



## PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FIRST UPR CYCLE FOR BELIZE

### Chapter I Background and framework

#### A. Scope and Status of international instruments

- 67.1 Look into the possible ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (Netherlands);
- 67.2 Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) (Turkey), which has been signed but not ratified (Argentina); accede to ICESR in a timely manner (Japan);
- 67.3 Consider the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPD) (Azerbaijan); accede to CPD and ICESR (Mexico);
- 67.4 Accede to ICESR in a timely manner as it was signed in September 2000 (Japan);
- 67.5 Consider adhering to the Optional Protocols to ICESR and CPD as soon as possible (Argentina, Mexico) as well as the Optional Protocols to ICCPR and to CED (Argentina);
- 67.6 Accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT) (Czech Republic); consider its ratification (United Kingdom, Argentina);
- 67.7 Work towards completing the process already underway for accession to major international instruments of human rights (Algeria).

*Disabilities:* On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2011, Belize ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which demonstrates the government's willingness to advance the rights of persons with disabilities<sup>1</sup>. The UNCT has no information with regards to the ratification of the Optional Protocol of the CPD or ICCPR. Belize has not ratified C159 (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983), though it has ratified all eight major ILO Conventions.

*Corruption:* Belize is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), currently the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument. Despite efforts made by the government to strengthen the accountability framework with the Prevention of Corruption Act of 2007 and the adoption of a 2010 Plan of Action to implement the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, the UNCT remains concerned that the lack of an adequate administrative and legal machinery to strengthen ethics and prevent corruption remains a weak feature of the democratic framework in Belize<sup>2</sup>. The UNCT has initiated dialogue with the Government to create momentum for signing the UNCAC and the Optional Protocol to the UNCAC.

*ESCR, OP-ESCR, OP-CAT:* Dialogue has also been initiated by UNCT with the Government of Belize for the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, its Optional Protocol and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or punishment. Though the Government of Belize remains open to the dialogue, no commitment has been made to ratify these instruments. The UNCT is concerned that these

<sup>1</sup>UNICEF 2011, "Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Belize – An Ecological Review."

<sup>2</sup>UNCT, 2012. "Joint Analysis and Mapping Report on Prevention and Human Security in Belize" (Draft).



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outstanding legal obligations on the part of the government create gaps in the protective mechanism and hampers the mainstreaming of human rights in the government’s developmental agenda.

**Chapter I Background and framework**  
**B. Constitutional and legislative framework**

- 67.30 Review its legislation with a view to prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children (Slovenia);**
- 68.7 Abolish corporal punishment for children (Germany).**

*Corporal punishment:* To create momentum for the elimination of corporal punishment in schools and to provide re-training for teachers and school management on the issue as well as creating a more enabling environment for the protection of children’s rights in schools, the Ministry of Education in 2009 adopted the Quality Schools Initiative (QSI) for Child-Friendly Schools and formed a task force with heads of MOE units to develop a quality assurance framework and a supporting mechanism.

In February 2011 the government announced the formation of a Task Force for identifying alternative student discipline approaches, with specific responsibilities to: identify, recommend and devise a plan for the introduction of alternatives to corporal punishment for achieving discipline in our schools, and to develop self-disciplined citizens. The work of the taskforce resulted in consultations and training with school management and teachers on the use and benefits of positive discipline

In May 2011, the Government passed The Education Act which prohibited corporal punishment in all schools in Belize. Also the Social Services Agencies and Regulations prohibit the use of corporal punishment in residential care facilities for children.

Belize also subscribes to the non-legally binding “*Charter of Civil Society for the Caribbean Community*” which sets out a number of fundamental principles including on children’s rights. The Charter is also relevant to many of the areas being addressed by this report.

**Chapter I Background and framework**  
**C. Institutional and human rights infrastructure and policy measures**

- 67.10. Consider the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles (Algeria);**
- 67.11 Conduct a systematic evaluation of the merits of establishing a national human rights institution (United States);**
- 67.12. Provide human rights training with regard to the protection of vulnerable groups, in particular women, children, indigenous peoples and persons of minority sexual orientation or gender identity to law enforcement officials, judicial officers and all State officials (Czech Republic);**
- 67.13. Continue to strengthen its efforts to ensure that all police and security officers receive human rights training (Netherlands); introduce human rights education for all government officials and departments and ensure that a human rights-based approach is mainstreamed across government policy (United Kingdom); deploy further efforts in training security forces in the field of human rights (Italy);**



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- 67.14. Strengthen the office of Ombudsman and the police department's office of internal affairs in order to improve capacity to hear and investigate complaints (Canada);**  
**67.16. Strengthen efforts for the full implementation of the National Action Plan for Children (Czech Republic);**  
**67.28. Improve the institutional capacity of the national machinery for the advancement of women, for their active involvement in public life (Azerbaijan);**  
**67.36. Continue its pursuit of assistance from the international community to foster its national human rights capacities (Mexico);**  
**68.4 Establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Canada)**

*National Human Rights Institution:* The Paris Principles require the establishment of a national human rights institution that enjoys constitutional or legislative protection with responsibilities, inter alia, to provide to government or other administrative body, on an advisory basis; reports, recommendations on the national human rights situation in the country including the state of the countries judicial and legislative response to the protection of human rights.

The only national independent human rights institution existing in Belize with overall responsibility to respond to allegations of breaches of rights is the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman is established by the Ombudsman Act<sup>3</sup>. The Office of the Ombudsman consists of one investigator, one administrative staff, four volunteers in the districts<sup>4</sup> and one head of office (the Ombudsman) and is mandated to investigate and report on the human rights situation in Belize as well as submit reports to parliament and make recommendations for legislative amendments. However, the Office of the Ombudsman is not part of the Constitutional process of legislative reform. The Ombudsman's role is limited to making recommendations for legal action, investigation of the abuse of Government power and issuing reports on their investigations. The Office of the Ombudsman cannot initiate legal action for redress for breach of human rights or to impose sanctions or sentences against persons their investigations have revealed have infringed the human rights of others.

The head of the Office of the Ombudsman was vacant for over a year. The Government appointed a new Ombudsman in December 2012, though no additional resources were at this point accorded to the institution. Much of the investigations of human rights violations by the Office of the Ombudsman have historically been centered on allegations of human rights violations by police officers.

A national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles has not yet been established. However, Belize has created a number of Statutory Bodies, Commissions and Committees that have been tasked with promoting and advocating for the protection of particular human rights obligations undertaken by the Government under international and national law, including:

1. The National Women's Commission which is tasked with the coordination of the implementation of the commitments under CEDAW and in reporting on and making recommendations to government and other stakeholders for the advancement of women and the realization of gender equality for women.
2. The National Committee for Families and Children has been tasked with coordinating the implementing the Government's obligations under the CRC and implementation of the National Plan of Action for children.

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter 5 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition, 2000.

<sup>4</sup>GOB 2008, "A Review of the Belize Police Department".



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3. The National Aids Commission has been tasked with the coordination of the national HIV/AIDS response and the promotion of the rights of persons with HIV/AIDS.
4. The National Council on Aging has been tasked with implementation of commitments under the National Policy on Older Persons.

These institutions currently do not have constitutional protection and can be removed by the passage of ordinary legislation in parliament. The Government has indicated on several occasions resource limitations for the setting up and maintenance of a human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles. The UNCT will continue to support initiatives to set-up an institution for Belize in accordance with the international standards as outlined in the Paris Principles and supporting initiatives that would further strengthen the National Women's Commission, National Committee for Families and Children, National AIDS Commission and the National Council on Aging.

*Human Rights Training and Education:* With regards to the provision of human rights training, between February 2011 and September 2011 the Government, with assistance from the International Organization on Migration (IOM) under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Project, provided 21 General Sensitisation trainings on the protection of rights of victims of human trafficking for over 800 government and non-government officials including all regular police officers of the Police Department, Police Recruits, Labour Department, Health Sector, Teachers, Social Workers, Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff, tourism police, Immigration, Customs, NGOs, Consular representatives, tourism representatives. In addition, specialised training on laws, judicial best practices for the protection of victims during the judicial process and the investigation and adjudication of human trafficking cases was provided to over 150 Magistrates, Supreme Court Judges, Prosecutors, Police and Immigration Investigator of human trafficking cases<sup>5</sup>. The project also provided direct sensitisation trainings to over 6,500 adolescents across the country. The government also developed a National Strategic Plan for the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee for 2012-2014<sup>6</sup>.

In 2012 the Government partnered with UNHCR to provide human rights training to all Police Recruits. However, there is no written curriculum incorporating human rights principles or practices within the learning methodology for Police Recruits. There are no written policies and procedures within the Police Department to mainstream or make operative human rights principles in all police operations practices, systems or procedures aside from the requirement to inform persons being arrested of their rights.

*Advancement of Women in Public Life:* Concerning the political role of women, at present, there is only one woman serving as an elected member of the national parliament and two appointed, non-elected female ministers in the new Cabinet whereas of the sixteen Chief Executive Officers in Government, 6 are females<sup>7</sup>.

