

---

# iahf



**InterAmerican Heart Foundation  
Fundación InterAmericana del Corazón  
Fundação InterAmericana do Coração**



[interamericanheart.org](http://interamericanheart.org)



InterAmerican Heart Foundation



IAHFNews

---

---

# We are here



# About us

We are a US 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit organization, founded in 1995, promoting health and well-being in **Latin America** and the **Caribbean** by working to reduce heart diseases and stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases –the non-communicable diseases or NCDs– which are the leading causes of premature death and disability in the world today.

---

## What do we do?

Our efforts are directed at modifying the risk factors that cause **heart disease** and other related **NCDs**; promoting environments that are free of smoke and toxic aerosols, healthy diets and physical activity in schools and communities.

We facilitate the development of networks of civil society organizations that work together to reduce the risks of obesity, hypertension, smoking, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, the harmful effects of air pollution, and defending the right to health and information.



---

# What are the challenges?

To promote healthy living and reduce NCDs in Latin America and the Caribbean through research, advocacy, public awareness and education.

Increase awareness in countries of the urgency of dealing with this pandemic of chronic diseases, which consumes a large part of health budgets and undermines sustainable development, becoming an issue of social equity.

To make NCDs a priority investment for health and development, promoting funding models that support cost-effective national responses to NCDs.

Strengthen and mobilize civil society, incorporating the voices of young people and people living with NCDs, enabling the development of networks of civil society organizations, integrating the academic and scientific world, so that they commit governments and multilateral organizations in this effort.





# Rising to the challenge

- Create awareness, inform and educate political decision-makers, the media and the public about people's right to health and to have clear, useful and truthful information about what they consume including food and beverages, tobacco and alcohol products.
- Strengthen public policies to generate the changes and regulations necessary to improve the quality of life for everyone.
- Promote smoke-free environments, air free of toxic aerosols, and warning labels for unhealthy products such as tobacco, ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks.
- Improve access and affordability of fruits and vegetables. Promote physical activity and control air pollution.

# **This reality must change now**

---

NCDs cause more than 75% of premature deaths worldwide. These are largely preventable and generate very high costs to healthcare systems and society as a whole.

Heart diseases and stroke are the most prevalent and represent the greatest economic and social burden of NCDs for countries.

Hypertension is one of the main risk factors for heart disease and stroke. The prevalence of hypertension can be higher than 40% of the adult population in some Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Thousands of people die each year from exposure to secondhand smoke, and billions of dollars per year are spent to treat health problems related to tobacco use.

The region of the Americas has one of the highest levels of overweight and obesity in the world. More than 60% of adults are overweight or obese, and these numbers have continued to grow at an alarming pace in the recent years, affecting children in increasing percentages.

Main factors driving this pandemic of heart disease and NCDs are the lack of physical activity, low consumption of fruits and vegetables and high consumption of foods in excess of sugar, salt, fats and trans fats.

Millions of adults in Latin America and the Caribbean live with diabetes. This translates to more than 102 billion US dollars per year in treatment and other indirect costs.

Heart diseases and NCDs affect not only individuals but also their families, and are an economic burden for countries as well as a barrier for sustainable development.

# Priority areas of work

---

## TOBACCO CONTROL

Tobacco use is one of the main risk factors for cardiovascular disease, cancer and other chronic diseases. The IAHF is working to accelerate implementation of the **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)\*** in Latin America and the Caribbean focusing on:

- Implementation of smoke-free environments, wherever the measure is still absent, and bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products.
- Increase taxation and measures to decrease affordability of tobacco products to reduce their consumption.
- Support for smoking-cessation strategies.
- Compliance with tobacco control regulations (i.e. smoke-free environments, warning labels on packs, marketing regulations, etc.).
- Promote accountability and transparency in government and multilateral organizations in their interactions with the tobacco industry and expose tobacco industry tactics and interference.

