

The National Women's Commission

National Gender Policy Consultation Report



Isis Enterprises

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April, 2009**

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1. Introduction

The National Women's Commission is a body of individual women and men appointed by the Government. It functions as a strategic guidance and oversight mechanism for the achievement of gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in Belize (GEEWE). More specifically, the NWC serves as an advisory body to the Minister with responsibility for women and gender issues and as an advocate for the fulfillment of the standards, principles, and goals embodied within the Convention (CEDAW), the National Gender Policy and other relevant policies. To carry out this mandate, the NWC seeks to review and update the National Gender Policy (2002). It therefore initiated a policy review process with the hosting of a National Gender Policy (NGP) Consultation. This Consultation was held on March 30-31, 2009 at the Chateau Caribbean in Belize City. Both Government and Non-Government partners participated in this event. (See A for a copy of the agenda and Annex B for a list of participants)

The objectives of the consultation were to:

- initiate a longer process of reviewing and updating the National Gender Policy 2002
- take stock of what actions have been taken to advance the provisions of the Policy
- develop a plan of action for a more comprehensive review and updating of the Policy

The Consultation was organized into five panel presentations Wealth and Employment Creation, Violence-Producing Conditions, Education and Skills Training Power and Decision-Making and Health based on the five thematic priorities outlined in the National Gender Policy (2002). Each panel was followed by plenary discussions. The consultation culminated with the presentation of a plan of action to Judith Alpuche, Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation.

The National Gender Policy Consultation was opened by Esther Ayuso Ramirez, Chair of the NWC who outlined the role of the commission. This was followed by a presentation of objectives by Ann-Marie Williams, Executive Director of the commission. Williams introduced the facilitator, Adele Catzim-Sanchez, to officially begin the consultation process.

2. The Policy Framework

Dylan Vernon, Independent Consultant, and Icilda Humes, Director of the Women's Department made presentations on the policy framework. Vernon focused on the results of a policy review study conducted by the Katalyst Institute for Public Policy and Research while Humes provided background information specific to the National Gender Policy 2002.

Vernon highlighted a rational policy making cycle and identified the policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of policy development as components most in need of strengthening in Belize. He reported that the extent of policy consultation prior to policy development does not influence the rate of policy implementation. Rather, the study showed that economic and revenue generating policies have a higher rate of policy implementation compared to other policies, such as social policies. The policy development cycle, he urged, must not end with the development or revision of a policy as in the case of the National Gender Policy. He quoted the NGP in stating that once developed, it suffered from “policy evaporation often due to the passage of time, a perception that the production of a policy document is the end rather than the beginning of the policy reform process, a shift in political priorities, etc.” (Johnson, 2002 pg. 65). He cautioned against this “policy evaporation” recurring with the review of the existing National Gender Policy.

Humes shared that the National Gender Policy was developed in 2002 by the National Women’s Commission. Its main purpose was to provide policy direction on gender issues and monitor Belize’s progress in complying with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This included the incorporation of recommendations from the UN CEDAW Committee. The NGP was developed based on the provisions of CEDAW, the UN CEDAW Committee recommendations from 1999 and a National Situation Analysis on Gender Issues in Belize. Section 4 of the NGP outlined five thematic priorities for Belize and offered strategies for coordination and implementation.

The five thematic priorities are:

- Health
- Wealth and Employment Creation
- Violence Producing Conditions
- Education and Skills Training
- Women in Decision-Making Positions

Humes further indicated that due to some of the same issues raised by Vernon, the NGP was not effectively implemented, monitored or evaluated. The NGP was therefore criticized by the CEDAW Committee for its inadequate implementation and enforcement of laws, its lack of measurability and its vagueness regarding process and impact over time. The UN CEDAW Committee therefore recommended that Belize:

- *put in place a comprehensive system of data collection in all areas covered by the Convention so as to **assess the actual situation** of women and to **track trends over time***
- ***monitor, through measurable indicators, the impact** of measures taken and **progress achieved** towards the realization of women’s de facto equality.*
- ***strengthen enforcement of its laws***

- *elaborate a **comprehensive operational plan** for the **effective implementation** of the Convention and its policies and programs for the advancement of women*
- ***intensify its efforts to raise awareness** about the Convention and about laws, policies and programs.*
- ***establish concrete goals, such as quotas and timetables** for each area of the Convention.*
(UN CEDAW Committee Recommendations 2007)

Humes urged the NWC and the participants to ensure that the NGP review and updating process consider the recommendations of the UN CEDAW Committee as well as respond to the weaknesses in the policy cycle as identified in the Katalyst study.

3. Summary of Panel Presentation and Discussions (See Annex C for a full matrix of the information presented)

Overall, 13 organizations made presentations on the thematic areas included in the National Gender Policy (2002). They outlined their goals, major achievements and challenges. They also offered lessons learned and recommendations on how the NGP can be strengthened. An additional presentation was delivered. This presentation focused on legal issues confronting society.

3.1 Wealth and Employment Creation

The National Gender Policy outlined several issues to be addressed under the theme of “*Wealth and Employment Creation*”. Four major areas were selected for review during the consultation. These were:

- Minimum wage levels
- Gender equity in employment opportunities
- Child-care opportunities
- Child and spousal maintenance provisions

Sonia Lenares, General Secretary of the YWCA, Carolyn Reynolds, Executive Director of WIN-Belize and Magistrate Alberta Perez or the Belize Family Court made presentations on these components of the NGP.

Goals

Lenares indicated that the YWCA aims to provide education and training for women and girls, provide opportunities for recreation and physical development and engage in advocacy actions on issues affecting women and girls. Reynolds reported that the network is responsible for research and advocacy to increase the minimum wage of domestic workers and shop assistants as well as advocate for the elimination of

discriminatory practices in the education system. They held consultations with the Labor Department to advance their agenda. Magistrate Alberta Perez indicated that the Belize Family Court was established to protect the rights of families and children. They deal with, among other things, child and spousal maintenance issues and child care and child custody issues.

Achievements

Major achievements noted by the YWCA were the provision of childcare and preschool services to women so that they can better take advantage of employment opportunities. They also provided skills training to both women and girls to enhance their level of employability. A related achievement was health promotion and basic mental health services to enable women and girls to become more productive citizens.

Major achievements noted by WIN-Belize included consistent increases in the minimum wage provisions for female dominated jobs, such as domestic workers and shop assistants and an awareness of discriminatory employment practices within the education system.

The Women's Department first brought the public's attention to discrimination in the education system. This issue was included in Belize's 1999 CEDAW report to the United Nations. The UN CEDAW Committee recommended that this issue be considered a top priority. Under the guidance of the National Women's Commission, this issue was included in the National Gender Policy. Using the National Gender Policy and CEDAW as a platform, the National Women's Commission legally challenged a case of discrimination. The defendant was financially compensated, thus setting legal precedent for other similar cases in Belize.

Major achievements for the Family Court included the provision of child maintenance provisions for children out of wedlock. A legal amendment was also made to extend the time within which a maintenance case can be lodged (from 1 to 3 years) for children born out of wedlock and in which the pregnancy was not recognized.

Challenges

Challenges in the implementation of wealth and employment creation programs included the perennial issue of limited human and financial resources for all agencies. The YWCA was also challenged to provide mental health services to its client base. For WIN-Belize, conducting research on the minimum wage was extremely difficult due to women's lack of participation for fear of discrimination. Issues of coordination and collaboration were also highlighted.

Challenges for the Family Court were extensive. They are challenged in the enforcement of maintenance orders for women and children. This is due to limited human resource capacity and the lack of sensitization of police officers on whom the magistrate courts depend for assistance. Disparities in the legislation for children born in and out of wedlock also make enforcement a serious challenge. Regarding spousal maintenance, the maximum payment for wives is not consistent with the current cost of living. Furthermore, husbands with legal representation argue that wives who are

employed are not entitled to spousal maintenance although the law makes no such exceptions.

Other challenges include the fact that many cases in need of child protection do not reach the court system. The lack of resources, both human and financial, within the Human Services Department, limits the number of cases to which the Department can respond. As a result, some children are left in harmful situations, some of which come to the public's attention when these children die in fires and other tragedies. Even when children, including juveniles, reach the court system and must be placed in substitute care, interim care orders are not enforced in a timely manner. Although the aim is to reunite children with their families, this is regularly delayed. The Human Services Department lacks the resources required to follow-up on cases and provide the necessary parenting education to mothers and parents. Parent education is usually a condition of the interim care order and parents must participate in these programs if they wish to be reunited with their children.

For juveniles who are found guilty of an offence, there is no adequate facility for sentencing and rehabilitation. Instead juvenile offenders are placed in the Wagner's Youth Facility, located on the prison compound where hardened criminals are housed even though this contravenes the provisions of the Juvenile Offenders Act.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned included the need to build greater human resource capacity among women constituencies so that they can advocate for their rights. The Family Court stated that there is a dire need for advocacy so that parents know their rights and can demand that the Family Court and Human Services Departments receive adequate resources to function effectively.