The National Women's Commission launched a full-fledged *Women In Politics Project* with the support of UN Women in October 2009. The project is a capacity building program for women aspirants to political office. The *Women in Politics Project* is an initiative of the National Women's Commission through UN Women. The first cycle of the project commenced in October 2009 and targeted women particularly young and indigenous women who were either already involved in politics at the local and national level or who had aspiration of a political career. However, a recent study into the issue of

<sup>5</sup>IOM, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Project, Project Closing Press Release, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP 2012, "Situation Analysis of Gender and Politics in Belize: Toward Equality of Opportunity for Equality of Results"



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women in politics has found that women experience many barriers when trying to engage in national political leadership. These barriers are cultural, structural and financial in nature. And while women indicate interest to participate in national decision-making processes including in parliament, there is still no official designation of a quota system to fast-track their political participation<sup>8</sup>. Short of official declarations of temporary special measures at the party and parliamentary levels, the UNCT remains concerned about slow progress towards achievement of the MDGs.

The UNCT is also aware that the Government has indicated its intention to pursue not only gender equality programs but to also promote gender equity in planning and programming to ensure issues related to male populations are addressed. This has included the promotion of certain male health issues such as in the area of screening and treatment for prostate cancer. There have also been initiatives under the National Social Assistance Program (BOOST) to encourage male enrollment and participation at the elementary level by providing financial support to boys at risk of dropping out.

## Chapter II Cooperation with human rights mechanisms

### A. Cooperation with treaty bodies

**37.19. Strengthen its efforts with regard to timely reporting to United Nations human rights treaty bodies (Netherlands);**

**67.20. Continue to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and on a regular basis submit the relevant reports for its consideration (Ukraine);**

**67.21 Submit its overdue report to the Committee against Torture at the earliest time (Czech Republic)**

**67.22 Submit all overdue report to the United Nations human rights convention treaty bodies and answer the questionnaires sent by special procedures mandate holders (Slovenia)**

**67.23 Continue efforts to submit overdue reports requested by the committees of various international conventions to which Belize is a party, and seek technical assistance for the establishment of these reports (Germany)**

The lack of timely reporting to treaty bodies on the progress of implementation of treaty obligations is a concern for the UNCT. The UNCT recognises that in many cases progress has been made in carrying out commitments but the lack of reporting prevents those gains from being assessed in a systematised manner and prevents compounded benefits for the mainstreaming of and prioritisation of the human rights agenda as well as the mobilisation of resources.

In 2011 UNDP carried out a “Rapid Capacity Assessment on Belize Human Rights Reporting Capabilities”<sup>9</sup>, revealing several challenges and capacity gaps of the reporting system, such as:

- a) Lack of clarity of mandates of relevant ministries in regard to human rights convention reporting;
- b) The respective conventions are insufficiently mainstreamed into the work of the ministries;
- c) Progress in the reporting system is hampered by insufficient staff numbers and;
- d) The generalisation of duties of ministry staff means that responsibilities for ensuring human rights reporting inevitably does not get assigned to particular job posts.
- e) Lack of institutionalized communication channels to move relevant information into the reporting framework;

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>UNDP 2012, “Country Common Assessment”.

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- f) Overreliance on the personal interest of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in key ministries for the assigned level of importance for human rights reporting and;
- g) The lack of publicity from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Belize's human rights obligations;
- h) Lack of human rights training for staff at relevant ministries and frequent data limitations and;
- j) Lack of public awareness of their fundamental human rights.
- k) A systemic lack of follow-up interventions and an absence of quality control mechanisms for reports.

During 2011 and 2012, UN agencies offered technical support in the development of reports to the State for the timely reporting to the initial and periodic reports of the following human rights mechanisms: CEDAW (with the support of UNDP), CRC (with the support of UNICEF) and CERD (with the support of OHCHR).

Upon request of the Government for technical assistance from OHCHR on 30 March 2010, a training workshop was undertaken by a member of the CERD Committee, the Committee's Secretary and a resource person from the Government of Barbados in June 2011 for Government staff, which took place in Belize City with members of various Ministries. However, the initial report to CERD was nevertheless not submitted and the Committee considered Belize in the absence of a report in August 2012, also in the absence of a delegation. The concluding observations were publicized in February 2013.

The Human Rights Committee (ICCPR) has made public that it will consider Belize in the absence of an initial report, which is scheduled to take place on 15 March 2013. The UNCT has no information about the submission of report to the Committee against Torture (CAT) as per recommendation 67.21. During a meeting with the Prime Minister in December 2012, the UNCT raised issues concerning overdue reports to the United Nations human rights mechanisms and received confirmation that the Government would take steps to address the issue.

The UNCT through UNICEF and UNDP has collaborated with the government to establish a Policy Observatory within the University of Belize to strengthen the way in which data is collected, and advice on analysis on the human rights situation in Belize. Contributions have also included the development of policy instruments, the Children's Issues National Research Agenda, (which constitutes a useful instrument that enhances the generation of knowledge and evidence as useful inputs into the national policy-making process), a quality advocacy report and the design of a policy observatory roadmap<sup>10</sup>.

In addition, over the reporting period, the UNCT through UNICEF in collaboration with UNFPA have provided substantial technical and financial support and assistance to the Statistical Institute (SIB) of Belize through at least 8 overseas workshops on census management and other topics on data collection and analysis, which have been highly relevant and effective for SIB staff. UNICEF has supported SIB in establishing the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which provides useful information about the status of women and children in Belize and certain MDGs<sup>11</sup> and is being used widely to assist in evidence based policy planning by the Government and is also being used for MDG reporting<sup>12</sup>. UNICEF also assisted SIB with the DevInfo international database, which is currently being populated by SIB. This will improve the data collection methodologies to strengthen the

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<sup>10</sup> UNDAF 2011, "Mid-term Review Report."

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



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Government's reporting mechanisms. Over the reporting period, the UNCT through PAHO/WHO has made significant contribution in the development of the Belize Health Information System (BHIS), which is operating in all Ministry of Health services. Emphasis was made on desegregation of data by sex, ethnic groups, locality, age, specific cause according the ICD10, etc. Also, in most recent times, PAHO/WHO has made contributions for the analysis of the data emanated from BHIS and will shortly develop a plan of action to strengthen the data collection and analysis of information on Gender Based Violence through the BHIS.

In December 2012, OHCHR provided a technical briefing to the Government in advance of the second cycle of the UPR with the support of headquarters staff from Geneva to assist in the preparation of its national report to the Human Rights Council.

**Chapter II Cooperation with human rights mechanisms**  
**B. Cooperation with special procedures**

**67.24 Consider extending a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council**

To date the UNCT is not aware of a standing invitation to all special procedures, or any specific invitation to any of the Special Rapporteurs, Experts or Working Groups of the Human Rights Council to undertake a country visit to Belize.

**Chapter II Cooperation with human rights mechanisms**  
**C. Cooperation with OHCHR**

OHCHR Regional office has enjoyed a constructive dialogue with many of the Ministries of Belize, its Foreign Ministry and the Prime Minister during visits to the country in 2010, 2011 and 2012. During 2009 the Regional Office carried out a training on ICESCR; CPD; OPs ICESCR, CPD, ICCPR and CAT upon the request of the Government; in 2011 it organized a specific training workshop on the reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD and CERD) for its initial report. OHCHR also invited in 2011 the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and a Commissioner from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to a joint event with UNICEF Belize to raise issues concerning children's rights. In 2012 the OHCHR Regional Office held an information sharing session on the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review with the support from the UPR unit in Geneva. The Regional Representative for Central America met with the Prime Minister in conjunction with the UNCT on 5 December 2012 during which she raised issues of concern to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The OHCHR Regional Office via the Resident Coordinator's unit offered logistical support to the State of Belize via video-conference link with the view to facilitate a form of inexpensive communication with the CERD Committee for the Committee's review of Belize in August 2012. The Office remains open to assist the Government of Belize in enhancing its human rights reporting.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**A. Equality and non-discrimination**

- 67.18. Further strengthen activities to prevent the spread of HIV and stigmatization and discrimination against people living with HIV (Ukraine);**
- 67.27. Continue to address the persisting gender inequality in the country (United Kingdom);**

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*Stigmatization and discrimination against people living with HIV:* In July 2012, the National Aids Commission (NAC) launched the National HIV Strategic Plan and the Accompanying Operational Plan with support from UNAIDS; UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UN Women and the World Bank and USAID PASCA. The Strategic Plan has three priority areas: ending or preventing new HIV infections, improving the health and well-being of persons living with HIV as well as creating an enabling environment for the implementation of different projects<sup>13</sup>. In relation to the area of enabling environment, the NAC has identified a need for legislative amendments including the decriminalization of HIV transmission as top priorities. With regards to quality of life, emphasis will be on education of persons with HIV on their rights, legal support available to them and also to help them to participate more in the national response. With regards to preventing new infections, the emphasis will be on more intensive education and public awareness on HIV and general sexual health. The Plan will be implemented by the National Aids Commission and the other agencies such as the Women's Department and the Department of Human Services in their strategic interventions for women and children.

PAHO/WHO in collaboration with UNDP assisted the Government to develop the HIV management care protocols. These protocols will facilitate the provision of proper case management for persons with HIV, which is important to maintain a low viral load in persons infected. The protocols also support the Government's HIV prevention strategies.

