

The National Women's Commission

Plan of Action 2008-2010



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November, 2008

Section 1: The National Women's Commission

A. Background

The National Women's Commission of Belize (NWC) was established in 1982 to serve as an advisory body to the Government on issues relating to women. Its establishment was part of an overall effort of the Government to meet a series of international commitments, commencing in 1975 when Belize participated in the First World Conference on Women, to improve the situation of the nation's women and girls.

In 1990, Belize both signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This international "Bill of Rights" for women sets standards and principles for the enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights.

B. Mandate

The National Women's Commission is a body of individual women and men appointed by the Government to function as a strategic guidance and oversight mechanism for the achievement of gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in Belize (GEEWE). The NWC falls under the portfolio of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation.

Specifically, the National Women's Commission has the mandate to:

- Serve as an advisory body to the Minister with responsibility for women and gender issues and to advocate for the fulfillment of the standards, principles, and goals embodied within the Convention (CEDAW), the National Gender Policy and other relevant policies.
- Serve as national advocate on issues related to the upgrading of the situation of women and girls and to advocate on matters regarding compliance with, or implementation of, the Convention, the National Gender Policy and other relevant policies as they relate to government ministries, institutions, and entities, etc.;
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and ensure national submission of the Belize progress report to the UN Committee every four years.
- Promote public awareness and encourage effective and efficient planning and coordination efforts among relevant stakeholders on matters relating to gender equality, equity and women's empowerment.

- Ensure that the appropriate implementation agencies undertake specific initiatives and tasks related to the implementation of the Convention, the National Gender Policy, and other relevant policies.
- Recommend, through the Minister, improvements in and development of national policies and legislation within the framework of the Convention, the National Gender Policy and other relevant policies.

C. Composition

The Commission shall be comprised of members appointed by the Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation. The appointment shall include the Director of the Women's Department and the Executive Director of the Women's Issues Network (WINBelize) as ex-officio members.

- Members shall be appointed for a term of two years, with the possibility of being re-appointed.
- Membership will include technical experts in the major thematic areas of intervention as set forth in the Convention, the National Gender Policy, and other relevant policies.
- Other members shall serve in their personal capacity as commissioned by the Minister and not as delegates or representatives of organizations, institutions, or groups.

D. The Executive Committee

The executive of the Commission shall comprise a Chairperson to be appointed by the Minister, and a Vice Chairperson, a Secretary, and a Treasurer to be elected from among the members. The Chairperson shall receive a stipend in recognition her duties. Other Commissioners receive no remuneration for their roles as Commissioners.

E. Role of the Chairperson

The Chairperson is responsible for providing the overall direction for the work of the Commission. The Chairperson also oversees the work of the Secretariat and acts as a resource person in the implementation of the Commission's Action Plan.

F. The Secretariat

The Commission shall be supported by a Secretariat headed by an Executive Director. The Commission may contract the services of other staff and technical experts as required for its effective and efficient operation.

G. Relationship with the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation

The Commission is administered by the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation from which it receives an annual subvention. This Ministry has administrative oversight of the Commission. The Commission is responsible for providing to the Ministry quarterly financial and progress reports. The Executive Director of the NWC attends senior staff meetings of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation.

H. Relationship with the Women's Department

The Commission will work closely with the Women's Department to ensure the implementation of initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality, equity and women's empowerment. The relationship will be supportive and collaborative. There will be open communication on the role and responsibilities of these two entities so that resources can be maximized and duplication minimized.

I. Resource Mobilization

Government will provide an annual subvention, but the Commission may access other funding through proposals submitted to national, regional or international funding agencies.

Section 2: The NWC Plan of Action 2008-2010

A. Overall Goal:

To advance the achievement of gender equality, gender equity and women's empowerment in Belize.

B. Key Principles

Gender Equality -

No discrimination on the grounds of a person's sex in allocation of resources, benefits, or access to services. This needs to be measured in terms of whether there is equality of opportunity, of access, and/or of results.

Gender Equity-

Fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes.

Women's Empowerment-

This is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality and gender equity. It includes specific, deliberate actions that identify and give redress to power imbalances and gives women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Women's empowerment is a vital aspect of sustainable development and the realization of human rights for all.