All organizations also named monitoring and evaluation as a major challenge even though they recognized the importance of such activities. For the YWCA, resources issues were found to be linked to the quality of program management within the organization. They also realized that if women and girls' mental health issues are not addressed, they are less likely to take advantage of wealth and employment creation opportunities available to them.

Magistrate Perez also called for child and spousal maintenance provisions to be amended to eliminate differences in the treatment of children in and out of wedlock. She further requested that changes to the amounts stated in the legislation for spousal maintenance be reviewed to be consistent with the current cost of living. She indicated the need for a structured parenting program which can immediately facilitate parents who are legally ordered to take these parenting classes. Finally, she advocated for the establishment of half way houses to host juveniles who are in need of rehabilitative services.

Other Input:

The participants recommended that the National Gender Policy be harmonized with other existing policy development processes such as the costing for the Millennium Development Goals and the Poverty Elimination Strategy for Belize. Furthermore they highlighted the need for greater enforcement of the minimum wage provisions through the labor department and the redefinition of a workplace to include homes that employ domestic workers. They further recommended that skills training programs seek to make strategic links with the private sector to increase the chances of employment for the beneficiaries of their programs.

3.2 Violence- Producing Conditions

The National Gender Policy outlined several issues to be addressed under the theme, “*Violence-Producing Conditions*”. The following provisions were reviewed during the consultation:

- The domestic violence framework
- The domestic violence and child abuse registration system
- Sexual abuse provisions
- Access to justice
- Victims and survivors of abuse
- Perpetrators of abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Child abandonment and neglect, and
- Commercial sex work

Icilda Humes of the Women’s Department and Denbigh Yorke Director of the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN) delivered presentations on the above issues.

Goals

Humes reported that the Women’s Department seeks to protect the rights of women and eliminate violence against them and their children. Yorke stated that NOPCAN has a similar objective, although it focuses specifically on protecting the rights of children and eliminating all forms of violence against them.

Achievements

Major achievements noted by the Women’s Department included the development of procedures for receiving, handing and pursuing complaints, although the impact of these procedures has not been adequately assessed. She also reported an increase in community awareness of the domestic violence act and services but stated the need for more awareness, especially in rural communities. She reported the provision of training

on the domestic violence and child abuse registration systems as well as the use of this registration system by front-line responders to gender-based violence. Another achievement was the establishment of two shelters for battered women, support groups for survivors and mental health services. Among these, a significant achievement was the amendments to the Domestic Violence Act which calls for the rehabilitation of perpetrators and for stiffer penalties for the breach of protection orders etc. Although sexual harassment legislation exists, there is a need for more public education and awareness on this issue.

Major achievements reported by NOPCAN included close collaboration with the National Committee for Families and Children in the development and revision of the Families and Children's Act for Belize. Also notable was a high level of education and awareness activities conducted by NOPCAN. This included mass awareness strategies as well as activities targeting special populations such as teachers and parliamentarians. The establishment of the Good-Touch-Bad-Touch program in schools and parent education services were highlighted as major achievements. Furthermore, NOPCAN engaged in research and advocacy activities that have led to changes in the public's perceptions and attitudes toward child abuse. One of the major impacts of the work of NOPCAN is related to its education and advocacy campaign on the elimination of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is now unlawful in all child care, day care and preschool institutions.

Challenges

Challenges for the organizations included the realization that addressing women and child protection issues is a long-term process that requires not only legal reform but a change in the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the entire population. For the Women's Department, coordination and resources issues affected the implementation of their activities.

Lessons Learned

Both the Women's Department and NOPCAN identified the need for research as a critical component of effective planning, implementation and monitoring. They also indicated that without effective education and family support strategies and without a strong legislative framework, protecting the rights of women and children become increasingly difficult. Both organizations also shared the need to include men in programs on violence reduction.

Other Input:

The participants agreed that there is a need for legal reform. The Chief Magistrate recommended the development of a Sexual Offences Act which addresses all form of sexual violence. There was also a call for reform aimed at the explicit legal prohibition of violence in the home and family, schools, institutions and the workplace. This, they urged, can improve access to justice. Legal reform can be accompanied by codes of

conduct for professionals such as teachers, social workers, police officers and detention personnel. The participation of communities, families and children was also highlighted as well as the need for inspection of institutions by relevant personnel. Also mentioned was the need to continue to focus on vulnerable populations and the development of more effective mechanisms for reporting and redress for violence producing conditions. Greater and more effective sanctions were recommended.

3.3 Women in Decision-Making Positions

The National Gender Policy propose broad strategies for increasing women's participation in decision-making positions and process. This included:

- the development of a formalized process for producing a gender based analysis of the annual budget
- having a unified central mechanism for incorporating gender analysis into the budget setting process.

The Women's Issues Network of Belize (WIN-Belize) took leadership in promoting these actions. Mrs. Carolyn Reynolds from WINBelize delivered a presentation on this issue.

Goals

WINBelize set out to provide leadership training for women, provide the medium for economic literacy for Belizeans, advocate for the implementation of gender budgeting and collaborate with the National Women's Commission to monitor CEDAW more effectively.

Achievements

Major achievements noted by WIN-Belize are the provision of leadership training for women, the establishment of a budget working group to execute a gender budgeting advocacy campaign, education and awareness on the national budget and the budget process. Of significance, was the Government's new practice of making the budget process more participatory. This was initiated in 2008.

The previous National Women's Commission also held a one day training session on women in leadership. This training was facilitated by gender specialist Eudine Bariteau of Barbados.

Challenges

Implementation challenges included a lack of support for those who engaged in advocating for gender budgeting in Belize. The budget working group did not gain momentum to effectively carry out its mandate and gender sensitization sessions with

government ministers were delayed. Furthermore, inequitable family structures remain as barriers to women's involvement as political leaders.

Lessons Learned

Overall, WIN-Belize realized that women need to receive ongoing leadership training and that this training must take place at all levels of society, from the village council to the central government level. They also noted the need to provide adequate support for women who are interested in becoming candidates for political office. WIN-Belize noted that the United Nations CEDAW Committee recommended the use of temporary special measures to accelerate women's de facto equality with men in all areas of life. The need for improved monitoring and evaluation of programs aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making positions was also highlighted.

Other Inputs:

It was noted that in 1998 a study on Opportunities for Women's Leadership was conducted. The recommendations from the Study were never implemented. The National Women's Commission intends to review the Study and take actions to advance women in leadership positions. Women who had sought political office then shared their diverse experiences in offering themselves as political candidates.

One key issue raised in plenary was the need to explore what it is about Belize's political culture that makes created challenges for good governance as well as makes it difficult for women to aspire to political office. A participants strongly urged the National Women's Commission to engage women in a process of deciding how women can participate in changing the political culture for the benefit of women and for improved governance overall. Women can then be support to be a part of this process.

3.4 Health

The National Gender Policy calls for action on numerous "Health" issues. The consultation focused on almost all the areas included under this thematic area. These included:

- Breastfeeding practices
- Growth retardation and stunting in children
- Iron deficiency anemia in pregnant women
- Reproductive health
- Teenage fertility rates
- Prevention of unwanted pregnancies
- HIV transmission
- Female vulnerability to HIV
- Mother-to-child HIV transmission
- Mental health

- Water and sanitation and
- Cervical cancer screening

Dr. Natalia Largaespada Beer, Director of the Maternal and Child Health Program, Nurse Ivorine Bulwer of the Belize Family Life Association, Norman Garcia of The Pan American Social Marketing Organization and Rodel Perrera of the Alliance Against AIDS delivered presentations on gender related health issues.

Goals

Dr. Beer of the Ministry of Health (MoH) updated the participants on a wide range of achievements and challenges in the provision of health services. She reported that the Ministry of Health has responsibility for leadership in most of the issues outlined under the health section of the National Gender Policy (2002). Overall, the ministry provides preventive health care services to women and children across the lifecycle and in both urban and rural locations.

Nurse Bulwer reported that BFLA aims to improve the sexual and reproductive health of women, men and girls using a rights-based approach. They increase access to, and use of, family planning services as well as services for sexually transmitted infections and other sexual and reproductive health issues. These services target youth, women and men. They also increase access to voluntary HIV counseling and testing and provide information for change in HIV risk behaviors. Garcia of PASMO stated that they engage in HIV prevention through social marketing interventions and education with vulnerable populations. The Alliance Against AIDS works to reduce women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

Achievements

Dr. Beer reported major achievements under almost all components of the health agenda. Highlights included an increase in exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months, the development and implementation of a Breastfeeding Policy and having three hospitals certified as "Baby Friendly" institutions. Furthermore, she noted improvements in growth retardation and stunting among children, especially Maya children in the Toledo District. Deworming tablets are being provided to children and there is an increase in calorie intake among children in preschools. Similarly, there is a reduction in maternal and the under five infant mortality rates.