The UNCT through UNICEF has held dialogues with the Government and with community and NGO stakeholders to widen the discussion to the abolition of corporal punishment in all spheres of children's lives. The UNICEF 2011 Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Belize – An Ecological Review (SITAN) indicated that many children in Belize were routinely exposed to violence linked to inappropriate disciplinary methods or to domestic violence in the home. There is concern that this routine and systematized violence will condition children or young people to regard violence as an acceptable means of resolving conflict. This may increase levels of youth crime.

*Gender Inequality:* The National Women's Commission is the institution tasked with the implementation of the CEDAW commitments and with raising public awareness on those commitments. The 2011 CEDAW report indicated that the Government has developed a National Gender Policy and the Belize Gender Info 1.0 that will strengthen the institutional capacity for the advancement of women. Included in the commitments under the Policy are:

- Develop and monitor the implementation of a legal framework and support structure that promotes the more equitable sharing of parental duties among women and men as a strategy for enhancing women's participation in political life and leadership positions in private and public institutions.
- Strengthen national institutions charged with responsibility for the implementation of gender programming so that they can efficiently and effectively coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of this National Gender Policy. This includes the National Women's Commission, the Women's Department and any related Ministry or Department that may be deemed critical to the successful implementation of this Policy.
- Develop a clear multi-sectoral strategy for implementing gender budgeting within the new public sector three-year budgeting cycle.

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<sup>13</sup> NAC, 2012, "National HIV Strategic Plan of Action".



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To date, though the Policy has not been approved by Cabinet and remains in draft form. The UNCT raised the issue with the Prime Minister in December 2012. In 2012, the UNCT through UNICEF supported National Women's Commission to strengthening the national statistical system as it relates to the collection, production, dissemination and use of sex-disaggregated data, Belize Gender Info 1.0. The results however, go far beyond the reach of this output towards an institutionalized monitoring mechanism and culture for ensuring that gender issues are front and center of the national development agenda and evidence-based. In addition, PAHO/WHO developed in coordination with the Ministry of Health Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. The overall purpose of the Gender Strategy is to ensure that the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of the Ministry of Health programs are gender sensitive and considered gender implications. As it is the case of the National Gender Policy, the Health Gender Strategy remains a draft, pending MOH approval for presentation to Cabinet.

An accompanying mechanism for institutional strengthening is the 2010-2013 National Gender Based Violence Plan of Action to be implemented through direct service delivery from the National Women's Department, developed with funding support from the UN Trust Fund. Though the plan has been approved by Cabinet, there are limitations on the effective implementation of the Plan of Action since the National Gender Policy, which sets out the long term goals and priorities for the advancement of women in Belize has still not having been approved.

*With regards to continuing to address gender inequality*, Government initiatives to increase the enrollment of girls in primary and secondary school by offering scholarships, providing financial support through BOOST, building primary schools in rural communities and providing transportation to students as well as the Child Friendly Schools Initiative supported by UNICEF has resulted in Belize successfully achieving the MDG indicator on gender parity in primary and secondary education, indeed for every 100 boys in school there are 101 girls enrolled and girls outnumber boys in secondary and tertiary level<sup>14</sup>. In addition, at the tertiary level females are surpassing males in education yet the MDG 2010 Scorecard indicates that women continue to be underpaid, experiencing low participation in economic activity and having inequitable access to means of production<sup>15</sup>. However, the 2010 MDG Scorecard Report also reports a geographic disparity that influences women's access to education and rural women and girls are often constrained from completing their education because of cultural norms.<sup>16</sup> There is also a need for institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, which is at the forefront of the Government's efforts to provide services for the provision and promotion of gender equality and gender equity. Over the reporting period, funds have been provided by UNICEF to provide training for social workers, re-structuring of the National Social Assistance Program (BOOST) and designed a database for identification and tracking of vulnerable families and children.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**B. Right to life, liberty and security of the person**

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF 2011, "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)"

<sup>15</sup> UNDP 2010, "MDG 2010 Scorecard Report".

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



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**67.29 Consider the adoption of measures commensurate with international standards on the subject and the launching of public campaigns about non-violent forms of discipline (Argentina);**

**67.9. Fully implement the Domestic Violence Act (Slovenia);**

*Public campaigns about non-violent forms of discipline:* The Taskforce created in 2011 and noted above under the efforts to eradicate corporal punishment in schools, remains active in creating public awareness and in training and sensitizing schools and teachers on positive discipline strategies for utilization within the classroom.

With regards to the issue of domestic violence, there has been an increased reporting of domestic violence over the reporting period, in response, the Government approved the National Gender - Based Violence Plan of Action 2010-2013. In addition, to improve the implementation of the new Domestic Violence Act passed in 2007, the Government with the support of UNFPA developed a Domestic Violence Protocol for police officers and a corresponding Sexual Violence Protocol for Police officers interfacing with victims of these crimes. The curriculums will also be incorporated into the Police Training School's curriculum and is a part of the annual capacity building of police officers provided with support from UNFPA.

PAHO/WHO with support from the UNCT Gender thematic group provided funding to the Government over the reporting period to conduct an awareness campaign on Gender Based Violence to support strong implementation of the Domestic Violence law.

Further, the Government through its Women's Department has undertaken training for police officers on the protection of rights of victims of domestic violence and has instituted with the assistance of UN Women and UNODC, a perpetrator rehabilitation program through the Family Court for perpetrators. UNCT recognises that challenges remain in providing adequate shelter facilities for victims of domestic violence and also in addressing corruption and/or neglect in the police force that can hamper or hinder timely investigation of domestic violence crimes.

In addition, the UNCT through UNFPA has actively given support to the Women's Department in awareness raising and promoting the use of the Domestic Violence Act (revised in 2007) for Police and Magistrates. This Act is now being used in gender-based violence court cases by the Family Court in Belize City (there are no family courts in the districts, putting a burden on magistrates in the districts). The Act has an Action Plan (2008-2010) attached to it, which has been distributed to members of the Gender-based Violence (GBV) Committees in each district.

### **Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**

#### **C. Administration of justice, impunity and rule of law**

**67.31. Investigate duly and promptly allegations of misconduct, abuse and violence by public agents and take adequate action against those responsible for such crimes (Italy);**

The UNCT of Belize is aware of a Government commissioned assessment of the Police Department<sup>17</sup> with a view to addressing corruption and institutional abuse. That report made recommendations for the strengthening of the Internal Affairs Division including referrals of all complaints by the public against police officers to be dealt with by the Office of the Ombudsman. In addition, the report

<sup>17</sup> GOB 208, "A Review of the Belize Police Department (Crooks Report)"



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recommended that the IAD should not be staffed by serving police officers and that the Ombudsman Office should be responsible for investigating all near fatal or fatal shooting by the Police and that the IAD should be responsible for investigating breaches of the police disciplinary rules not directly involving citizens and should record and had over citizens' complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman and that cases of corrupt behavior should no longer be dealt with by IAD but should be handed over to an Anti-Corruption Unit of the Police Department. These specific recommendations have not yet been acted on, though the Government has committed to the restructuring of the Police Department in line with the Crooks' Report recommendations.

*Citizen Security:* There is a high and rising crime and murder rate, combined with understaffed and poorly resourced police and justice administration institutions. According to the UNODC 2011 Global Study on Homicide, the intentional homicide rate in Belize in 2010 was 41.7 per 100,000 inhabitants and the percentage of homicides committed with a firearm in the same period was 52.3%<sup>18</sup>. Males committed intentional homicides in 86.9% of cases, and females in 12.3%<sup>19</sup>. The legal and judicial systems have been unable to bridge the gap between crime and provision of citizen security.

Overall, the conviction rate for murder cases is below 10% indicating serious policing and judicial weaknesses. The UNCT is aware that the high levels of impunity and low conviction rates have been attributed to poor investigation; poor case preparation; poor communication between the police and the courts; irresponsible media reporting; allegations of corruption among magistrates and solicitors and allegations of political interference in cases.

Free legal representation in Belize is only available for capital offences. All persons who come before the court charged for capital offenses are provided with a court appointed attorney if they cannot afford one. However, as was cited in the technical group response to the recommendations of the 2009 UPR, the high cost of providing an attorney precludes the government from consistently providing defendants with one. However, the UNCT is aware that recently, however, the fees payable by the Government for the court appointed attorney in capital offence cases, was raised threefold, from USD\$250 to USD\$750 thus improving the defendants access to legal counsel during trial. It is the understanding of the UNCT in Belize that this has not been extended to other serious crimes or to issues affecting the rights of women, indigenous peoples or minorities. Those persons still face challenges in securing adequate legal representation to defend and protect their human rights. In addition, securing legal advice on the exercise of rights is also problematic as the only legal aid center offering free legal advice or information is in Belize City. The UNDP partnered with the Government in 2004 to establish legal information bureaus to provide free legal information on rights to members of the public. The Government assumed responsibility for funding the centers which were in each district but in 2011 disbanded the centers citing insufficient government revenues.