C. Issues to be addressed

- 1.) The need for investing in the institutional strengthening of the NWC which currently operates with an Executive Director, a new group of Commissioners, basic office equipment and without legislative authority.
- 2.) No clear direction on how to achieve gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in Belize.
- 3.) Absence/lack of utilization of sex disaggregated and gender related data in the planning process.
- 4.) The absence of an enabling environment for women to play a greater role in leadership and decision-making.
- 5.) Resources are not effectively targeted to address the needs of women, men, girls and boys based on their social, cultural and economic needs and circumstances.
- 6.) The public and school-aged children have a limited knowledge of CEDAW and understanding of women's rights as human rights.
- 7.) Shortage of resources within the legal and social systems creates inefficiencies in addressing gender issues.

D. Strategies for Action:

The NWC will adopt multiple key strategies to ensure the fulfillment of its mandate. This includes:

Policy Development and Influence:

The work of the NWC will be guided by the Convention, the National Gender Policy and other relevant policies that contribute to the achievement of gender equality, equity and women's empowerment. The NWC understands that it is not currently a policy making body but that it can propose and influence policies that advance the achievement of its mandate. Policy approval occurs at the Executive and Legislative branches of Government.

Partnership Building:

The National Women's Commission is not an implementation body. It can achieve its mandate by working closely with organizations that are charged with the implementation of relevant policies and programs. Building effective partnerships with these key national and international agencies is therefore one of the most critical strategies for ensuring the achievement of the NWC mandate.

Coordination:

The National Women's Commission understands the need to maximize human and financial resources and to streamline these towards the achievement of the NWC mandate. The NWC therefore sees coordination of related policies and programs as an essential step towards creating greater efficiency in achieving its goal.

Advocacy:

Advocating for changes in policies, programs or legislation is one of the core commitments of the NWC. Advocacy strategies are a set of tools aimed at bringing about the desired changes.

Public Awareness:

Gender equality, equity and women's empowerment must be achieved within the national context. The public's awareness of gender issues and gender relations are an essential component of stimulating changes in gendered power relationships within the public and private domains.

Research:

The NWC believes that it must rely on sound evidence as the basis for executing its mandate of policy development, policy influence, advocacy and public awareness. The NWC is also committed to building a solid body of knowledge and information resources aimed at demonstrating the need for, and progress towards, gender equality, equity and women's empowerment.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Transparency and accountability are two of the main tenets of the work of the NWC. The Commission will therefore invest in the development of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the policy and program levels. This will be aimed at ensuring compliance with both national and international commitments to gender equality, equity and women's empowerment.

Training and Capacity Building:

The NWC is committed to continuous strengthening of the capacity of its membership and Secretariat as a strategy for improving its overall effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its mandate.

E. The Planning Matrix

Problems/Issues to be addressed: There is a need for investing in the Institutional strengthening of the NWC which currently operates with an Executive Director, a new group of Commissioners, basic office equipment and without legislative authority.				
End Result: A well equipped, capable National Women's Commission that has the resources to effectively carry out its mandate.				
Indicators: The NWC is a legal body; % increase in resources to carry out the NWC mandate.				
Strategies: partnership building, research, advocacy, resource mobilization				
Actions	Timeline	Benchmarks	Partners	Resources
1. Develop a training program for Commissioners on GEEWE issues With the help of partners, a one-day training programme on GEEWE issues has been designed and sent to ECLAC gender consultant for input.	1 st Quarter of 2009	Training programme developed to include thematic areas identified for training.	Women's Dept. WINBelize Minister of Human Development Attorney	ECLAC Consultant agreed to facilitate one-day workshop. (FREE) while on working visit to Bze.
2. Implement the training programme ED prepares for capacity building of commissioners	2 nd Quarter of 2009 and Ongoing Training scheduled for Saturday, March 21, 2009.	Progress reports with results of training session	General's Office NCFC NAC UNICEF PAHO UNFPA UNIFEM	Commissioners Consultants/ex ecutive director
3. Procure office equipment to enable effective implementation of NWC programs.	1 nd Quarter of 2009 and ongoing	FO to assist with Inventory of office equipment after acquiring a photocopier, book shelves, filing cabinet, fax machine & furniture		Staff
4. Take stock of current structure of the NWC and similar structures, organizational policies and procedures and governing legislation	4 th Quarter of 2008 and 1 st Quarter of 2009	Copies of similar structures, organizational policies and procedures and legislation		Staff
5. Develop NWC organizational structure and policies and procedures Looking at NCFC's structure	1 st Quarter of 2009	NWC organizational structure and policies and procedures developed		Staff Commissioners