The Ministry of Health also has recorded a 50% reduction in iron deficiency anemia among pregnant women. This is due to the distribution of iron and folic acid supplements to pregnant women. With regards to reproductive health, the Ministry has developed a Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Policy and a national SRH Strategic Plan. The SRH Policy is being implemented and SRH issues are now included in the health and family life curriculum for primary and secondary schools countrywide. Public education SRH campaigns are ongoing and contraceptives are now available

through the Ministry of Health. The ministry also provides care to women with obstetrics complication.

In the area of HIV, the Ministry of Health has implemented a Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission Program (PMTCT). Through this program, HIV positive pregnant women receive HIV prevention care as well as treatment services. These services are provided during pregnancy, at labor and during breastfeeding. Children born to HIV positive women are also monitored. HIV positive women also have access to family planning and support services.

Finally, Ministry of Health has completed a mental health assessment on women, men and the ageing population and has increased the coverage of piped water and sanitation services in both urban and rural communities.

Nurse Bulwer noted that a major achievement is the provision of organized cervical screening with integrated breast examination services, syndromic diagnosis, treatment of sexually transmitted infections and counseling on the prevention and testing of HIV. They also act as a referral point for people infected and affected by HIV, including women, men, female sex workers, adolescents and youth. They currently have a collaborative agreement with PASMO for the provision of voluntary HIV counseling and testing services for PASMO's clients. BFLA has targeted adolescents and youth in the provision of overall sexual and reproductive health services. They include men and boys in these SRH activities which explore gender-based violence, conflict resolution, communication and negotiation skills. They have also developed a game called "Thorn" which aims to enhance SRH education and stimulate behavior change among adolescents and youth.

Garcia stated that PASMO has made strides in its provision of services to female sex workers. They have reached a total of 1,638 female sex workers in 2007 and 2008 combined. They have also conducted research on this population so that they can develop more effective strategies for behavior change. Through their agreement with BFLA they are able to ensure that their clients access voluntary HIV counseling and testing services. They also provide their clients with access to condoms and water-based lubricants. Furthermore, they help their clients to develop self-efficacy plans aimed at diversification from commercial sex work into employment which reduces their risk of HIV transmission.

Perrera noted that in collaboration with the Women's Issues Network of Belize, the Alliance Against AIDS have implemented a psycho-educational, sexuality based model for behavior change. This model was reported as being highly successful in assisting 40 women in rediscovering sex and sexuality issues within themselves. This type of model, he argued is necessary if the ultimate goal is to change behaviors. Other education type models are not developed to effect behavior change, but rather to provide information on HIV.

Challenges

Major challenges for all agencies included limited resources for the adequate implementation of programs. For the Ministry of Health, a major challenge is the reduction of teenage fertility rates and dealing with the reality of unwanted pregnancies. Coordination and collaboration across agencies and ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation were also named as major challenges.

BFLA and PASMO noted that HIV stigma and discrimination remain high. This negatively affects access to services. They also noted the need for social protection programs for their clients. Social protection is needed so that their clients can either diversify from commercial sex work and/or afford the cost of health care and other services imposed by HIV. For PASMO, a particular concern was the indiscriminate raiding of sex work institutions by police and immigration officials. This prompts female sex workers, who are mostly foreigners, to be highly mobile, moving frequently to avoid being captured. This also disrupts the trust and rapport that PASMO builds with its female sex worker client base.

Lessons Learned

Overall, the lessons learned indicated that there is a need to have one health system that takes a market segmentation approach. Alongside this approach is the need for effective coordination and collaboration across agencies. This means that multiple agencies will be able to provide different but complementary healthcare services to both urban and rural communities. All agencies referred to the need for social protection programs. This included coverage for family and community health services under the National Health Insurance Scheme as well as economic empowerment and other economic support programs for populations vulnerable to HIV.

Additionally, BFLA noted the need to improve inventory management of their HIV testing supplies to alleviate brief periods when these supplies are unavailable in VCT centers in Belize. They also indicated the need to improve their marketing and outreach services, particularly for sexual and reproductive health services.

The need for the adequate enforcement of laws was mentioned several times throughout the consultation. Both PASMO and the Alliance Against AIDS reiterated that this should be a priority if sexual exploitation is to be halted. The Alliance Against AIDS also strongly advocated for the application of psycho-educational, sexuality based education and behavior change programs targeting professionals, teachers, students, parliamentarians, social workers and the public. Included was a recommendation for the development of a media corps education certification programs so that media personnel become more sensitive to the rights of survivors of sexual violence and people who are HIV positive.

Other Input:

The participants reiterated the need for family support programs to ensure the effective uptake of available services. This includes economic and social safety nets and parent education programs. There was also agreement on the need to prioritize sexual and reproductive health, especially for adolescents and young women. The review of maternity and paternity leave was also recommended. A strong recommendation was made regarding the need to ensure the adequate implementation of sexual and reproductive health education in the school system as well as the inclusion of men and boys in reproductive health education and services.

3.5 Education and Skills Training

The National Gender Policy has expansive coverage of “Education” as a priority. The consultation reviewed progress with the following provisions included under that thematic area:

- Gender stereotyping
- Pre-school education
- Pregnant teachers (considered in the panel on wealth and employment opportunities)
- Corporation punishment practices (considered in the panel on violence producing conditions)

Margaret R. Williams from the Pre-school Unit of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Carolyn Codd of the Health and Family Life Education Unit also of MoE delivered presentations on this thematic area.

Goal

According to Williams, the Early Childhood Education and Development Center (ECEDC) is responsible for the coordination and development of a policy addressing pre-schools and early childhood education centers in Belize. At a national level, they coordinate, supervise and monitor the activities of pre-school centers. Furthermore, they conduct research, analyze and make recommendations related to access to, and coverage of, early childhood education opportunities countrywide. They coordinate activities to enhance the teaching-learning environment for pre-schoolers and strengthen the local, national, regional and international partnerships related to early childhood education, care and development.

Codd reported that among other things, QUADS is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Health and Family Life (HFLE) Curriculum in pre-schools, primary and secondary schools countrywide. The HFLE Curriculum responds to the high rate of sexual violence and other crimes rampant across the Belizean society.

Achievements

A major development for the ECEDC was the development of an Action Plan for Early Childhood Education. This Action Plan is being implemented. The ECEDC was renamed (from Pre-school Unit), relocated and upgraded to meet its new responsibilities.

Achievements of the Action Plan include the establishment of 80 new pre-schools in Belize. They have therefore increased access to early childhood education programs while being efficient in the use of infrastructure. They have attached pre-schools to primary schools to ensure access in both urban and rural communities. Enrollment in pre-schools has since increased from 3,100 students to 7,333 students over the last five years. Because the government now pays the salaries for 215, as opposed to 21, pre-school teachers, early childhood education programs are now also more affordable for parents.

To complement the establishment of new pre-schools and to ease the transition into pre-schools, the government has employed six new early childhood education coordinators to deliver early childhood activities with parents and communities. Additionally, the pre-school curriculum was revised to create linkages with the infant curriculum in primary schools. There is also increased public awareness and parent education activities taking place across the country.

A comprehensive research study was conducted and strategic recommendations have been made. These are aimed at improving the quality of pre-school and early childhood education programs in Belize. Recommendations included the nationwide rollout of the preschool teacher education programme, the standardization of the curriculum, a better monitoring and evaluation system for preschool teachers and improvements in the quantity and quality of educational materials and supplies.

Ms. Codd of QUADS reported that the Government has developed and ratified the Health and Family Life Education curriculum (HFLE) and a five-year strategic plan has been developed. An HFLE Curriculum and Resource Guide for primary schools were also completed. Teachers have been trained in the use of the curriculum and most pre and primary schools are engaged in implementation. To date, consultations are ongoing for the development of an Education Sector HIV and AIDS Policy.

Challenges

The lack of legislation for regulating pre-schools was cited as a major challenge. The lack of updated information on children not receiving early childhood education services and the reasons for this also limits the effective targeting of programs. Human resources presented obstacles because of the need to invest heavily in training and technical support for pre-school teachers. A lack of coordination and collaboration with other social sector ministries was also a major challenge.

The implementation of the HFLE Curriculum was affected by the fact that some schools, due to their religious affiliation, are reluctant to fully implement the sexual and reproductive health modules of the curriculum. Similarly, some teachers indicate their discomfort with teaching the module. They prefer to engage other agencies which they feel are better equipped to deliver the content. The result is that many children are not receiving the sexual and reproductive health information as outlined in the curriculum. The monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum was another serious problem to overcome.