<p><b>Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations</b>  <b>D. Right to privacy, marriage and family life</b></p>
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**67.15. Consider the possibility of eliminating the required parents' consent for HIV testing for minors under the age of 16 (Argentina);**

**67.17. Rectify possible shortcomings in the registration procedure for all new born children (Czech Republic);**

<sup>18</sup>UNODC 2011, "Global Study on Homicide".

<sup>19</sup> Ibid



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*Elimination of Parental Consent for HIV testing:* Appropriate and adequate access to sexual and reproductive health information and services remains a challenge for adolescents in Belize due to the legal barriers to the provision of such services to adolescents. With support from UNFPA, the Government has undertaken an assessment of the legal barriers to the elimination of parental consent with subsequent development of a Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Bill as a model legislation intended to close this gap. The UNCT is aware that this assessment has initiated public discussion on the issue which has seen support from NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and churches to address the requirement for providing adequate reproductive health information and services to adolescents including legal reform to remove the requirement for parental consent where that is not available or not in the best interest of the adolescent.

The Government has also initiated consultations with NGOs and CBOs to develop a roadmap and develop the scope of these legislative amendments that address the need for appropriate sexual and reproductive health services; and information with the view to strengthening parental involvement and guidance in the lives of children and adolescents.

*Birth Registration Reform:* In February 2011, UNICEF in collaboration with the Government launched a campaign targeting unregistered children under the age of 18 with the goal of achieving 100 percent registrations for all new born children. The “Make Your Child Campaign” campaign was implemented at national, regional and sub-national levels and was supported by legislative amendments carried out by the Government to: allow registration processes to be done at hospitals countrywide at the time of birth; decentralize and computerize regional centers that collect information and process late registration applications; waive fees. In addition, the Government strengthened the training of hospital staff and district support staff on the registration process. A media campaign with the use of brochures and pamphlets were developed and distributed and was broadcasted through radio and TV spots in various languages and dialects served to inform the public of the importance of birth registration and procedures. As a result, over 17,000 children and their families were reached with services which included new and late registration and processing of new birth certificates. Furthermore, it allowed for changes to the birth registration system itself, which continues to regularize and increase the registration of new births.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**E. Freedom of movement**

There are no restrictions on movement according to information available to the UNCT in Belize. Freedom of movement is protected by the right to peaceful assembly under the Constitution of Belize. However, the UNCT is aware that there are public concerns that the recent move by the Government to designate certain areas of Belize City as crime ridden areas and to widen police powers in those areas as part of its crime prevention strategy, will negatively impact the freedom of movement for persons in those areas. As yet no specific incidents have been brought to the attention of the UN in Belize.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**F. Freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly, and right to participate in public and political life**



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*Freedom of Religion:* The preamble of Belize’s constitution indicates that the nation is founded upon principles which acknowledge the supremacy of God. There is, however, no defined state religion. Since the 2009 reporting period there have been no recorded reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation. There has been no demonstrated trend for either the improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom. Senate representation by the Council of Churches<sup>20</sup> was maintained following the February 2012 elections. Government has not acted in any way to regulate religion and or religious practices. Based on the country’s 2010 census findings, approximately 90% of the country’s population report themselves as being “Christian”<sup>21</sup>. During the period 2010- 2012 the media has reported no issues of physical abuse or displacement directly attributable to religious affiliation.

*Freedom of Expression:* Freedoms associated with expression are protected under Part II, section 12 of the Belizean Constitution. This very same constitution however permits the enactment of laws to make "reasonable provision" for limiting freedom of expression in the interests of defense, public safety, order, morality, health, and protection of reputations, rights, and freedoms of other persons. The December 2010 passing of the Interception of Communication Act, as a crime prevention measure, raised concerns as to the potential for misuse of the provisions under this Act, violating the expressed freedoms and right to privacy of Belizeans. Nevertheless, there has been no reported abuse of authority on the application of this Act.

Belize is considered to have a generally open media, however, during the reporting period, a wide range of viewpoints has been presented publicly, with no act of reprisal recorded against the Government. Recorded incidence of media intimidation are very low, however the UNCT is aware that there are reported allegations of perceived intimidation of local activists and whistle blowers.

*Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly, and Right to Participate in Public and Political Life:* Belizeans’ Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly, and Right to Participate in Public and Political Life are protected under Part II Section 13 of the Belizean Constitution. These freedoms play a crucial role in preserving the country’s democracy. Belizean freedom of assembly and association has been generally upheld as demonstrations are usually peaceful. Nonetheless, the UNCT is aware that there are reports of instances where the actions of elements of the security forces have been called in question.

There exist no formal restrictions on the right to participate in and to organize political parties. However, the UNCT is aware that there exists a perceived fear of political reprisal based on political affiliation associated with the changing of governments. This issue has been made more acute due to the lack of viable avenues through which those who believe that they were wrong can seek redress.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**G. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work**

<sup>20</sup> The Council, based in Belize City, is made up of the following members: Roman Catholics, Salvation Army, Society of Friends, Anglican, Church of Christ, Methodists, Adventists, Chinese Christian Mission, Presbyterians, and church-related organizations such as the YMCA and the Black Cross Nurse Association.

<sup>21</sup> National Census 2010.



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**67.34. Take targeted measures or affirmative action, where necessary, to ensure active participation of women in the labour market and to close the wage gap between women and men (Turkey);**

Despite the increased participation of females in education, there is still slow movement in women's participation in the formal workforce. The MDG indicator 3.2 "*Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector*" shows how women are not yet in non-agricultural wage employment in an equal share to men. Moreover, since 1995, i.e., over 11 years to 2007, the share has moved only 3 percentage points, from 38.7% to 41.7%, with a 9 percentage point deficit to be made up by 2015<sup>22</sup>. This has specific implications for young persons as the recent Belize Labour Force Survey indicates that the youth population experiences the highest level of unemployment.<sup>23</sup>

In 2011 the Government enacted the Labour (Amendment) Act. Technical support was provided by the ILO. The act provides generally protection against unfair dismissal or discipline based on the grounds of race, colour, sex, marital status, ethnic origin, family responsibilities, religion, nationality, indigenous population, social origin, political opinion (where it does not interfere with work performance), workers' physical structure, disability or age, pregnancy, union membership and HIV status.

The UNCT notes that the CEACR<sup>24</sup> has called on the Government to provide information on the steps taken to follow up on the Labour Advisory Board's recommendation to revise the Equal Pay Act, 2003, with a view to giving full legislative expression to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value and to indicate the specific measures taken or envisaged to address the gender pay gap, including the measures to increase the representation of women in middle and higher income levels, and the results achieved. However, the UNCT is not aware that any steps have been so taken.

In addition, in 2010 the ILO provided technical support for the Government's draft Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) Bill aimed at raising the legal standards and practices for workplace safety and to improve working conditions for workers. The Bill has not yet been passed into law although dialogue has been initiated with the trade union and employers association to create awareness on the new standards to be enacted. Movement on the passage of the Bill into law has stalled with employers complaining of the additional costs to meet the new standards. The UNCT would welcome the following steps:

1. Re-energize support for the passage of the Bill by establishing cost savings of linking OSH to increased productivity from the upgrade of skills and more motivated workers.
2. Increase social dialogue with trade unions and equipping them with negotiation tools, good practices, knowledge of laws and conventions and knowledge of the socio-economic conditions;
3. Promote more regional exchange workshops to gather best practices from other countries in the region.

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<sup>22</sup> UNDP 2010, "MDG Scorecard Report,".

<sup>23</sup> Statistical Institute of Belize, "Belize Labour Force Survey, September 2012 – Summary of Findings"

<sup>24</sup> Comment adopted in 2011 on C100.



## Belize

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**H. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living**
**67.25. Give priority to the improvement of the situation of certain vulnerable groups, especially women and children (Algeria);**

As it relates to improving women's situation, the National Women's Commission, has completed a draft national gender policy, currently awaiting approval by the National Cabinet. The Gender Policy is the framework through which women's rights are translated into practice. The National Gender Policy is founded on principles outlined in the Belize Constitution and in International Conventions and Agreements signed and ratified by the Government of Belize. As was mentioned above, the UNCT raised this in a conversation with the Prime Minister in December 2012.

The UNCT commends the provision of non-contributory pension and the efforts to widen the number of women who receive the pension through the National Social Security. In addition, the conditional cash transfer under the BOOST program also seeks to widen access to women and children and this forms part of the social protection system in the country. In addition, the tuition support under BOOST for secondary school students also reduces marginalization of children who otherwise could not access secondary education.