*\* Tobacco control work includes supporting bans and regulations on the “new products” of tobacco including heated tobacco products (HTPs) and electronic nicotine-delivery systems (ENDs) such as vaping systems and e-cigarettes.*





## HEALTHY NUTRITION / OBESITY / PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

It has been estimated that up to 80% of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes can be prevented by reducing levels of obesity, unhealthy diets and increasing the practice of regular physical activity. Our work in this area will be geared towards:

- Projects and initiatives to effect positive change on the food and physical activity environments, especially in schools.
- Support of **Front of Package Labelling (FoPL)** policies for food and beverage products as an effective measure to better inform consumers, promote healthier food choices and reformulation of products with lower levels of sugars, sodium, fats and trans fats.
- Research to improve our understanding of the factors that contribute to unhealthy diets and sedentarism.
- Advocate for measures that increase availability, affordability and accessibility of healthy foods.
- Promote active transportation and improved access to urban recreational spaces.

## COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS TO CONTROL HYPERTENSION, DIABETES AND DYSLIPIDEMIA

These three big risk factors contribute to substantial disability and death from cardiovascular disease and despite the existence of evidence-based therapies, many in Latin America and the Caribbean remain unaware, or are not adequately treated or controlled for these conditions.

We propose:

- Scaling up **effective interventions** such as “task-sharing” with non-traditional healthcare providers to improve the levels of screening, treatment and control of hypertension, diabetes and dyslipidemia. Promote the introduction of these cost-effective measures in the primary healthcare system.
- Developing projects and interventions for salt reduction in the diet and advocate for more stringent regional and national targets for sodium content in foods.
- Increasing public awareness of hypertension as a risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke and of the need for regular screenings.



## AIR POLLUTION

This is an important determinant of cardiovascular disease and other chronic diseases on par with tobacco use. However, there has been little progress to abate its effects. The aim is to increase awareness about this determinant of health and begin introducing effective measures to reduce both ambient and indoor air pollution.

- Implement and improve monitoring and control systems of main pollutants. Often the levels of different pollutants and their origin are not well studied.
- Support World Health Organization air pollution policies.
- Focus on cities where important factors for cardiovascular health converge: air pollution, transportation, physical activity, healthy school and after school environments.



## ALCOHOL CONTROL

Excessive alcohol consumption can be damaging to the body, including the heart, by contributing to hypertension, coronary disease, arrhythmias and cardiomyopathy. It can also affect the heart through damage done to other organs. The prevention of harmful use of alcohol will include **advocacy** activities to strengthen alcohol control policies and initiatives.

# Highlighted Projects

## IAHF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN CIVIL SOCIETY SCORECARD

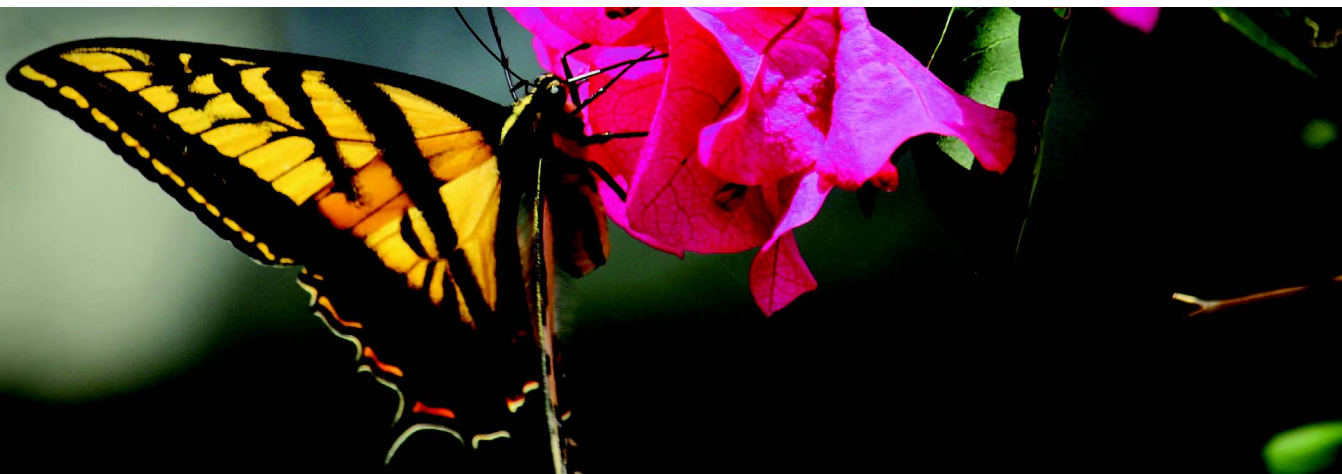
An analysis on the regional and country level progress made by Latin American and Caribbean countries on their **indicators and policies** supporting prevention and control of cardiovascular diseases and chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The study analyzes both progress and gaps in the development of policies to control the main five risk factors for NCDs (*tobacco consumption, poor diet, physical inactivity, alcohol consumption and air pollution*), and provides recommendations for advocacy actions.