Lessons Learned

The ECEDC identified the need for a better policy and legislative framework to guide the development of early childhood education programs and services. Addressing human resource capacity and quality assurance issues were necessary for both the pre-school and HFLE programs. The need to strengthen the network and coordination systems, engaging in monitoring and evaluation were also named by both presenters. Additionally, conducting more targeted research and providing access to education, spaces, material and supplies were named as priorities.

Other Input:

Other recommendations brought forward at the consultation were the need to analyze the Ministry of Education's current response to the existing National Gender Policy and validate related components of the Policy with current reforms in the education sector such as the:

- Restructuring of the Ministry of Education
- Review of Education Act
- Increasing access to secondary school
- National school feeding programs

The ministry also called for the development of a "Gender-based Communication Strategy" within the education sector and the need to institute a monitoring and evaluation strategy for sector's response to policy indicators. Ideas for the integration of the Gender Policy into the HFLE curricula and teacher training programs were shared. The expansion of the Safe Schools Program implemented in collaboration with the Women's Department was offered as a program that should be continued.

The completion and ratification of the draft Early Childhood Education Policy was highlighted as a priority for MoE. The suggestion was for the draft Policy to keep its focus on an integrated response to early childhood development. Parental support and social protection programs as well as community intervention initiatives were reiterated as key elements of a strategy to provide education for children.

3.6 Legal Issues Confronting Society

Audrey Matura-Shepherd, Director of the Legal Advice and Services Center (LASC) delivered a presentation on legal issues confronting society.

Goal

The LASC was established to provide legal aid services aimed at protecting the legal rights of people, especially vulnerable populations such as women and children.

Laws to be Enforced or Amended

Matura-Shepherd outlined gender related laws in need of enforcement or amendment. Her presentation prioritized laws that protect the rights of survivors of sexual violence. She called for the enforcement of the sexual abuse reporting legislation. She also called for the enforcement of the rule of confidentiality for minors so that they won't have to re-live their experiences of abuse by confronting their perpetrators in the courtroom. She further advocated for the enforcement of provisions for the appointment of an amicus curia (friend of the court) to protect the rights of children, especially in cases where the parent or guardian is the perpetrator or an accomplice to the perpetrator or has cause to withdraw the cases involving their children. Finally, she noted the curfew laws are not being enforced nor are provisions for the tracking of perpetrators of sexual abuse.

She stated that among the laws that require amendments are rules on how survivors of sexual abuse provide evidence and how they are allowed to testify. In this case, the use of technology was proposed as an effective mechanism for preserving the rights of the victim while getting the required evidence from them. She further noted that there is a need to redefine the definition of rape so that it can be gender neutral and can include other forms of sexual abuse, rather than only the penetration of penis to vagina. Currently, sexual abuse or penetration using an object or rape of a boy or man does not qualify as rape under the law. She requested the need for increasing the penalties for sexual offences as well as increasing the minimum years of sentencing of the perpetrator. She further called for sexual assault to become a more serious offence.

Matura-Shepherd spoke of the dire need for legislative changes to eliminate disparities in the maintenance of children born in wedlock and those born out of wedlock. She was especially concerned about the legal process of appeal in custody cases and in occupation orders. Even when women win a court case, if the defendant immediately lodges an appeal, the court's decision is "stayed" until the appeal is heard. This can take years, making this law ineffective in providing justice for women and children.

Finally, she stated the need to clarify the adultery provisions for married women and provide women with the right to name their children based on the child's best interest. In the latter case, she explained that the mother should have the right to decide if a child is to carry, or continue to carry, his or her father's name. In the case of the United States, for example, mothers can change a child's name when the father has been convicted of

a violent crime. Another instance in which it may be beneficial for the mother to give her name (as opposed to the father's name) to all her children name is when she has children of different fathers but would like the children to feel a sense of unity with each other. She noted that there is no law that states that if the father legally recognizes a child, that child must carry this name.

In addition to amending the Criminal Code, Mrs. Shepherd also called for revisions to Maternity Leave provisions and the Social Security Act.

Challenges

Matura-Shepherd reported that there are inequities in women and children's access to justice. She also indicated that while the LASC was established to reduce these inequities, it does not have the human or financial resources to effectively respond to all cases. This leaves many women and children without access to legal representation. Furthermore, many women, due to lack of information on their rights, are fearful of visiting the police station or the courts to seek legal redress.

Lessons Learned

She added that every aspect of a citizen's life is, in some way, affected by the laws of its society. She also revealed that even when laws are in place, they may not be adequate or are not enforced, making them ineffective in protecting the rights of people, especially vulnerable groups. Currently, the laws are still unfair to women and their children. She called for amendment to legislation and for greater education and information dissemination about women's rights under the law. Using this approach, women can be empowered to advocate for their rights and the rights of their children.

Other Input:

Matura-Shepherd's presentation highlighted stark inequities in women and children's access to justice. Her comments centered on the reality of women and children who are again victimized by the laws and the court system.

4.0 Recommendations for the strengthening the National Gender Policy

Time did not allow for the development of a detailed action plan for updating the 2002 National Gender Policy. However, the National Women's Commission can develop this detailed action plan based on general recommendations offered by the participants. These recommendations are:

Ensure that the National Gender Policy is based on the principles of human rights and the rights of women.

- Clearly state that a human right framework guides the National Gender Policy

- Mainstream a women's right approach throughout the policy and action plan
- Use CEDAW as the primary based document to guide the National Gender Policy
- Ensure that the Policy address the key issues raised in the recommendations of the UN CEDAW Committee to Belize based on Belize's third and fourth periodic report to the United Nations

Ensure effective leadership and ownership of the National Gender Policy (a champion is needed):

- Continue to sustain the current activities with a view to achieve the required objectives of the policy
- All agencies need to have the political will to implement the Policy
- Formal commitment at the department and ministerial level is needed.

Increase the participation and inclusion of stakeholders at all levels of the policy cycle:

- Ensure that both urban and rural males and females are equally considered and for support and development.
- Ensure the inclusion of both male-and female-centered policies and regulations.

Strengthen coordination, collaboration and networking initiatives:

- Strengthen the network system- Internally and externally

Ensure effective implementation of the Policy:

- Update the gender policy to ensure that the strategies are relevant
- Develop a strategic plan with core indicators to measure impact and major processes
- Incorporate the strategies into national plans for budgeting and implementation purposes

Cost the implementation plan so that resource issues are effectively addressed:

- Provide the necessary resources for the policy to be monitored and implemented
- When seeking commitment from Cabinet, it may be useful to submit a summary of sectoral resources needed to fulfill the commitments of the policy

Develop clear monitoring and evaluation strategies during the policy development process:

- Some statements are ambiguous therefore need to be made more specific
- A monitoring and evaluating strategy needs to be developed with realistic timelines and indicators to facilitate thorough monitoring and evaluation
- Develop Information systems, such as surveillance systems and population based research to include (as in the case of health and violence producing conditions) exposure to risk factors, health status, risk behaviors

- Expand research to involve the targeted populations such as women and children, but include provisions to protect them from harm if they choose to participate in such studies
- Conduct targeted research in areas such as domestic work, illegal activities, bonded forced labor
- Regularly assess the impact of social and economic policies on women
- Disseminate best practices widely
- Create a system for regular reporting to the National Women's Commission (eg: twice a year)

Develop a communication, advocacy and awareness building component as a critical component of the policy cycle:

- Make the policy more user friendly for agencies
- Make a concerted effort to provide information on the gender policy to the community, including, but not limited to employers, administrators, talk shows, panel discussions. etc.
- Use information (gathering and sharing) and technology to create awareness of the NGP
- Publish a biannual report that is disseminated to the community
- Continue to advocate for policies to improve inequalities in the workplace such as policies impacting on job opportunities, promotions and treatment.

5.0 The Plan of Action – Review and Update of the National Gender Policy (2002)

The participants of the National Gender Policy (NGP) Review Session recommended that the National Gender Policy be revised to ensure that it is based on:

- a.) The fundamental principles of human rights and women's rights as human rights
- b.) The provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The NGP review and updating process can include four major steps:

- 1.) Conduct a more comprehensive review to fill existing gaps in information while at the same time doing the new Situation Analysis,
- 2.) Develop an updated Policy Document with a Resource Needs Analysis and Macro-Level Monitoring and Evaluation Framework,
- 3.) Develop the Policy Action Plan with an accompanying Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (micro-level).
- 4.) Develop a Communication, Awareness and Advocacy Strategy as a key component of the policy cycle

5.1 The Situation Analysis

The participants proposed that the Situational Analysis consider the following steps:

- A. The compilation of existing gender-related policies, reports and studies to ensure harmonization between these and the National Gender Policy. The compilation is to include policies, documents and reports such as:
 - Reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
 - Reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
 - Country Poverty Assessments and Strategies,
 - Millennium Development Goal Reports,
 - Situation Analyses on HIV and other issues that have a gender dimension
 - The Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy and Action Plans
 - The National Plan of Action on Children and Adolescents
 - The National HIV Policy and Strategic Plan of Action
 - The National Breastfeeding Policies and Action Plans
 - Any other related social and economic policies that have a gender impact
 - Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey results and the results of any new related research studies
 - New gender related laws and amendments to existing gender-related legislation

- B. Use the compiled information as part of the literature review and complement this with three other strategies:
 - the incorporation of new or updated information on the gender situation in Belize using available sex-disaggregated data, data from qualitative interviews and focus groups and any other relevant information
 - a mapping of services exercise to determine the inventory or services and identify existing gaps
 - a request from implementation agencies to report on progress on specific areas included in the National Gender Policy (2002) from inception to date. This can be done using a simple format to be completed by the relevant agencies. This would also include data on new and amended legislation.