Nonetheless, women who have been subjected to human trafficking continue to be a concern during the reporting period. Belize has been identified as a source, transit and destination country for victims of human trafficking. The Government has partnered with IOM to provide training to all stakeholders including police, immigration, judicial and consular officers on screening for victims, protecting the rights of victims of human trafficking, providing adequate rehabilitation and repatriation services for victims, developing a National Strategic Plan of Action for addressing prevention, protection of victims and prosecution of trafficking offences. In addition, the Government has passed into law a revised Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act to incorporate offences for commercial sexual exploitation of children and also to address manifestations of trafficking in persons that are specific to Belize.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**I. Right to health**
**67.33. Take further concrete measures to enhance women's access to health care, in particular sexual and reproductive services, as recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, among others (Netherlands);**

To enhance health services to women, the Government has implemented the Health Strategic Plan 2009-2011 with support from UNICEF and UNFPA. The plan has the following objectives:

- Safe motherhood initiative strengthened towards having a healthy mother and a healthy newborn by providing quality comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health services to non-pregnant females > 10 years of age; by providing quality health care services for the prevention and control of cervical cancer and quality health care services – (prevention, detection, management and referral services) to female and male survivors of gender based violence; by providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services with a human rights-based approach (gender, culture, race, religion, sexual orientation among others) throughout the life cycle.
- Also the strategy plans to provide comprehensive care for women during pregnancy to prevent, control, manage and refer patients with obstetric complications. Overall the

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initiative aims to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of interventions towards improving maternal and child health through the Safe Motherhood and Child Health Committees. The implementation of the plan has resulted in improvements in the maternal mortality rate. Maternal Mortality has been showing a constant decrease going from 134/100,000 in 2005 to 55.3/100,000 in 2010 and in 2011 there were no maternal deaths, largely due to the implementation of quality improvement guidelines. It should be noted that the main causes of maternal death are hypertensive disorders during pregnancy.

In 2013 PAHO report Health in the Americas Belize chapter, also reported that there is a need to strengthen health services to reduce maternal and child mortality, the later with emphasis on neonatal mortality. Measures to be taken involved a strong capacity building at the community and health services level including training of midwives, training on implementation of health care protocols, laboratory strengthening, newborn revival, newborn warming, proper management of infections, etc. To address this topic, PAHO/WHO in coordination with Ministry of Health and support from the European Union developed a proposal to reduce neonatal and maternal mortality.

Further, PAHO/WHO is collaborating with the Ministry of Health in developing the National Health Plan/Strategy 2013-2017. The plan will have an important impact on the provision of health services for women and children with emphasis on primary health care such as prenatal care, vaccination, promotion of breast feeding, implementation of the child health strategy. The National Health Plan will: a) increase the delivery of quality health services at all levels (public and private), considering the current concept of universal coverage with a primary health care focus; b) increase the availability of essential drugs and increase the number of appropriate diagnostic facilities and technologies; c) engage civil society and other actors to promote behavioral change; d) propose actions to increase the number of necessary human resources, develop local training and contracting mechanisms to ensure quality health delivery; e) improve current financing mechanisms for the provision of quality services as well as the necessary financial needs based on the actions proposed by the plan under development, and d) strengthen the MoH capacity in leading the analysis and change required to implement the plan.

*HIV/AIDS:* Data for 2010 revealed HIV infections had decreased for the second year in a row, in 2009 the programme had documented a 14% decrease when compared to 2008 data and 2010 data shows a further reduction in new infections by 33.8% when compared to 2009 data. The country has thus gone underneath 250 new infections for a single year, something that hadn't been documented since 2000, prior to the wide scale testing, the introduction of VCT services countrywide and the achievement of universal ART coverage While this is certainly mirroring a positive impact within the national response, the key age groups still affected remain those between 20-49 years of age with the highest number seen in those 25-29 years highlighting the fact that much work remains to be done amongst this productive sector of society<sup>25</sup> in spite of the implementation of a National HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy in 2004 and its pending revision.

As for the total number of new AIDS cases, in 2010 there were a total of 81 (30 female, 51 male). The statistics over the reporting period confirms a fluctuating pattern of reported HIV infections and the difficulty in keeping track of those patients detected as positive as most patients won't show up again in the system until they are at the latter stages of advanced HIV infection and this is particularly so

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<sup>25</sup>Ministry of Health Statistics



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with the male population. The more predominant numbers are those between 25-49 years, the same age groups as for new HIV infections and this reflects the most sexually active age groups.

Persistent problems associated with poor knowledge of transmission methods and negative growth in behavior change and attitudes continue to be of concern especially for adolescent female populations and populations with high risk sexual activity which are the groups most at risk for new infections. In 2009, 50.2 % of young people 15-24 years of age correctly identified both consistent condom use and having one uninfected partner, who has no other partners, as ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV<sup>26</sup>.

Further in 2009, the Pan-American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO) Belize conducted a second round of an HIV/AIDS TRaC Study, evaluating condom use among FSW and MSM in Belize City, Cayo, Orange Walk, Corozal Town and Stann Creek districts. The scores in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 were 48.5% and 52.3% respectively<sup>27</sup>. Condom use among these groups showed diverging directions, however, both studies highlight that the consistent use of condoms has decreased.

*Chronic Diseases:* Health surveillance over the past years has been indicating increasing occurrence of non-communicable diseases and other health risks in Belize. Across several age categories chronic diabetes and cardiovascular disease are leading causes of mortality taking over from many of the traditional infectious diseases such as malaria, TB and dengue. These emerging health risks from chronic diseases are all related to a cluster of risk factors connected to inappropriate and inadequate diet, lack of exercise and inadequate living environment. Further, road accidents are major causes of mortality yet the quality of the roads is low and the enforcement of safety regulations is minimal. However, there are few initiatives from the Government to address these issues. The bulk of government investment in health care is focused on HIV/AIDS interventions and interventions for infectious diseases. There was a National Health Insurance (NHI) Scheme that was rolled out in 2007 by the Government, the goal of which was to improve universal access to health care especially for chronic disease prevention. However, over the reporting period, the program was retracted to Belize City and some areas of Southern Belize due to lack of resources. While there have been other reforms by the Government to computerize the intake and patient care tracking system for the health services throughout the country, there has been no appreciable impact on the prevention and control of the incidence of chronic diseases.

In addition, to these emerging health issues, there is an inadequate access to health services and health facilities for most of the population. There is an acute shortage of primary care nurses with a very low 1.4/1,000 population ration and only 0.2/1,000 in primary care<sup>28</sup>, in part, this is a result of the limitation of the NHI services to Belize City and Southern Belize. The health care system has a heavy dependence on foreign health care workers which raises other issues related to language barriers, cultural differences, and high rotation of staff and greater demand for monitoring and evaluation of the quality health services.

In response to this need for prevention, advocacy and public information is required, as well as specific data about certain health risks in Belize. UNDAF has, therefore, supported various surveys

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<sup>26</sup>GOB 2009, "Sexual Behaviour Survey – Ministry of Health".

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> MOH Statistics – Human Resource Core Data Set.



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and studies to fill these data gaps, promote healthy life styles, advocate disease prevention and promote sexual rights:

1. Risk-factor survey (diabetes, hypertension)
2. Tobacco survey (part of global WHO surveillance, including professionals and students survey)
3. Study on economic impact of road traffic injuries
4. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)

The Nutrition Survey and the National Height Census have indicated that significant under nutrition and stunting exists in rural populations. Most troubling were statistics that while the national average in urban areas for moderate stunting was 15.7% and that for rural areas was 21.4%; for Toledo the statistics for moderate stunting was 41.6 %<sup>29</sup>. Surprisingly, it was Stann Creek another rural community populated by an indigenous population had the highest statistics for under weight children, a high of 9.5% compared to 7.5% in Toledo and 6.6% as the rural average<sup>30</sup>.

The UNCT would welcome the following recommendations to be considered by the Government:

- i. Develop a cadre of sufficiently paid and motivated community/field workers to provide community based health education on emerging chronic lifestyle diseases.
- ii. Fully incorporate and implement strategies for a healthy lifestyle approach in health education and prevention efforts for children, adolescents, adults and the elderly.
- iii. Work towards common ground for the provision of adequate and appropriate health education and prevention programming in schools and other spaces where adolescents are present.
- iv. Develop strategies to provide HFLE to the large component of adolescents who are out of school.
- v. Develop and implement public awareness campaigns in multiple languages that better inform adolescents about HIV/AIDS and that seek to reduce address stigma and discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS.
- vi. Decentralize and expand training for education and health so that culturally specific practices, language and materials are incorporated in the practices of teachers and health works working in indigenous and minority communities.
- vii. Increase the access to health information available at the community level.
- viii. Improve the access of women especially in rural communities to sexual and reproductive health service and primary health care.
- ix. Improve mental health services to and create greater accessibility to such services for persons affected by violence.
- x. Improve the coordination of strategies and programs addressing HIV/AIDS especially at sub-national levels.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**J. Right to education**

<sup>29</sup> UNICEF 2011, “Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Report (MICS).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

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Education is a basic human right and is the second MDG. Belize has made important gains in the development of and implementation of a policy to create child friendly schools and the establishment of Quality Assurance Unit. In addition, the Revision of the Education Act to create the Teacher's Commission and to establish standards for qualified teachers in the classroom has improved the standard of education to children in Belize. However, there has been a decline in gross enrolment and net enrolment rates at the primary school level. The gross enrolment rate as of 2009 is only 95.1% and the net enrolment rate is 83.7%. The national primary school completion rate is only 37%<sup>31</sup> as a result; the country is not on track to meet MDG targets for primary enrolment and completion.

In addition, there has been increasing level repetition and poor academic performance indicating policy and quality problems within the education system as a whole<sup>32</sup>. One factor that has contributed to this is the fact that the education system is an aggregate of education sub-systems with no coordinating mechanism and varying management policies and strategies and quality of teaching staff<sup>33</sup>.