6. Approve organizational structure, policies and procedures	1 st Quarter of 2009	Resolution approving organizational structure, policies and procedures		Commissioners
7. Draft model legislation for the NWC 8. ED to examine Michigan's legislation and see how the NWC can tailor to suit. (May 2009)???	2 nd and 3 rd Quarters of 2009	Model legislation for the NWC developed		Commissioners
9. Develop and implement an advocacy and education campaign on new legislation to the Attorney General's Ministry	4 th Quarter of 2009	Advocacy plan for the official NWC legislation to be developed		Staff Commissioners
10. Legalize the new structure of the NWC	1 th Quarter of 2010	NWC law passed and ratified by Government		Commissioners
11. Create public awareness and education on the new structure of the NWC	1 st Quarter of 2010	Public awareness strategy developed		Commissioners
12. Hire professional and administrative support staff (to be determined)	1 st and 2 nd Quarter of 2010	Names and positions of staff members		Staff Commissioners
13. Develop a long-term Strategic Plan for the NWC	2 nd Quarter of 2010	Strategic Plan developed		Staff Commissioners Consultants
Indicative Budget: \$150,000 to \$200,000				

Problems/Issues to be addressed: No clear direction on how to achieve GEEWE in Belize.				
End Result (after 2 yrs.): A realistic national gender policy (with linkages made to other related policies) complete with monitoring indicators and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.				
Indicators: A National Gender Policy				
Strategies: research (stock taking), analysis, monitoring and evaluation				
Actions	Timeline	Benchmarks	Partners	Resources
1. Evaluate current gender policy Proposal written and submitted to UN to fund the NGP. The UN has promised to fund the policy. First leg of the project--Two-day consultation with partners, (users of the policy) planned for Women's Month. ED awaits consultant quotation.	1 st Quarter 2009 To be held on March-----2009.	Evaluation Report completed and disseminated	Women's Dept. WINBelize MHDST NCFC NAC MOH MOE MED	ED commissioners Consultant. NWC to fund consultation.
2. Develop a new gender policy complete with indicators and monitoring and evaluation mechanism (to include areas of attention outlined by the CEDAW Committee re: third and fourth periodic report and CRC eg: birth registration issue) The ED is in consultation with the consultant who produced the first policy while awaiting word from the UN.	2 nd 3 rd Quarter 2009	New National Gender Policy developed Monitoring indicators developed Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism developed and agreed with partners	MRD SIB Media UNICEF PAHO UNFPA UNIFEM	Consultant With Commissioners, ED and Partners
3. Organize a complete public awareness program including an education forum on the new policy	4 th Quarter 2009	Public Awareness Strategy Developed Agenda for Forum developed and disseminated Results of Forum documented		Staff Commissioners
4. Formal adoption of the new policy (define Cabinet level or legislative arm)	1 st Quarter of 2010	Legal passage of the new National Gender Policy		Commissioners
5. Reproduction of the National Gender Policy (Official Publication) Looking for a funder. Print Belize agreed to assist.	1 st Quarter of 2010	# of copies of the National Gender Policy reproduced At least 1,000 copies for effective distribution.		Commission Staff Print Belize

6. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of new policy	Throughout life of initiative and after adoption	Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism developed and functional Design for 1 st Monitoring and Evaluation Report developed		Staff Commissioners Consultants
Indicative Budget: \$40,000 to 50,000 (depending on level of research and publication requirements)				