Funded by the World Heart Federation, the original work took place in 2017-2018 in twelve countries representing more than 85% of the Latin American and the Caribbean population and presenting the perspective of more than 20 civil society organizations. We are currently updating the information to publish and disseminate regional and country findings.

---

## TOBACCO CONTROL IN BOLIVIA

For the past 7 years the IAHF has been working together with the Fundación InterAmericana del Corazón Bolivia (FIC Bolivia), with support from Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), to promote the approval of a **comprehensive tobacco control law** in the country. When achieved in 2020, the approval of this law became a landmark which made the entire South American subcontinent now protected by smoke-free environment laws. Current work is focused on the implementation of this national tobacco control law and developing a plan of action with other measures to reduce tobacco consumption.



---

## STUDY OF COMORBIDITIES IN HOSPITALIZED COVID-19 PATIENTS

IAHF is leading a regional effort within 7 countries –Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Jamaica, Peru, Mexico and Venezuela– to characterize the profile of comorbid diseases and risk factors in hospitalized patients with a positive test for COVID-19. This study will contribute to remedy the shortage of information from Latin American and Caribbean countries in the scientific literature about the COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected that the results will also reinforce the growing body of evidence that links chronic diseases and their determinants with increased vulnerability to infections.

---

## DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TO IMPROVE NUTRITION

The community of practice includes researchers and advocates working together to achieve positive change in food environments. The Latin America and Caribbean Community of Practice for Nutrition and Health (COLANSA) aims to become a center of reference for healthy nutrition and to promote effective evidence-based policies. This initiative, launched in March 2021, is spearheaded by the IAHF with five other organizations in the region, and is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Front of package nutritional labelling (FoPL) policies, which warn consumers about **critical nutrients** (such as sugar, sodium, fats and trans fats) within packaged foods and beverages, have been adopted in several countries in Latin America. From its inception, COLANSA has had an early focus in advancing FoPL in the region and is working to create a FoPL “hub”, and a digital platform where community members can search for specific literature, policy documents, videos, advocacy factsheets and other information.

---

# Board of Directors and Staff

- Ms. Deborah Chen, President (Jamaica)
- Mr. Craig Beam, Vice-President and President Elect (United States)
- Dr. Nathan Wong, Immediate Past President (United States)
- Ms. Marielba Cordido, Secretary (Venezuela)
- Ms. Mônica Andreis, Member at Large (Brazil)
- Dr. Daniel Piskorz, Member at Large (Argentina)
- Dr. Karen Sealey, Member at Large (Trinidad & Tobago)


- Dr. Eugenia Ramos, Executive Director
- Mr. Javier Valenzuela, Chief Operating Officer
- Ms. Piera Deambrosi, Communications Consultant
- Ms. Rosina Bonomi, E-newsletter Coordinator
- Ms. Cristina Salazar, Administrative Assistant



**InterAmerican Heart Foundation**  
**Fundación InterAmericana del Corazón**  
**Fundação InterAmericana do Coração**

 [interamericanheart.org](http://interamericanheart.org)

    [InterAmerican Heart Foundation](#)

 [IAHFNews](#)