Further, though the education system is multi-cultural, the nature of teacher training and the educational curricula does not adequately address and reflect this reality. Leaving students for whom English is not a mother tongue at a disadvantage<sup>34</sup>. In fact, at one primary school in a rural community, only 6% of the school population speak English as a first language<sup>35</sup>. Indigenous, minority and migrant children already affected by other human rights disparities such as poverty, racism and discrimination are most affected<sup>36</sup>.

The Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Curriculum implemented in the primary schools. The curriculum was developed with the support from UNICEF and PAHO/WHO and was based on HFLE programs in the Caribbean. Initially, the project had wide public support, however, the Government roll out of the program country wide, faced some resistance from denominational organizations when resource materials developed by the PEACE CORPS introduced sensitive issues such as sexual diversity. Public support was withdrawn and there were complaints that the materials were not age appropriate or culturally relevant. The Government withdrew the resource materials in February 2012 and agreed to provide training and support to teachers in the classroom. However, the controversy has resulted in much resistance to the HFLE Curriculum by denominations and even teachers and principals. In addition, much of the hard won gains made by the Ministry of Education in institutionalizing HFLE at the primary school level have been eroded and the introduction of the curriculum in Secondary Schools has been delayed.

The UNCT would welcome the following recommendations to be considered by the Government:

- i. Complete implementation of WASH project under the Quality Schools Initiative Framework.

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<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Education Statistics.

<sup>32</sup> UNICEF 2011, "Knowledge Lab Series – Aguacate Primary School: Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) at Primary Level"

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> SIB 2010, "Population and Housing Census Belize."

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF 2011, "Knowledge Lab Series – Julian Cho Technical High School: Holistic and Inclusive Secondary Education."



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- ii. Ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the incorporation of the provisions into legislation as well as the development of policies, action plans to properly make rights operative for persons with disabilities.
- iii. Better diffuse through the education system the positive discipline techniques and best practices gathered during the UNDAF projects up to 2011.
- iv. Establish mechanisms and/or support the MOE with mechanisms for quality improvement and better follow up of projects by improving monitoring and evaluation.
- v. Increase in house capacity within MOE and district offices to implement and monitor the MOE quality schools initiative projects.
- vi. Develop appropriate Health and Family Life Education Curriculum and provide training and public awareness campaigns to support its implementation.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**K. Cultural rights**

Efforts have been made to improve education access for indigenous peoples and in improving access to water and sanitation. Over the reporting period UNICEF has supported a pilot project for the implementation of the Government’s intercultural bilingual education (IBE) strategies in indigenous communities under the initiative “Protecting the Rights of Indigenous Children in the Development Process”. The initiative seeks to increase enrollment and improve academic outcomes for children in these communities to break the cycles of poverty by implementing IBE. IBE allows for children in indigenous communities to learn the school curriculum in their mother tongue. Already the strategy is reported to have resulted in an increase in students’ motivation, better understanding of school concepts. The programme has invested in teachers and aimed at developing a common school culture and incorporating parents and communities so as to protect the cultural rights of indigenous children to the use of their main language in schools<sup>37</sup>.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**L. Persons with disabilities**

Although the Government has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention has not yet been incorporated into national legislation and no Government Department has been assigned the mandate to implement the rights of persons with disabilities. Specific services for treatment and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities continue to be provided by NGOs rather than Government agencies which have limited the scope and resources available for the provision of such services.

In 2010, UNFPA supported the National Resource Centre for Inclusive Education in establishing a sexual and reproductive health programme for persons with disabilities. A South-South cooperation network was established to ensure that this programme drew from experiences of other Caribbean countries with similar programmes<sup>38</sup>. It included training for parents and caregivers of adolescents and adults with disabilities to strengthen their capacities to identify support and respond to the sexual and reproductive health needs of their young children. In 2010, UNFPA organized trainings for adolescents

<sup>37</sup> UNICEF 2011, “ Knowledge Lab Series – Aguacate Primary School: Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) at Primary Level.”

<sup>38</sup> UNFPA 2011, “UNFPA Report on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”



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and adults with hearing impairments and supported a survey in the area of HIV and AIDS<sup>39</sup>. The 2010 census included a question that specifically captures data on the number of persons with disabilities and their type of disability and MICS was designed to identify children 2 to 9 years at risk for disability in ten areas: walking (gross motor skills), hearing, seeing, understanding, movement (fine motor skills), learning, speaking and mental slowness.

In 2011, UNICEF provided supported for the completion of a Situational Analysis of Persons with Disabilities in Belize which has highlighted the disparity in access to services necessary for the enjoyment and protection of rights of persons with disabilities. UNICEF continues dialogue with the Government on the way forward to address the findings of the SITAN and to implement recommendations.

In 2011 following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Belize's Special Envoy for Children launched a public initiative to raise funds to establish a disabilities treatment and resource facility to be called the Inspiration Center. The initiative received wide support with over USD\$750,000 pledged by members of the public towards the building of the facility.

<b>Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations</b> <b>M. Minorities and indigenous peoples</b>
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**67.8. Implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to prioritize effective measures to reduce poverty among indigenous and minority children (Canada);**

Since 2008 the Government has been engaged in an exercise to strengthen institutions in indigenous communities tasked with the mandate to advance indigenous and minority children. This has resulted in new strategic plans for the Toledo Development Corporation (TDC), its restructuring and incorporation into Toledo Programme for Children and Adolescents (TOLCA).

In 2009, the Government launched the National Poverty Elimination Strategy for 2009 to 2013 which identified indigenous peoples as the most vulnerable population to poverty and outlined the specific strategies to address poverty which included to mainstream land practices into the national land management framework and increase the total value and sustainability levels of alternative livelihoods activities implemented in and by rural communities and sustained levels of fresh water to these groups. However, gains have yet to be assessed. The Minimum Cost Daily Food Basket (MFB), the cost required to provide an adult male with a diet of 2,400 calories per day, to be \$2,005 per annum. The highest MFB cost was found to be in Toledo district (\$6.12/day), which was also the case in 2002 (\$4.29/day) while the lowest was in the Cayo district, which includes Belmopan.<sup>40</sup>

There is also less food security as rural farmers tend to grow what they eat though the diet is not necessarily nutritionally comprehensive. Existing government programmes to address food security and poverty issues include safety net measures have proved inadequate to address the immense challenges and vulnerabilities faced by the population. The BOOST programme created in 2007 with the assistance of the World Bank was designed to be based on a social contract with qualified beneficiary families and to whom the government provides cash transfer on a monthly basis. In return

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> UNICEF 2011, "Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Belize – An Ecological Review."



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the family ensures that poor and vulnerable children in their care benefit from social goods including, school enrollment and attendance, receipt of immunizations according to schedule and other age-appropriate health services. Those families being targeted are most needy and considered to be in the lowest economic quintile. The programme prepares the children of poor families to be able to overcome some of the challenges associated with living in poverty. The program was intended to have had its strongest impact in indigenous communities and south-side Belize City and to provide assistance to the elderly population. However, the Government has struggled to recruit adequate staff, finance the program and to provide the necessary support mechanism to schools and communities to overcome persistent challenges living with poverty and has not had much success as yet in reversing poverty trends in indigenous and other vulnerable communities.

Over the reporting period, UNDP has also implemented the water and sanitation project, “Applying MDG Acceleration Framework: Addressing Governance Bottlenecks to Achieve Water and Sanitation Coverage in Belize” in collaboration with and through the Government. The project is geared at contributing to poverty elimination by investing in people and aims at enabling improved good governance practices at national and local and non-state institutions like the Ministry responsible for rural development and local government, and the local water boards. This is particularly important to indigenous populations being able to meet MDGs for health and poverty alleviation.

**67.35. Redouble its efforts in favor of the respect of the rights of indigenous peoples, in line with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Mexico);**

At the time of reporting the Government has made little progress in advancing the allocation of 500,000 acres of disputed Mayan Traditional Lands which followed the 2004 Inter-American Commission of Human Rights report in favour of Mayan property rights. On 28 June 2010 the Supreme Court of Belize ruled for the second time in favour of Maya land rights (first case was in 2007), again affirming constitutional protection for ancestral land rights for 38 villages in Southern Belize. However, to date only some 77,000 acres have been designated. Lack of advances on this front is being presented by Mayan leaders as an attack on traditional livelihoods and their culture. A recent government decision has given concession to a US petroleum company allowing for oil exploration within traditional Mayan lands, and there are claims that this has taken place contrary to free, prior and informed consent of the Mayan indigenous communities in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The UNCT remains concerned at social tension around the issue of indigenous peoples and encourage increased dialogue with the designated leaders of the Mayan people. The UNCT also takes note that there has been no ruling yet on the Government’s Appeal and would welcome a resolution.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**N. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers**

**68.10. Review its legislation and practice with a view to ensuring effective access to asylum procedure and upholding the principle of non-refoulement (Czech Republic);**

*Refugees and Asylum Seekers:* The UNHCR’s mandate is restricted to issues related to refugees and asylum seekers. The UNHCR through its local partner, Help for Progress assists the Government in identifying, detecting and screening of refugees and asylum seekers. Once recognized as refugees or



**Belize**

asylum seekers, person in need of protection are allowed state subsidized primary health care. Children ages 6-14 have access to subsidized primary school education. Children of asylum seekers who are born in Belize are provided Belizean citizenship with all its rights and responsibilities. The State assumes protection for the asylum seekers, refugees and their families. At present, Belize has an asylum population 60 persons, of which 45% are women and girls. UNHCR has been in dialogue with the government for the re-establishment of Eligibility Committee for Refugee Status Determination, with specific provisions addressing the protection needs of refugee and asylum seeking women and girls. There are other concerns as well including the following:

1. Asylum seekers risk refoulement related to the non-existence of formal asylum system and government’s reluctance to consider asylum claims;
2. “Extra-regionals” continue to be incarcerated as legislation allows for them to be detained indefinitely even after sentences for illegal entry are completed while the Government looks for means to repatriate them to their countries of origin;
3. Bureaucracy and stringent immigration requirements that prevent economic migrants from accessing work permits that can allow them to benefit from social security and to find employment; and
4. Lack of adequate screening to identify other vulnerable migrants such as victims of human trafficking.

