean Public Health Law Forum – a unique multi-stakeholder mechanism to advance dialogue and action around Health and law in the Caribbean.

A trained cardiologist and long-standing leader in regional NCD prevention and control, my role on the Steering Committee is to bring civil society’s perspectives on NCD policy and legislation in the Region and to identify synergies between HCC’s advocacy and the Forum’s legal work.

HCC envisions the Forum as a dynamic and diverse platform for the exchange and advancement of health policies in the Caribbean.

## Meet the Members (continued)



### Gladys Young

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Assistant General Counsel, CARICOM Secretariat

#### Plenary Chair

In addition to my role as one of the CARICOM Secretariat's representatives on the Steering Committee and Chair of the Plenary of the Caribbean Public Health Law Forum, I see the growth and success of the Forum as instrumental in providing an avenue for the development and exchange of ideas to tackle noncommunicable diseases that affect all of us in the Caribbean, including my immediate family, friends and colleagues.

My vision is for the Forum to create greater consumer awareness of the elements that we should be mindful of and seek to eliminate in our foods and drinks (such as trans fats), and the healthy habits we should incorporate in our daily lives to help us combat NCDs.



### Dr Karen Gordon-Boyle

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Programme Manager, Health Sector Development, CARICOM Secretariat

#### Plenary Vice Chair

As Vice Chair of the CPHL Forum, I view my role as that of helping to identify the regional burning public health issues that require legislative or policy support for them to be addressed definitively.

Along with others with similar backgrounds, I bring the Public Health perspective. In the coming year, it is my wish to see the Forum, through the sub committees, work with Member States to:

- Develop national policies or legislation to address the ban on and regulation of the importation of foods with trans fats;
- Develop policies that support the reduction in the purchase of sugar-sweetened beverages and promote the use of water as a healthy alternative; and
- Sensitise the public on the front of package warning labelling standard, once it is finalised. This standard is being developed by the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and will help the consumer make healthy food choices.

## Meet the Members (continued)



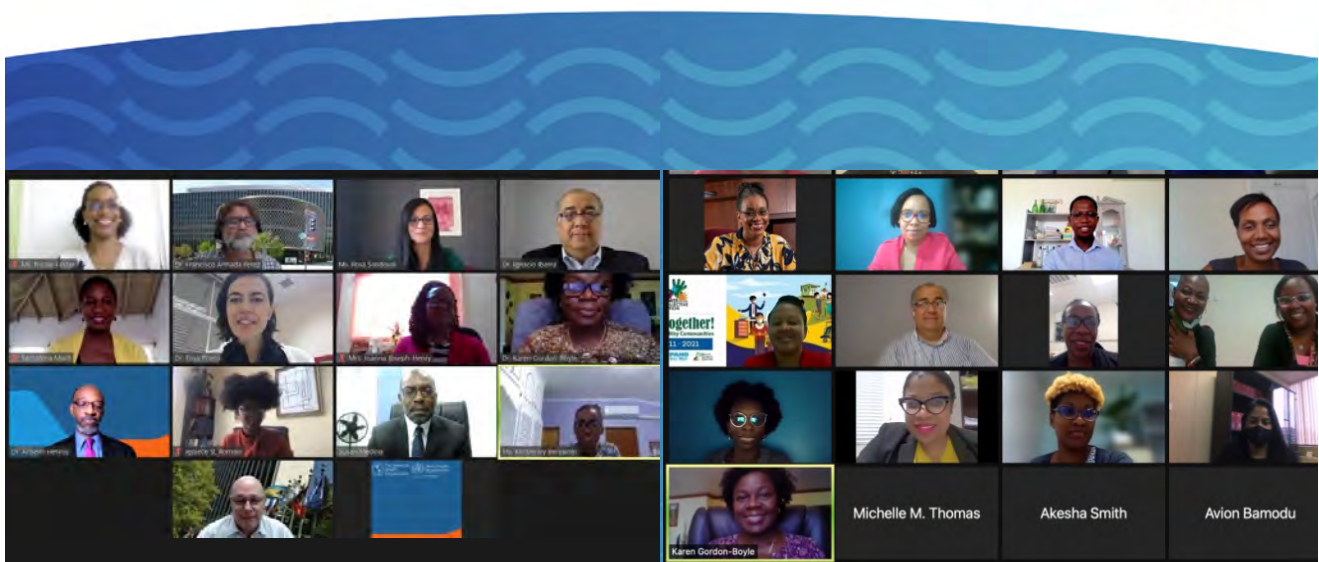
### Sheryl Dennis Wright

International PAHO Consultant,  
Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health  
PAHO/WHO Office of Subregional Programme  
Coordination for the Caribbean

#### Steering Committee Member, Secretariat

In executing the functions of the PAHO Subregional Programme Office on the Steering Committee, I provide advice and technical expertise to consolidate the functioning of the Forum. As Facilitator of the Tobacco Control Working Group, I assist in guiding the work programme while serving the Secretariat by supporting the management and coordination of activities through ongoing collaboration with all the components of the Forum and facilitating the registration of new members.

My vision for the Forum is for its advancement through its work, impact and recognition as a regional instrument in shaping and developing regional public health policies and legislation.



Snapshot of interactive virtual sessions with Forum members and other participants.