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Problems/Issues to be addressed: Absence/lack of utilization of sex disaggregated and gender related research data in the development planning process.				
End Result (after 2 yrs.): A database of existing sex disaggregated data and information on women/gender-related programs has been developed and is being utilized to ensure that development planning becomes more gender sensitive.				
Indicators: sex disaggregated data on at least 70% of key priority issues outlined in a National Gender Policy; # of policies and programs developed using sex-disaggregated data				
Strategies: partnership building, research, coordination, monitoring				
Actions	Timeline	Benchmarks	Partners	Resources
1. Identify and secure strategic local and international partners that have an interest in, or a mandate for, ensuring sex disaggregated data Awaiting UNIFEM's reply for technical assistance. Meet with UNICEF ON Tues. Feb. 17 on database partnership.	4 th Quarter, 2008 and 1 st Quarter of 2009	List of partners developed Partners contacted and their responses documented	NCFC NAC SIB UB UNICEF PAHO UNFPA UNIFEM	Staff and Commissioners
2. Review available information systems to determine their usefulness in providing sex disaggregated data as well as identify information gaps in existing databases. Met with Glenn Avilez (SIB) to examine data. NWC granted access to all SIB data & surveys. Information has been requested	1 st Quarter of 2009	An outcome document of the review process with recommendations on the next steps is available		Staff, Consultant
3. Along with partners, develop a process for strengthening existing databases and/ or design an appropriate data base for the collection and analysis of gender-related statistics.	2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Quarters of 2009	A proposal has been developed outlining what type of database is to be developed A database has been developed		Staff, Consultant
4. Develop a mechanism for the regular updating of the data	4 th Quarter 2009	A mechanism for maintaining the database has been developed and is being used. A clear system has been agreed upon regarding how existing information systems (eg: BHIS) will feed into		Staff Consultant

		the database.	
5. Populate the database with relevant data.	1 st Quarter 2010	The database has been populated with relevant information	Staff?
6. Identify gaps in data and advocate for these to be filled by relevant data collection agencies.	1 st Quarter 2010	A gap analysis report has been developed	Staff, Commissioners
7. Advocate for the utilization of existing data in the planning process	1 st and 2 nd Quarters of 2009	Advocacy plan has been developed and implemented	Staff, Commissioners
Indicative Budget: \$20,000 (support) to \$75,000 (development of separate data base)			

NWC Plan of Action 2008-2012

Problems/Issues to be addressed: The absence of an enabling environment for women to play a greater role in leadership and decision-making				
End Result (after 2 yrs.): A proposal of identified strategies aimed at increasing the level of women's participation in leadership. (note: ensure bi-partisanship process for sustainability)				
Indicators: # of strategies outlined in the proposal document which have bi-partisan support				
Strategies: research (stock taking), analysis, partnership building,				
Actions	Timeline	Benchmarks	Partners	Resources
1. Examine the publication "Women in Politics" and any other information to determine factors that have prevented women from being in leadership positions. Sought funding via a proposal to UNDP. ED documenting factors which hinder women	3rd Quarter 2009	Literature review of documents completed	Women's Dept. Linette Vassell Caribbean Women in Leadership	Staff Commissioners
2. Reprint the "Women in Politics" publication and produce a women in leadership book complete with photo exhibit "Daughters of the Mangrove".	3rd Quarter of 2009			
3. Organize a bi-partisan brainstorming session to examine the issue and generate ideas for strategies	4 nd Quarter 2009	Agenda for the session developed and disseminated Report of the session developed and disseminated		Women's Department Consultant
4. Develop a bi-partisan strategy document reflective of information drawn from the publications and brainstorming session	4 th Quarter of 2009 and 1st Quarter 2010	Advocacy strategy developed		Commissioners Consultant
5. Advocate for formal adoption of the proposed strategies	2 nd Quarter of 2010	Funding sources identified Project proposals developed Funds deposited		Staff Commissioners
6. Monitor the implementation of selected strategies	3 rd and 4 th Quarters of 2010 (next Commission)	Progress report developed and disseminated		Staff
Indicative Budget: \$30,000 to \$75,000 (depending on level of research and international technical support needed)				



NWC Plan of Action 2008-2010

Problems/Issues to be addressed: Resources are not effectively targeted to address the needs of men, women, boys and girls based on their social, cultural and economic needs and circumstances.