*Migrants:*

General migration laws govern this population; this now also includes persons identified as victims of trafficking in persons, who under the Trafficking in Persons Act are able to obtain temporary residency status as well as residential, medical and educational assistance. In 2012, migration authorities reported that over 250 undocumented migrants were intercepted and detained, 50 were refused entry. The vast majority of these were returned to their countries both by land and sea. Most individuals served a minimum of three to four months incarceration after detection. Currently, intercepted and undocumented migrants, including potential asylum seekers, convicted of illegal entry are incarcerated together with serious criminal offenders convicted of violence, drug-related activities and those suffering from various illnesses. Extra-regionals continue to be incarcerated as legislation allows for them to be detained indefinitely even after sentences for illegal entry are completed while the Government looks for means to repatriate them to their countries of origin. Bureaucracy and stringent immigration requirements prevent economic migrants from accessing work permits that can allow them to benefit from social security and to find employment.

Of particular concern to the UNCT is the vulnerabilities caused to migrant children, many of whom are located in ad hoc communities of undocumented persons in the agricultural belts and alongside border communities. Some of these children were born in Belize but due to lack of documentation of their parents have not been registered and so cannot access appropriate health, education or other service to exercise and protect their rights. The UNCT calls on the Government to prioritize a situational analysis of migrants and the development of a suitable migration policy that adequately addresses the risks of victimization and the vulnerabilities of migrant children.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**O. Internally displaced persons**

The UNCT is not aware of the existence of any internally displaced persons seeking assistance from the Government of Belize over the reporting period. The UN System has no further information in this regard.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**P. Right to development, including environmental issues**

The impact of repeated exposure to small and medium size storms and climate-related events have contributed to increased vulnerabilities and reduced adaptation capacities of people, particularly in the small rural and coastal communities of the country. This compounded with economic challenges at the national and global arenas have exacerbated the poverty levels and other development challenges in these areas in particular but overall in the country. Many coastal areas exposed to hurricane hazard risks –such as Belize City- generate its economic outputs from tourism. Crops are also destroyed during hurricane and Belize may be vulnerable to several diseases, as well as hunger and food scarcity resulting from hurricane events. While building standards are improving, they remain relatively poor, contributing to increased infrastructure vulnerabilities during hurricanes and related hazard risk.

The Government has implemented several recent initiatives and passed several policies to address environmental vulnerability. These include; the 2011 development and adoption of a National Land Use Policy, the 2011 passing of a National Integrated Water Resources Management Act, the 2011 drafting of an Area Based Rural Development Strategy, and the 2012 formalization of a specialized Sustainable Development Ministry all contribute to the national framework which protect Belizean access to natural resources (Land and water) necessary for the securing/ sustaining of livelihoods and to overall improved quality of life. The UNCT notes that environmental rights are not, enshrined in the Constitution of Belize, but is a party to many International Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) is already establishing regional disaster preparedness and response systems. The Belize Red Cross Society has also started this process since 2008 in the Toledo District, followed up by projects in 2009, 2010 and 2011 in Belize, Cayo and Corozal districts to integrate communities' disaster preparedness plans, and experiences, with neighbouring communities. Nevertheless, NEMO does not have a stated gender policy or strategy document, nor does it maintain sex-disaggregated data<sup>41</sup>. This data would allow for analysis of the populations most at risk including greater knowledge of their capacities to mitigate impacts from disasters.

Regarding the first target of the MDG 7, Belize has embarked on a number of initiatives to streamline and harmonize its policies, legislation and programmes with its regional and international commitments aimed at meeting this first target. With the support of active NGO partnerships and financial assistance from the UN System and regional partners, Belize has been able to make significant strides toward its environmental management goals and targets. Though challenges remain and Belize is on target to meet this MDG. According to a study conducted by Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC) and NASA, Belize's forest cover in early 2010 was approximately 62.7%, down from 75.9% in late 1980. While only some 6.4% of forests inside of legally declared protected areas were cleared between 1980 and 2010, over a quarter of forests outside of protected areas had been lost between 1980 and 2010. The study also indicates that each year, 0.6% of Belize's forest cover is lost, translating to the clearing of an average of 24,835 acres (10,050 ha) each year. This has worrying environmental concerns for Belize which has high vulnerability for flooding and hurricane both of which are worsened by inadequate forest cover.

The UNCT would welcome consideration of the following recommendations by the Government:

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<sup>41</sup> UNCT 2012, "Joint Analysis and Mapping Report on Prevention and Human Security in Belize."





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- i. Implement the Protected Areas Policy and Systems Plan to better coordinate the management of protected areas which is currently spread between there different and independent ministries.
- ii. Ensuring the implementation of national mitigation efforts and vulnerability studies at sub-national levels.
- iii. Conducting evaluations/impact assessment of GEF/SGP/COMPACT projects in particular to assess their contribution to sustainable development practices at community levels.
- iv. Strengthening coordination of national climate change issues and advocating for their integration within a cross section of ministries (beyond the climate change focal point within the National Meteorological Service).
- v. Strengthening the implementation and enforcement of plans and policies already developed, including the National Implementation Plan on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Integrated Water Resource Management plans, Private Protected Areas plan, and the Action Plan on Marine Pollution.
- vi. Initiating/encouraging the Government to conduct regular performance monitoring, mid-term reviews, evaluation of policy and impact assessments.
- vii. Strengthen the implementation of MEA, including their incorporation into national law as may be necessary.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**Q. Human Rights and counter-terrorism**

Belize has had no cases of alleged terrorism identified within its borders.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**R. Situation in or in relation to specific territories**

There are no issues in relation to specific territories within the country of Belize.

**Chapter III Implementation of international human rights obligations**  
**S. Other**

- b. Children**
  - i. Protection, abuse and neglect**

From January through June 2010, there were 81 registered cases of domestic violence against children under age 14 and 18 cases of sexual abuse against children under age 14<sup>42</sup>. In many cases the government was unable to prosecute individuals for such abuse because the victims or their families were reluctant to press charges. Statistics on the cases of child abuse are not publicly available.

<sup>42</sup> GOB, 2010, “ Family Court Statistics – 2010”



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UNICEF identified key problems of legal system regarding issues of protection, child abuse and neglect<sup>43</sup>:

- i. Withdrawal of cases
- ii. Lack of sensitization training for prosecutors
- iii. Lack of training of doctors and police in collecting and presenting forensic evidence and the absence of protocols on these
- iv. Lack of early collaboration between prosecution and police
- v. Lack of uniformity in the procedures in Family Court
- vi. Lack of legal aid for foster parents seeking de facto adoptions.

The children with the highest need for protection are identified as: children without parental care, including: the children in kinship care, foster care, and institutional care; children with disabilities; adopted; and victims of child abuse and neglect<sup>44</sup>. More strategic investment across the life cycle that specifically targets these groups to improve their realisation and enjoyment of rights by these groups is recommended.

The UNCT through UNICEF has initiated dialogue with the Government for the consideration of appointing an Ombudsman for Children with specific responsibility to take legal action on behalf of children for the protection of their human rights and to investigate abuse of Government power that results in the infringement of the rights of children. As a result, the government did appoint an Inspector of Institutions to investigate cases of allegations of abuse in residential institutions for children. However, that position is now vacant. In addition, there are challenges in translating commitments made under the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents into concrete actions, systems and services to achieve full developmental rights.

**ii. Child Labour**

Child labour continues to be a problem. The National Child Labour Policy is being implemented but with over 41% of the population living below the poverty line and insufficient spaces at the Secondary Education level, high secondary school fees and inadequate or unaffordable or inaccessible alternatives for vocational education, such implementation has had limited success in eradicating child labour. In Toledo and Corozal, 16 per cent of children attending school are involved in child labour<sup>45</sup>. UNICEF and ILO collaborated with the Government to provide training workshops to labour inspectors on detection of the worst forms of child labour. IOM's Anti-trafficking in Persons Project also provided training to labour officers on detection of trafficking for labour purposes and provided screening tools and educational pamphlets for distribution<sup>46</sup>.