- C. Write and publish the Situation Analysis which will include all of the above information as well as recommended macro-level priority areas and indicators that should be a part of the monitoring and evaluation process. These macro-level indicators should be developed from the inception to be able to show the “before and after” situation in the related priority areas.

5.2 The Policy Development Process

The participants recommended that the policy development process be based on the following:

- A. The Situation Analysis which has updated data as well as a documentation of other related policies, documents and report.
- B. Focus groups consultations with working groups. It was proposed that these working groups be comprised of people who have experience or expertise in gender-related issues. These groups are to ensure the participation of indigenous women, urban and rural women and other major stakeholder groups. These focus groups are to give input into:
 - The Policy Areas proposed by the Situation Analysis. These may be the same policy areas included in the existing National Gender Policy (2002) or this may be different based on the Situation Analysis.
 - identifying gaps based on their experience and expertise
 - prioritize the recommended policy areas identified
 - give recommendations on amendments and changes to the current policy based on their experience and expertise
 - give input into the level of human and financial resources needed for the effective implementation of the new proposed policy areas
 - help to show linkages with other policies so these can be harmonized within the updated policy document
 - give input into the selection of specific indicators for assessing impact of the policy areas (macro-level indicators). The process of developing macro-level indicators would have begun at the stage of the Situation Analysis but concretized at this point.
- C. Hold a follow-up joint session with all working groups and other stakeholders to address any other gaps and linkages that need to be made. This session can also validate the policy areas, priorities, policy goals and macro-level indicators.
- D. Write the updated National Gender Policy document in the following user-friendly format:
 1. Vision
 2. Principles
 3. Goals by policy area
 4. Monitoring and evaluation framework (macro-level by goals)

5.3 The National Gender Policy Implementation Plan

The participants proposed that the National Gender Policy Implementation Plan be separate from the Situation Analysis and the Policy Document. This third document would:

- A. Utilize logical framework format to ensure that the actions logically lead to the achievement of the Policy Goals identified in the Policy document. The proposed structure for the Implementation Plan is as follows:
 1. Narrative summary: goal, outcome, outputs and activities
 2. Indicators: impact and major process indicators
 3. Means of verification of results
 4. Risk and assumptions involved in the implementation of the activities
 5. Costing (human and financial) of the activities in the Implementation Plan
- B. On an annual basis, coordinate a planning session before Government's annual budgeting exercise to ensure that budgetary requests related to the implementation of the Plan be mainstreamed into the budget submission for all relevant government and quasi-government agencies. This will also assist non-government partners to make budgetary allocations and develop proposals to implement specific components related to their work.

5.4 The Communication, Awareness and Advocacy Strategy

After the development of the Implementation Plan, the recommendation is that a strategic communication, awareness and advocacy plan be developed and executed. Some ideas for inclusion in this Strategy include:

1. Development of a popular version on gender policy, ensuring that the rights based approach is highlighted
2. Conducting an annual AGM type review and evaluation session
3. Development of a complaints policy at specific institutions charged with oversight for Policy implementation
4. Conduct training on the National Gender Policy through public service training unit and existing agencies and umbrella organizations
5. Conduct training with senior managers and policy makers
6. Conduct sensitization sessions at the community level and across stakeholder groups.
7. Produce and air public service announcements (PSA) on people's rights as related to the Policy commitments
8. Develop an advocacy strategy (built from the bottom up) using constituency groups to ensure that the Policy is implemented in an effectively and timely manner

Annex A: Agenda
National Women's Commission
National Gender Policy Consultation
Chateau Caribbean, March 20-31, 2009

Day One:

8:00-8:30 a.m.	Registration
8:30-8:45 a.m.	Welcome – Esther Ayuso-Ramirez, Chair, NWC
8:45-9:05 a.m.	Introductions and Objectives – Ann-Marie Williams, Exec.Dir. NWC
9:05-9:30 a.m.	The Policy Making Process – Dylan Vernon, Commissioner, NWC
9:30-10:15 a.m.	The National Gender Policy (2002) – Icilda Humes, Director, Women's Department, Ex-Officio Member, NWC
10:15-10:30 am.	Plenary
10:30-11:30 a.m.	Break
11:30-12:00noon	Panel 1: Wealth and Employment Creation
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Plenary
1:00-2:00 p.m.	Panel 2: Violence-Producing Conditions
2:00-2:15 p.m.	Plenary
2:15-3:15 p.m.	Panel 3: Women in Decision-Making Positions Gender Related Legal Issues Confronting Society
3:15-3:30 p.m.	Plenary
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Initial Considerations: Towards Updating the National Gender Policy

Day Two

8:30-8:45 a.m.	Review of Day One
8:45-9:45 a.m.	Panel 4: Education and Skills Training
9:45-10:15 a.m.	Plenary
10:15-10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30-11:30 a.m.	Panel 4: Health
11:30-12:00 noon	Plenary
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-2:45 p.m.	Plan of Action: Next Steps toward an Updated National Gender Policy
2:45-3:00 p.m.	Break
3:00-3:45 p.m.	Presentation of Plan of Action – Judith Alpuche, Chief Executive. Officer who deputised for the Hon. Peter Martinez, Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation
3:45-4:00 p.m.	Close of Session

**Annex B
List of Participants**

The National Women's Commission				
National Gender Policy Stakeholder Consultation				
March 30 & 31, 2009				
	Name	Organization/Agency	E-mail Address	Contact #
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26	Flavia Sho	TMWC		
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35	Carolyn Codd	QUADS		
36	Rodel Perrera	AAA		
37	Ann-Marie Williams	National Women's Commission	amarie@nationalwomenscommission.org	
38	Denbigh Yorke	NOPCAN		
39	Judith Alpuche	MOHD		

Annex C: Summary Matrix of Panel Presentations

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Women's Issues Network of Belize (WINBelize)	Family Court
Goals related to Wealth and Employment Creation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Training of girls and women • Financial sustainability of the YWCA's work • Physical development and Recreation • Advocacy with a focus on issues related to girls, women, youths, HIV/AIDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and advocate for an increase in minimum wage for domestic workers and shop assistances • Advocate for the elimination of discriminatory practices in the education system • Hold consultations with the Labour Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect the legal rights of families and children in Belize
Highlight of Major Achievements		
<p>Care and preschool allows women to access employment opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Child Development Education such as the daycare and preschool centers as well as the after-school tutoring program. These program provide a safe environment for mothers to leave their children while they work and earn a living. The YWCA has enrolled 55 children in childcare and 173 preschoolers. <p>Skills development makes women more employable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Skills Development through the Helping Early Leavers Program (HELP) as well as the Adult and Continuing Education and the 	<p>Improved Minimum Wage Provisions for Women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1999, WIN-Belize continued the advocacy started by BOWAND to increase the minimum wage for domestic workers and shop assistants • In 2002, GOB increased the minimum wage from \$1.75 to \$2.25 per hour and in 2007, the Minimum wages Act was repealed and the minimum wage was increased from \$2.25 to \$3.00 an hour 	<p>Child Maintenance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children born out of wedlock have a right to maintenance • The number of years within which a mother can make a maintenance claim for a child born out of wedlock and in which the pregnancy not recognized by the father, was extended from 1 to 3 years. <p>Juvenile Offenders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile offenders are legally required to be kept in a facility separate from hardened criminals

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Women's Issues Network of Belize (WINBelize)	Family Court
<p>Language Development programs. A total of 55 HELP students are enrolled and 150 adults are currently in adult education programs. Graduates of past years are now teachers in some primary schools and the YWCA, social workers, workers at major hotels and other similar organizations. Participants of the adult education programs become caterers and day care owners, thus multiplier the impact on the lives of women and children in Belize. Immigrants learn English which makes them more employable in local stores and hotels. Overall, skills training impact the lives of hundreds of both urban and rural girls and women.</p> <p>Health promotion increases productivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Development through outreach, education and training, the Seniors Program, the Ms. Y Pageant and the Summer Program. Under outreach, barber shops and beauty salons receive free condoms and resource materials through YWCA's HIV/AIDS advocacy program in order to promote safe sex. The Y pageant provides support and encouragement for senior women as well as acts as income generation for the organization. 	<p>Reduction in Employment Discrimination in the Education System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A conference was held to discuss a study done by the women's department on discriminatory practices in the education system. This resulted in the development of an advocacy campaign. The NWC facilitated the process for a teacher to take her case to court resulting in compensation for the teacher 	

