



REPORT

Commonwealth Civil Society Policy Forum 2022

27 APRIL, Geneva, Switzerland

Online Forum

“Commercial determinants of health: evidence, tools, dialogue and advocacy”

1. INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA) host a policy forum each year in conjunction with the Commonwealth Health Ministers’ meeting. The CHPA have a commitment to optimise civil society interaction with Commonwealth Health Ministers and see this as an important forum for influencing health policy and practice on behalf of the practitioners they represent and for citizens across the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Health Ministers meet annually prior to the commencement of the annual World Health Assembly of the World Health Organisation. Over many years, with the ongoing support of the Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth civil society has actively sought an opportunity to interact with, and inform Commonwealth Health Ministers at their annual meeting. Civil society brings a unique perspective to the deliberations of Commonwealth Health Ministers and it is important that their voice is heard.

In hosting the 2022 CCSPF, the CHPA has an opportunity to partner with a range of other civil society organisations. The Commonwealth Association of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition (CAPGAN) took the lead in organising the 2022 CCSPF on behalf of the CHPA.

2. COMMONWEALTH CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY FORUM THEME

The theme for the 2022 CCSPF was ‘*Commercial determinants of health: evidence, tools, dialogue and advocacy*’. Commercial Determinants of Health have been defined as “*strategies and approaches used by the private sector to promote products and choices that are detrimental to health*” (Kickbusch, I. 2016)¹. This concept includes commercial influences at both micro level (individual health behaviour and choice) and macro level (political economy of globalization). The World Health Organization² notes that “*Commercial determinants of health are the private sector activities that affect people’s health positively or negatively*”.

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(16\)30217-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(16)30217-0/fulltext)

² <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/commercial-determinants-of-health>

Such activities may influence social, physical and cultural environments e.g. supply chains, labour conditions, product design and packaging, research (e.g. funding, findings and publications), lobbying (e.g. influencing policy and practice guidelines), preference shaping and others.

These actions impact on a wide range of health conditions (notably non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular health) and although everyone is affected, the young, the marginalized and the poor are especially at risk (both at individual and country level).

Three factors (outreach of corporations, internationalization of trade and capital, and demand of growth) drive this process (Figure 1) (Kickbusch, I. 2016).

Figure 1

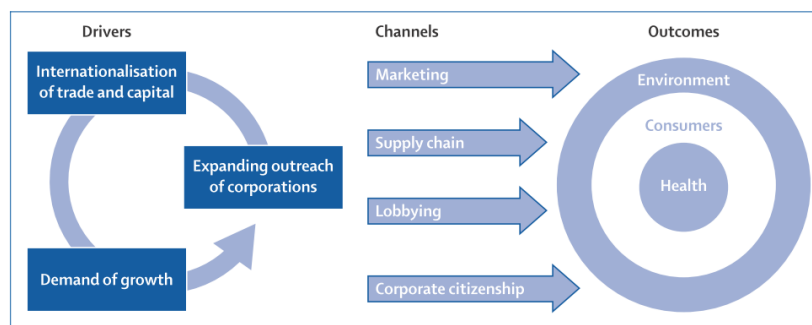


Figure: Dynamics that constitute the commercial determinants of health

WHO has initiated a new program of action: *The Economic and Commercial Determinants of Health*, with four goals:

1. to strengthen the evidence base,
2. develop tools and capacity to address the commercial determinants,
3. convene partnerships and dialogue,
4. raise awareness and advocacy.

The objectives of the 2022 CCSPF were:

- To raise awareness of the commercial determinants of health
- To highlight the four goals of the World Health Organization's program of action on *Economic and Commercial Determinants of Health* (to strengthen the evidence base; develop tools and capacity to address the commercial determinants; convene partnerships and dialogue; raise awareness and advocacy)
- To propose actionable recommendations for Commonwealth Health Ministers on innovative strategies to address these four goals across the Commonwealth

The 2022 CCSPF was hosted by the Commonwealth Association for Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition (CAPGAN).

3. COMMONWEALTH CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY FORUM PROGRAM

The CCSPF discussed aspects of how addressing commercial determinants of health can improve the health and wellbeing of the people of the Commonwealth. In the context of continued progress toward Universal Health Coverage in the Commonwealth, and with experiences gained from COVID-19, the 2022 CCSPF discussed both the challenges faced and innovative approaches to enhance the positive aspects and reduce the negative impacts of private sector activities on health.

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Her Excellency Baroness Patricia Scotland QC, opened the 2022 CCSPF.

Dr Anne Gallagher AO, Director General of the Commonwealth Foundation, provided a comprehensive introduction to the topic. Four eminent speakers addressed each aspect of commercial determinants of health from the new WHO initiative:

THEME: Strengthening the evidence base

Speaker: JENN LACY-NICHOLS

Title of presentation: Strengthening the evidence base

Affiliation: Academic Specialist in Non-Communicable Diseases, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health

THEME: Tools to address commercial determinants of health

Speaker: CAMILA MARANHA P De CARVALHO

Title of presentation: Preventing and managing conflicts of interest in nutrition programs