**iii. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and human trafficking**

There have been persistent reports of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize over the reporting period. In addition, there are reports of cases of trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation as well as forced labour. The Major Crimes Unit from the Belize Police Department

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<sup>43</sup>UNICEF 2011, "Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Belize – An Ecological Review".

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> UNICEF 2011, "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)".

<sup>46</sup>IOM 2012, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Project Closing Press Release.

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has participated in three (3) major operations from April 2010 to March 2011. The Major Crimes Unit also participated in three (3) major surveillances. In 2010 the Major Crimes Unit personnel conducted a total of forty eight (48) interviews with suspected victims of trafficking in persons. As a result of these interviews conducted with suspected victims of trafficking in persons countrywide by Major Crimes Unit personnel, seven persons have been arrested and charged for 8 counts of Trafficking in Persons, Attempted Trafficking in Persons and Rape and Aggravated Assault which resulted from Trafficking in Person investigations. Additionally there have also been five (5) reported CSEC cases. These cases are currently before the court.

In 2012 the Government enacted revisions to the Trafficking in Persons Act to include offences the specifically criminalize CSEC and to address manifestations of trafficking in persons that are peculiar to Belize. The legislation will provide protection to children from CSEC up to the age of 18 years.

**c. Youths and Adolescents**

In 2011, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Youth in the development of a National Youth Development Policy which was ratified by Cabinet in January, 2013. The National Youth Development Policy establishes an important framework for addressing adolescent and youth development from a positive perspective. The passage of this policy comes at a critical time when the risk of violent offending and violent victimization among young people has increased. This has occurred in a context of high levels of youth unemployment, inadequate educational opportunities, and exposure to violence at home, in schools, in communities and in the wider society. At the same time, youth continue to express that there are limited alternatives for positive development opportunities such as sports, recreation, second chance programmes, etc. Youths have also expressed feelings of exclusion from national and regional governance processes, which helps predispose them to participate in alternative structures, including gangs. In addition, the UNCT is aware that there are reports abuses of juveniles who come in conflict with the law.

In 2010, the government of Belize launched the RESTORE Belize Programme, a crime prevention initiative, which operates directly out of the Office of the Prime Minister. The programme primarily operates as a coordinating agency that pulls together all government agencies to address the complex range of institutional, social and economic issues that have given rise to the high levels of violent crime in Belize. Additionally, restorative justice programmes have been implemented.

Some examples of Restorative Justice Programmes used by the Government include: Victim-offender mediation; Conferencing, Victim Assistance, Ex-offender assistance, Restitution and Community Service.

In respect to adolescent girls, The UN launched a Joint UN Programme to Reduce the Social and Economic Vulnerability of Adolescent Girls in 2011. The UN Joint Programme to reduce social and economic vulnerability of Adolescent Girls continued to contribute to an understanding of the barriers and bottlenecks that contribute to girls' vulnerability. The UN collaboration along with technical support from the Population Council has resulted in an improved understanding of the situation of adolescent girls in Belize. Quality data is now available on the situation of the most disadvantaged girls through the completion of the Adolescent Girls Coverage Study and community dialogue has resulted in the identification of several bottle necks to accessing services for adolescent girls. Further, UNFPA has supported services for teenage mothers and strengthening of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) commodities by supporting NGOs such as YES (Youth Enhancement Services) and BFLA (Belize

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Family Life Association) in, for example, youth conferences and establishing Youth-Friendly Services; and making social and health services (including SRH) accessible to adolescents. UNFPA has also organized in-house training on crisis counseling with YES, which was highly appreciated, and sponsored the publication of the Parenting and Gender Booklets. YES is also involved in skills development for young girls (upholstery, cooking, hospitality). The UNCT notes that one important gap that remains, which has been highlighted by the Adolescent Girls Coverage Study, is the absence of support services for adolescent girls. Specifically, there is low coverage of services for life and livelihood skills development in all areas of Belize covered under the study.

**d. Older Persons**

Locally, NGO organizations such as HelpAge have supported international efforts for the development of a UN Convention on the Rights of Elderly Persons. In addition, the National Council of Aging, established by the Government of Belize, has advocated for legislative advancement to protect the rights of older persons in Belize. Since 2002, the Government of Belize has developed a National Policy for Older Persons and established the National Council on Aging to Implement the Policy but no significant budgetary allocation has been made for its implementation. The Council in 2007 facilitated the draft of an Older Persons Bill but to date the Bill has not been passed by Parliament. The Bill seeks to secure the protection of the human rights of older persons and the creation of conditions of economic security, social participation and education that promote the satisfaction of older persons' basic needs and their full inclusion in society and development in accordance with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. In 2009, the Country Poverty Assessment of 2009 states, "... older persons living on their own are much likely to be income poor". In recognizing the vulnerability of this group, the government introduced the Non-Contributory Pension, initially for women of 65 years and above and subsequently the inclusion of men 67 years and above was seen as a very necessary benefit to those older persons most in need. The NCP is only available to older people who are not supported by family members and at the end of 2009 the number of recipients totaled 4,297, which is approximately 18.05% of the population of older persons in Belize.

The majority of older persons live with family members and with an overall poverty rate of 41% it could be concurred that the majority of the older persons live within poor family homes and therefore continue to face hardship<sup>47</sup>. The living conditions of older Belizeans are unsatisfactory.

The UNCT would welcome consideration of the following recommendations by the Government:

- i. Develop a more just and inclusive benefit scheme should be introduced such as a Universal Pension for all.
- ii. Provide full budgetary support for the National Policy of Older Persons
- iii. Enact the Older Persons Bill.

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<sup>47</sup>UNFPA, GOB, 2010, "Situational Analysis of Older Persons – Belize".



**ANNEX A – The UNCT would welcome the following recommendations to be considered by the Government:**

**1. Citizen Security -Recommendations:**

- i. Improve the capacity of the police to investigate crimes by properly staffing and equipping the forensic unit.
- ii. To promote the ratification of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- iii. Fully, implementing the recommendations of the Crooks Report<sup>48</sup> to re-structure the Police Department.
- iv. To elaborate protocols and implement programmes addressing the lack of training of law enforcement regarding legal and judicial procedures as well as sensitization and special treatment of youth and victims.
- v. Providing technical capacity building to the prosecution branch within the Police Department.
- vi. Supporting reforms to the Magistracy that will protect the independence of the judiciary.
- vii. Conducting an assessment on the communication between the police and the judiciary, particularly assessing how their mandates and duties are related and how to improve the joint working.

**2. Abuse and Protection of Children – Recommendations:**

- i. Standardize and harmonize all laws protecting rights of children.
- ii. Legislative reform to the Criminal Code and other laws that abolish provisions that legalize harm to children.
- iii. Legislative reforms to create provisions that better protect boys from sexual crimes are also still outstanding.
- iv. Implementing the recommendations made in the UNICEF 2011 SITAN.
- v. Strengthening and mobilization of sub-national structures in towns, villages and communities.
- vi. Increase formal spaces for participation of children and adolescents in formulation of policies affecting exercise and enjoyment of rights.

**3. Child Labour - Recommendations:**

- i. the implementation of a new child activity survey to gather current trends on the phenomenon of child labour in Belize,
- ii. the strengthening and revitalization of the National Committee on Child Labour,
- iii. the consolidation of commitments under the National Child Labour Policy into legislation with greater enforcement powers to labour inspectors,
- iv. Closer collaboration between Labour Inspectors and social workers in communities where child labour is endemic.

**4. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children – Recommendations:**

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<sup>48</sup>GOB 2008, “A Review of the Belize Police Department.”

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- i. Commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (CSEC) offences should be criminalized.
- ii. Increase the investment of resources to facilitate greater long term assistance to victims including retraining and transition into the workforce and school system as appropriate.
- iii. Improve screening procedures at border points.
- iv. Computerized data collection and tracking of emigration and immigration patterns.
- v. Strengthen the collaboration with NGOs and CBOs working with vulnerable populations
- vi. Attach the Code of Conduct and training for detection and reporting of human trafficking as a condition of the license for resort and hotel operators within the tourism sector.
- vii. Continue public education and media campaigns to educate the public on the manifestations of and risk of human trafficking as well as how to get help.

**5. Youths and Adolescents - Recommendations:**

- i. Support for robust implementation of the National Youth Development Policy.
- ii. Approval of the National Gender Policy.
- iii. Legal reform to create accessibility of adolescent girls to sexual and reproductive information and services.
- iv. Public education on the causes of youth crime and the rights of youth offenders.
- v. To implement a prevention-oriented approach that ensures that young offenders receive early attention and rehabilitation. The provision of legal aid lawyers specializing in juvenile cases to youth is highly recommended.
- vi. Increasing participation of the business community alternative sentencing programs.
- vii. Strengthening of the Restorative Justice Programmes, in order to avoid efforts that could perpetuate the cycle of violence and criminal behaviour of juvenile offenders, Restorative Justice and Violence Prevention initiatives must be encouraged.
- viii. Include the child protection system and role of the police in the training curriculum for police officers at the training academy. Staff the Juvenile Justice Courts with trained mediators and social workers.