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Women's Issues Network of Belize (WINBelize)	Family Court
Indication of Major Challenges		
<p>Resource Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient human and financial resources for the proper management of the organization so that it can continue to provide more girls and women with the opportunities for wealth and employment creation • Finding resources to follow up on programs to be able to measure the impact of the trainings • The inability of any students to pay fees since they come from disadvantaged situations and therefore not being able to charge fees to cover the cost of the program <p>Responding to mental health needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to provide counseling for many of those participating, in order for them to make full use of the education and training opportunities provided 	<p>Participation in research limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline to do follow-up study on the minimum wage was too short (three months) • Women were not willing to be interviewed because most of them were afraid of losing their jobs • Participants were found through the social network of domestic workers or shop assistants as well as the professional and social networks of WIN-Belize and its member agencies. <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Labor Department was not able to carry out enough inspections of workplaces because they did not have enough Labor Officers <p>Collaboration and support across the network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration among agencies to carry out advocacy campaign was a major challenge • Support of agencies to teacher's case was minimal • Because of church state system, school policies which are based on the teachings of the church take precedent over the education rules 	<p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws are not enforced due to a lack of human and financial resources as well as a lack of sensitization by police officers who assist magistrates courts in the timely delivery and follow-up of distress orders (outside Belize City) • Children in need of child protection services may not reach the court system due to a lack of human and financial resource at the Human Services Department. The Department cannot respond to all new cases or effectively follow-up on existing cases. <p>Legal Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children born in and out of wedlock are treated differently and are considered in two different laws. • Amounts stated in laws for child and spousal maintenance may not reflect the current cost of living. • Men with legal representation argue that working wives are not entitled to spousal maintenance and there is no similar provision for spousal maintenance for men. • Juveniles are placed in the prison system even though the law indicates

Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)	Women’s Issues Network of Belize (WINBelize)	Family Court
		that they are to be separate. There are no existing facilities to accommodate juvenile offenders.
Lessons Learned		
<p>Participation and Self-Help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important that the participants be involved in planning their programs • Foster the idea of self–help among participants • Mainstream a counseling component in some programs to address mental health issues that negatively affect women and girls access to economic opportunities <p>Family Orientation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is strategic to cater to the entire family and involve spouses so that they can support their women. • Having their children nearby in the preschool or daycare allows women to take greater advantage of wealth and employment creation opportunities. <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more realistic about the goals and achievements. • Have regular assessment of the programs. • A monitoring component is needed to assess the impact of programs 	<p>Building human resource capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women need to be educated on their rights so that they can more effectively participate in advocacy activities and demand their rights <p>Support and collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies need to provide support to women who are willing to challenge the systems • Effective collaboration is needed among agencies for advocacy to be more effective <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluations of studies need to be instituted 	<p>Education, Awareness and Advocacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for strong advocacy efforts aimed at legal amendments as well as the enforcement of existing legislation and court orders. • The police need to be better sensitized on child rights issues. <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited resources reduce women and children’s access to services and this puts children in harmful situations that can result in their death. <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enforcement and impact of legislation needs to be monitored and evaluated if changes are to be effective.

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Women's Issues Network of Belize (WINBelize)	Family Court
<p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YWCA has had to become proactive in finding ways to sustain its programs • Link programs to the development of the entire country. 		

2. Violence Producing Conditions:

Women's Department	National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN)
Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect the rights of women and girls and reduce and eliminate violence against women and children in Belize. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect the rights of children and reduce and eliminate all forms of child abuse and neglect in Belize.
Highlight of Major Achievements	
<p>Domestic violence framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The procedures for receiving, handling and pursuing complaints are to be evaluated. (An assessment of the adequacy of existing services and of access to those services has not been conducted.) Over the past 5 years there has been stronger efforts in promoting community awareness of domestic violence provisions, rights and services. (There is still the need to promote this awareness in rural communities). <p>Domestic violence and child abuse registration system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive training has been conducted by MOH and PAHO on the use of the National Gender Based Violence (GBV) Surveillance System. This system is being used by Women's Department, Police Department, Department of Human Services Family Court and other agencies which are first line of contact for GBV. <p>Victims and Survivors of Abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Groups for Victims of GBV have been established in each district Counseling is offered through the Community Counseling Center, Psychiatric Nurses and private counselors Two shelters for battered women now exist: Belize District and Cayo. New provisions in the Domestic Violence Act to extent the 	<p>Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with the National Committee for Families and Children and Social Partners. <p>Mass and Targeted Education and Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and children are more responsive and bold in the reporting of suspecting cases of child abuse and neglect. Validation of parent's right to care for and to be the duty bearers of their children. Parents in many communities the recipient of parenting training. A school-base program on Good-Touch-Bad-Touch Positive changes in the public's perceptions and attitudes towards child abuse. Issues of masculinity and gender socialization are now being addressed as factors that contribute to violence producing conditions. Creation of friendly-user materials for the public on the Concluding Observations of the CRC Committee Distribution of relevant and information briefs to Parliamentarians on the changes and progress made in the region and on the international scene. Draw the media into the facilitating of public forums that they keep the issues on the front burner. Have them cover events relative to child participation. Inundate the public with information on the existing

time for which Occupation Orders can be granted (up to 3 years)

Perpetrators of abuse:

- Under the Domestic Violence Act, Counseling Orders can be issued for the purposes of rehabilitation of perpetrators
- The Women’s Department has embarked on the Batterers Intervention Program. Some funds are being allocated by GOB and sourced by external agencies to initiate the program in 2009.
- Penalties for breach of protection orders are now stiffer.

Sexual Harassment:

- Some public awareness of the Protection against Sexual Harassment Act has been done mainly at the community level.
- In 2008, a legislative review of the Act was conducted and consultations were done with government agencies, educational institutions civil society, PSU and BNTU, etc.
- It is clear that there is the need for more public awareness of this issue.

conventions and launch a massive campaign involving social partners.

- Promote child participation activities within the context of child rights, creative talent shows, sports, church fellowship, health and education.

Research and Advocacy:

- Maintaining progress reports by engaging in exercises that update and inform of new trends and ideas for change.
- Conducting research disaggregated on a national scale. Use recommendations from the recent National study on Crime and Violence against children and adolescents.
- Getting the University of Belize involved in research, and in identifying alternatives to corporal punishment.
- Strengthening advocacy effort by facilitating the process to establish an NGO coalition that can report on the realities of the situation of children in the country.

The CRC and Legal Reform:

- CRC provisions still require incorporation into domestic law.
NOPCAN participated in the formulation of the Families and Children’s Act. The Families and Children Act forms the base for legislation on child protection. Review currently undertaken as issues surface that requires amendments to existing statutes.
- Helped to table and support such laws as the Mandatory Reporting Law and the removal of corporal punishment from Day-care and Pre-school institutions.
- Conducted legal review in regards to corporal punishment
- Investigate the possibility of creating one codified, consolidated and comprehensive children’s code.[3]
- Worked to repealed inadequate existing legislation such as the *Infants Act* and the *Status of Children Act*. See section 155(1) of FACA.