Affiliation: Faculty of Nutrition, Fluminense Federal University Brazil

THEME: Convening partnerships and dialogue

Speaker: ROBIN IRELAND

Title of presentation: Understanding commercial marketing through sport

Affiliation: Director of Research, Healthy Stadia, United Kingdom

THEME: Raising awareness and advocacy

Speaker: SHONA HILTON

Title of presentation: Commercial interests and the media

Affiliation: University of Glasgow

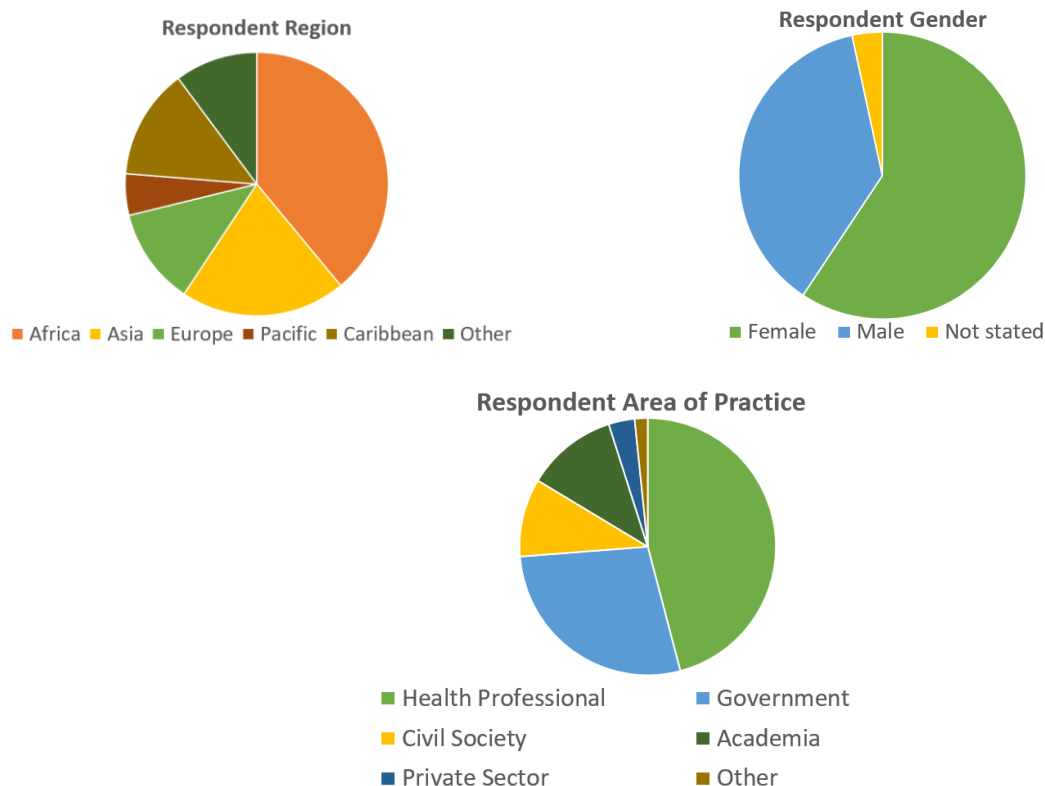
Speakers participated in a panel discussion, facilitated by Professor Anthony Nelson from CAPGAN, responding to a large number of questions put by participants.

Dr Neelam Mohan from CAPGAN shared the recommendations to be presented to Commonwealth Health Ministers at their meeting in May.

Copies of the recommendations, speaker presentations and a video of the CCSPF are available on the CHPA website <http://www.chpa.co>.

4. PRE-CCSPF SURVEY

An online survey was conducted prior to the CCSPF to seek input into and support for four draft recommendations. Fifty-nine responses were received from across the Commonwealth, the majority of whom identified as 'health professional'.



Survey participants were asked whether a range of health issues were positively or negatively impacted by the activities of commercial organisations or industry. In four of the identified health issues, respondents identified both negative and positive impacts, with the negative impacts being greater than the positive impacts. Communicable disease however, while having both positive and negative impacts scored a higher percentage of positive impacts than negative. Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from this result which warrants further research.

Positive and negative impacts of Commercial Determinants of Health in specific area

HEALTH ISSUE	POSITIVE %*	NEGATIVE %**
Nutrition / growth	46	71
Non-communicable disease	41	63
Mental health	37	71
Oral and dental health	15	48
Communicable disease	48	34

* Percentage of respondents who answered 'yes' to positive impacts of commercial determinants

** Percentage of respondents who answered 'no' to negative impacts of commercial determinants

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Civil society across the Commonwealth looks forward to working with Commonwealth Health Ministers to implement the recommendations below and to working with Commonwealth Governments on the new WHO program of action: *the Economic and Commercial Determinants of Health*.

Recommendation 1: strengthen the evidence base

Commonwealth Governments budget for country-specific, regional and global research to review the existing evidence-base to identify gaps and develop strategies to address these evidence gaps to strengthen the evidence on the impacts of Commercial Determinants of Health on their populations.

Recommendation 2: develop tools and capacity to address the commercial determinants

Commonwealth Governments strengthen legislation and governance structures to minimise opportunities for commercial actors to influence policy development, to support the participation of civil society in democratic policy making, and to utilise and refine WHO and similar tools.

Recommendation 3: convene partnerships and dialogue

Commonwealth Governments partner with civil society to identify and implement strategies that minimise the negative impacts of Commercial Determinants of Health and highlight strategies to foster health promoting commercial practices (while ensuring the latter are not used to compensate for health harming practices).

Recommendation 4: raise awareness and advocacy

Commonwealth Governments support independent monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including those examining media content promoting health and wellbeing products, and share information about the impacts of Commercial Determinants of Health on peoples and society.

Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance

<http://www.chp.co>

16 May 2022