	<p>Corporal Punishment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and awareness on corporal punishment nationwide and for teachers nationwide • A Resource Guide for teachers & child care professionals was developed and distributed for use in various schools. NOPCAN has developed new materials on alternatives to corporal punishment for teachers and child care professionals and has embarked on an awareness campaign while engaging children in activities to create social change. • Conducted Jurisprudence study of corporal punishment in Belize (Submitted to the Andean Commission of Jurists/Save the Children Sweden). • Situational Analysis on Corporal Punishment (2005) • Corporal punishment is now unlawful in all child care institutions as well as Day care and Pre-school institutions.
Major Challenges	
<p>Coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination within this sector and between sectors to address the issues • Issues must be addressed holistically- from a multi-sector standpoint. Sector plans in addition to individual agency operational/strategic plans should be developed and executed. <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of sufficient human resources to get the job done 	<p>Change is a long-term process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The greatest challenge to the prevention of child abuse is corporal punishment because of it's a way of life - a socio-cultural phenomenon grafted in the psyche of its people.
Lessons Learned	
<p>Coordination and Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration are key elements of creating changes that impact on the lives of women and children 	<p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research is important in providing information on the situation of child abuse and neglect and in providing recommendations on how to address the situation

Resource Issues:

- Without adequate resources, plans cannot be effectively implemented

Legal Reform:

- Have a strong legislation framework provides a legal basis for education and advocacy
- Legislation allow survivors to have legal redress when their rights are violated

Parent Education and Support:

- Parental education and support are critical factors in changes perception, attitudes and practices in relation to child abuse and neglect

Women in Decision-Making Positions:

WINBelize
Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership training for women • Provide the medium for economic literacy among Belizean Citizens • Advocate for the implementation of gender budgeting • Collaborate with the National Women's Commission to monitor CEDAW more effectively
Highlight of Major Achievements
<p>Gender Budgeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2006, WIN-Belize facilitated training for its members and partners on gender budgeting • A budget working group was formed to develop an advocacy campaign • The result of the training was a training manual which was distributed to the schools and libraries throughout the country of Belize • A two day conference was held to discuss and address the issues highlighted in the training manual • A radio call in show was aired for four months promoting economic literacy • In 2008, GOB changed the budget process to be more participatory • A one-day training was held for women in leadership by the previous NWC. •
Major Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are not supported by other women nor men • Family structures are barriers to women's involvement as political leaders • Party and institutional structures are also barriers to women's involvement as political leaders (all boys' club) • Budget working group weakened after training was completed • Sensitization sessions with GOB Ministers were delayed
Lessons Learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women need to receive ongoing leadership training from the levels of village council to national elections • Agencies need to provide support to women who are willing to run for political office • In 2007, the CEDAW committee recommended that the state use the temporary special measures in order to accelerate the realization of women's de facto equality with men in all areas. • Sustaining groups very challenging especially when not broadening vision on how issues tie into work • Timelines need to be adhered to • Monitoring and evaluations very essential to the effectiveness and achievement of activities and objectives

Health 1:

Ministry of Health	
Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide preventive health care services to women and children across the lifespan in both urban and rural areas. 	
Highlight of Major Achievements	
<p>Breastfeeding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator: Exclusive breastfeeding rate @ 6 months from 3 % in 1999 to 10% (MICS) or 24% (MCH) Policy implementation BF data disaggregated by sex Three Hospitals certified as Baby Friendly <p>Growth Retardation and Stunting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1990-1991 Mayan children with 66% growth retardation compared to 17.6% in 2001 and 17.9% in 2006. Updated growth charts (WHO new growth standards) Increased calorie intake in pre-school Provision of deworming tablets for children 1-14 years. <p>Maternal and child undernutrition: consequences for adult health and human capital</p> <p>Iron deficiency anemia in pregnant women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anemia rate > 50% Iron and folic acid supplementation during pregnancy and females 10-49 years Hb testing at the beginning and ending of pregnancy Specialized care for complicated cases 50% reduction of anemia during pregnancy. Iron and folic acid distribution to females 10-49 years in Toledo and expanding to the rest of the country. Promotional material on local crops with high iron content and 	<p>Reproductive Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRH Policy approved SRH policy national strategic plan SRH policy implemented TBA's trained, certified and monitored by MOH Skilled birth attendance rate is 97% SRH included in HFLE Curricula SRH school based information Public education campaigns on safe sex and use of contraception Targeting males "knowledge" <p>HIV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal access to ARV's Sustained public awareness on safe sex –all modalities- Protocols for the prevention of vertical transmission of HIV from mother to child (PMTCT) Utilization of FOCUS – a comprehensive PMTCT Strategy Criminalization of willful transmission of HIV Prevent unintended pregnancies among HIV infected women through the provision of family planning services to HIV infected women Prevention of Transmission from an HIV infected woman to her infant during pregnancy, during labor and through breast-feeding Provision of care, treatment and support for HIV- infected

<p>preparation of foods rich in iron</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hb levels of 8,9 are now rare • Low Hb level among pregnant women in Toledo is 10.4, 10.3, 10.9 <p>Unwanted pregnancies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of care to women with complicated obstetric event <p>Maternal and Under 5 Infant Mortality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of maternal mortality rate by three quarters • Reduction in Under 5 infant mortality rate 	<p>women , their infants and their families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of Vertical HIV Transmission from 11.1% to 4.6 in 2008 <p>Mental health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on mental health problems on gender and aging <p>Water and Sanitation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in households coverage with piped water • Sanitation coverage 80% urban and 40% rural
Major Challenges	
<p>Breastfeeding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCH Breastfeeding Coordinator • Breastfeeding counselor / district • Training of fathers in BF • Media campaign • Breastfeeding in workplaces/working moms <p>Growth Retardation and Stunting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal USG by second Trim • HC equipped with USG and Nurses trained • Administrative data collection • Children and parents food preparation training in school curricula • Primary school based feeding programs • Teacher training curricula includes food and nutrition in early childhood • Height Census every 3 years <p>Maternal and Child Undernutrition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management skills at local level 	<p>Reproductive Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of quantitative indicators • Measuring male users of reproductive health services • Access to family planning is limited. • Traditional Birth Attendants re-certification every five years • Teenage fertility rates are high with 20% of total live births to teenage mothers <p>Unwanted Pregnancies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidential services and reliable information not easily available • Recognizing abortion as an expression of unmet need of individuals reproductive health rights to correct information and services • Revision of punitive measures against women who have undergone abortion • Distinction among miscarriages and induced abortion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late antenatal care at 20% • Proving Hb testing on site 	
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Lessons Learned

<p>Social Protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Health Insurance scheme provides room for family and community health services • The provision of public goods can save lives <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is not measured, will not be done • Need to employ more Results Based Management (RBM) <p>Coordination and Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is the need for one health system, applying market segmentation approaches • All avenues for the provision of sexual and reproductive health preventive services are welcomed

Health 2:

Belize Family Life Association	Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO)	Alliance Against AIDS
Goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the Sexual and Reproductive Health of women men and girls utilizing the Rights Based Approach. • Increase access to and use of family planning, STI and other S&RH services to youth, women and men in Belize. • Increase access to voluntary counseling and testing and information necessary for behavior change and HIV education and prevention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the National Response to HIV & AIDS through prevention and social marketing interventions such as the promotion of products (VIVE Condoms and Lubricants) and education and prevention services to target vulnerable populations (eg: female sex workers and men who have sex with men) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the vulnerability of women to HIV /AIDS
Highlight of Major Achievements		
<p>Cervical Cancer Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the best organized cervical cancer screening service with integrated breast examination service, syndromic diagnosis and treatment of STI's, and counseling on the prevention and testing of HIV/AIDS in all centers • Solicitation of sponsorships of pap-smear packages which afforded under-served women to access the services • Recognition in 2007 by the Govt. of Belize, for its invaluable services in the prevention of cervical cancer <p>Voluntary HIV Counseling and Testing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral point for persons affected or infected with HIV/AIDS • In August of 2007 signed a MOU with the Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO), an organization that does extensive work with CSW and MSM, agreeing to be the referral point for S&RH services, including VCT for HIV and Syndromic Management of STIs for persons of these two groups. • All nurses trained in the provision of VCT services 	<p>Interventions with Female Sex Workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2007, a total of 791 activities were conducted reaching approx. 200-220 FSWs throughout Belize • In 2008, a total of 847 activities conducted reaching approx. 250-275 FSWs throughout Belize (Note: majority of these FSWs are in 'Fixed' Sites) • A TRaC Study was conducted amongst this population (TRaC is a tool which assists in determining behaviours as well as provides a path for which interventions are needed) 	<p>Collaboration and Coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with the Women's Issues Network to address gender issues in HIV <p>Education and Behavior Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilized a psycho-educational, sexuality based model for behavior change targeting women. The model addressed HIV/AIDS/STI prevention & sexual health promotion for women. A total of 40 professional women from different health/human

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral point for children who are suspected of contracting the HIV as a result of rape/incest. <p>Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past three years several projects have been implemented by BFLA to address HIV/AIDS and other sexual and reproductive health issues among at risk youth. Development of Policies, Protocol and Guidelines for the Delivery of Quality Sexual and Reproductive Health Services In 2008, won IPPF's - West Wind Award for Excellence in the area of Adolescents Services Launched on December 1, 2008 the Board Game "Thorns" first of its kind made in Belize <p>Participation and Inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater involvement of young boys and men in sexual and reproductive health activities: Gender-based violence prevention, conflict resolution, effective communication and negotiation skills <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved data management of information by sex, services and age disaggregated 	<p>Communicative Health with Target Populations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCT services are accessed through referral and accompaniment of target populations Education provided on the correct and consistent use of condoms Education to develop condom negotiation skills Education on the role of emergency contraceptives, Provision of water based lubricants Provision of basic STI/STD information Development of future plans for greater self efficacy 	<p>services organizations, HIV/AIDS front-line workers, reproductive and sexual health workers, community leaders, members of HIV/AIDS committees, networks and women interested in self-development, participated in the session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participants undertook a profound & intimate revision of concepts such as sex, gender socialization in Belizean culture and sexuality.
Major Challenges		
<p>HIV Stigma and Discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIV/AIDS - stigma and discrimination impacts on access to and impact of programs <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunistic diseases require attention but resources to address these needs are limited Dependency on the Ministry of Health for HIV testing supplies 	<p>Collaboration and Coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police conducts immigration raids which impacts negatively on PASMO's access to clients and the level of trust that clients have in the social protection systems in Belize A majority female sex workers targeted are from neighbouring countries (Guat., Honduras, El 	<p>Education and Behavior Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited capacity and low level of comfort of professionals, including doctors, teachers and social workers, to provide effective HIV and sexual and reproductive health services

<p>Economic Support for clients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited or loss of income for those who are HIV positive and their families General burden of care increases for HIV positive families <p>Low Pap Smear Coverage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 10,000 or a little over 10% of the above the target group had a pap smear done. <p>Collaboration and coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition with other agencies in the provision of sexual and reproductive health services 	<p>Salvador) making for a high level of mobility among these populations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Lessons Learned		
<p>Education and Behavior Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BFLA needs to improve its marketing and outreach services particularly for its sexual and reproductive health programme. <p>Resource issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a two month buffer of HIV testing supplies from the MOH to alleviate brief periods of unavailable VCT services in centers. <p>Economic Support for Clients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to develop economic programs to assist clients and their families in managing the burden of care placed on them <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs processes 	<p>Legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for the adequate enforcement of laws against those establishments and individuals who exploit underage girls for commercial sexual exploitation <p>Economic Support for Clients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to develop economic programs to further empower those women who choose not to continue in sex work <p>Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for greater collaboration and sensitization of the Police and Immigration Departments well as political commitment to make aware the dangers of raids which cause 	<p>Legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stiffer laws need to be put in place to address gender based violence and sexual violence. Perpetrators need mandatory sexual abuse counseling. Several laws need to be amended to address issues of discrimination towards all sexual minorities, including women and homosexuals. <p>Education and Behavior Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for education programs on sexual health and sexuality throughout society

	<p>these women to hide as well as miss opportunities to seek help but in fact continue with risky behaviours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All HIV/AIDS education needs to include human sexual behavior and issues relating to gender• Programs of human sexuality need to target teachers, medical and human service professionals and children• Teachers need sexual education in order for them to be able to teach human sexual behavior.• There is a need for a media corps education certification program to be developed
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Education:

Early Childhood Education and Development Center	Ministry of Education Quality Assurance Development Unit
Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and development of a policy addressing preschools and early childhood education in Belize • Coordinate and supervise the activities of preschool centers countrywide • Monitor to ensure the preschools centers comply with the licensing requirements of the 2000 education rules. • Research, analyze and make recommendations relating to access to and coverage of early childhood education opportunities countrywide • Coordinate activities to enhance the teaching-learning environment for preschoolers • Strengthen the local, national, regional, and international partnerships addressing early childhood education, care and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Curriculum that addressed the core areas of self and interpersonal development, sexuality and sexual health, eating and fitness and managing the environment
Highlight of Major Achievements	
<p>Policy and Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed Action Plan in Early Childhood Education with a focus on creating access, accountability measures, establishing linkages and parental involvement. <p>Access to Early Childhood Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of new preschools in Belize (from 99 to 179) • Increased enrolment of preschool aged children. (from 3100+ to 7,333) Decreased cost of early childhood education to parents <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Preschool Unit has been renamed, relocated and upgraded. • Six new ECE coordinators are now employed to work in each of the districts. • Increased number of preschool teachers paid. (from 21 to 215) <p>School Curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised preschool curriculum: to create linkages with the infant curriculum. 	<p>Policy and Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HFLE Policy ratified by Cabinet • Draft 5 year strategic plan developed • HFLE Curriculum and resource guide for Primary schools completed • Consultations are ongoing for the development of an Education Sector HIV & AIDS policy <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three levels of Teacher training have been completed from 2006 – 2008. <p>Access::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most pre and primary schools implementing the curriculum.

<p>Monitoring and Evaluation -Accountability Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ECE program has move significantly toward the acceptable regional standards. • Increased supervision, monitoring and intervention of the preschool activities <p>Education and Awareness- Parental Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public awareness activities and parent education workshops <p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated Alberto August's (Ed.D).research on the quality of pre-school education in Belize. He offered recommendations on how to enhance early childhood education. 	
Major Challenges	
<p>Legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of legislation to regulate preschool education. <p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a Situational Analysis (needs assessment) of children not receiving ECE and reasons for this. <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of technical assistance for qualification and training of teachers working in preschool centers. • Developing and providing suitable training for preschool teachers. • Provision of much needed infrastructure to accommodate more preschool aged children. • Expansion of the ECE program in very remote communities. • Political will to provide policy guidance and resources <p>Coordination and Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination among stakeholders e.g.: social sector ministries. 	<p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some schools, due to religious reasons, are reluctant to implement the sexual and reproductive health modules of the HFLE curriculum • In some schools, teachers are not comfortable teaching the sexual and reproductive health aspects of the HFLE curriculum <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for greater monitoring and evaluation of the HFLE curriculum to ensure a higher level of effective implementation nationwide
Lessons Learned	
<p>Legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of legislation for ECE indicates a need for clearly defined norms and regulations to govern this system. (a vision for high level of national 	<p>Coordination and Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for strengthening of collaboration/relationship, between HFLE

<p>development)</p> <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of early childhood education training for teachers affects the quality of the preschool programs. • The need for the establishment of a program that develops the physical environment of preschools is essential. <p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ECE program needs to be assessed to chart the way forward <p>Coordination and Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the networking system/ inter-ministerial collaboration <p>Quality Assurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of preschool education offered in the rural and urban area and the status of preschools (whether public, private, community, or government-aided) did not differ. • The national curriculum promoted child-centered activities. This mode of instruction encourages children’s self-development and self-expression. • Efforts should be made to furnish the preschool classrooms with sufficient materials to accommodate all children and allow them to engage in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic explorations. • Major stakeholders spoke positively of the district coordinators and the attachment program. These programs are important steps toward improving quality and access of preschool education in Belize and should be continued. • The lack of early childhood education may affect the quality of preschool programs provided by teachers. 	<p>and partners (to avoid duplication)</p> <p>Monitoring and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to strengthen the M&E component <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization of all aspects of the curriculum is importance • Need to increase efforts at implementation nationwide
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Gender Related Legal Issues Confronting Society:

Legal Advice and Services Center (LASC)	
Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide legal services to protect the legal rights of people, especially vulnerable populations 	
Laws that need to be enforced:	Laws that need to be amended:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting of sexual abuse by Offence not to report sexual abuse to the authorities – see subsidiary laws of Families and Children Act (FACA(S)) CAP 173 sec. 4-7 • Enforcement of rule of confidentiality and that says child to give evidence behind screen – we now need VIDEO – sec 112-13 FACA(S) (law to be amended for this) • Court is no appointing <i>amicus curea</i> (friend of the court) as required by law (sec 14:01)FACA(S) • There are already existing rules for curfew but they are not enforced see FACA(S) - Protection of Children Regulation sec 3-5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How victims of sexual abuse give evidence – it is high time that they are allowed to testify by live video feed • Criminal Code to re-define rape from its traditional common-law definition to one in keeping with changing sexual norms. • Change the penalty for sexual offences and increase the minimum years of sentence. Criminal Code sec. 46-51 • Make indecent assault a more serious offence liable with severe imprisonment penalty. Criminal Code sec. 45(f) • The Supreme Court of Judicature Act, which makes an appeal of the Family Court’s decision act as an automatic stay, thus causing grave hardship. Sec. 112 • The right to name children keeping in mind their best interest. Registration of Births and Deaths CAP 157 • The disparity in maintenance of a child born in wedlock and one born out of wedlock – it is discriminatory! • Clarify the adultery provision from the Married Women (Protection) Act – sec. 9
Challenges	
<p>Access to Justice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, access to law is not yet for the masses and especially for women and children <p>Resource Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Legal AID Services Commission (LASC) is not able to meet the entire country’s needs leaving many indigent women and children remain without legal representation <p>Education and Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many women fear visiting the courts or police station or other agencies that could assist, but this is mostly due to lack of 	

knowledge and information

Lessons Learned

- Every aspect of our lives, in some way or the other, is affected by the laws in our society.
- Even when laws are in place they may be inadequate or are not enforced. Therefore laws need to be enforced or amended
- There needs to be greater education and information dissemination about women's rights under the law so that women know
- We cannot speak about women without speaking about children because our society remains highly patriarchal
- Many laws are still unfair to women and by extension children or are not gender-neutral