End Result (after 2 yrs.): A strategy for developing gender-sensitive budgets.

Indicators: Gender budgeting will be initiated in one Government Ministry

Strategies: partnership building, research, advocacy

Actions	Timeline	Benchmarks	Partners	Resources
1. Identify partners and form effective partnership (Will support the work of WINBelize)	1 st Quarter of 2009	List of partners Partners contacted and their responses documented	Women's Dept. WINBelize MHDST	Staff Commissioners
2. Support WINBelize in doing stocktaking/review and analysis of any previous gender budget exercises and the current budget process in Belize. ED spoke to WINBelize and is waiting on their call.	2 nd and 3 rd Quarters of 2009	Research report on results of the gender budgeting review and analysis process (to include experiences of other countries and opportunities and challenges for Belize)	MOEcon MOF UNIFEM UNICEF PAHO	Staff Commissioners Consultants
3. Support WINBelize in the development of a strategy for piloting the gender budget initiative in Belize	1st Quarter of 2010	Strategy for gender budgeting in Belize developed and disseminated		Staff Commissioners Consultants
4. Along with WINBelize, develop an advocacy and education plan to get approval for the piloting of the Strategy in one Government Ministry in Belize	2 nd Quarter of 2010	Government approval for the piloting of gender budgeting in one Government Ministry		Staff Commissioners

Indicative Budget: \$75,000 in collaboration with WINBelize

Problems/Issues to be addressed: The general public and school aged children have a limited knowledge of CEDAW and understanding of women's rights as human rights.				
End Result (after 2 yrs.): Increased knowledge of CEDAW and increased understanding of women's rights as human rights among the general public and school aged children.				
Indicators: % of target population with knowledge of CEDAW and women's rights as human rights.				
Strategies: training/capacity building, public awareness, partnership building				
Actions	Timeline	Verification	Partners	Resources
Identify partners in CEDAW related and women's rights and human rights issues	2 nd Quarter 2009	List of partners developed and contacted Response of partners documented	UB NHRC MOE Women's Dept. WINBelize	Staff Commissioners
Develop appropriate, user friendly, culturally sensitive public education communications strategies aimed at increasing the general public's understanding of women's rights as human rights, including the provisions of the articles in CEDAW (eg: Public Forum on Women's Rights and Human Rights for International Human Rights Day)	2 nd and 3 rd Quarters of 2009	Communications Strategy developed	NCFC SIB	Commissioners Consultant
Implement the identified communications strategies	4 th Quarter 2009 and 1 st and 2 nd Quarters of 2010	Progress Report on implementation of Communications Strategy (eg: literature developed and disseminated etc.)		Commissioners Consultant(s)
Review existing school's curriculum to identify usefulness in promoting women's rights as human rights and women's rights under CEDAW	1 st and 2 nd Quarters of 2010	Report of results of the review process with recommendations attached		Commissioners Partners
Ensure mainstreaming of women's rights as human rights information, including rights under CEDAW, within existing primary and secondary school curriculum	2 nd Quarter 2010 and ongoing	A mainstreaming process and relevant material has been developed and agreed upon with the Min. of Education.		Commissioners
Develop a process for measuring people's (general public and school children) level of understanding of	2 nd Quarter 2010 and ongoing	A process has been developed to monitor an		Staff Commissioners

women's rights as human rights (eg: can include survey module attached to the Labor Force Surveys or the MISC surveys, etc.) ED is in discussion with the SIB		increased in understanding by the targeted populations (general public and children)		
Implement the monitoring process	1 st and 2 nd Quarter of 2010	Progress report of results of the monitoring process		Commissioners Consultants
Indicative Budget: \$75,000 to 150,000 (depending on communications and monitoring strategies selected)				

NWC Plan of Action 2008-2010

Problems/Issues to be addressed: Shortage of resources within the legal and social systems creates inefficiencies in addressing gender issues.				
End Result (after 2 yrs.): Government has an increased number of professional social workers working in social sector Ministries.				
Indicators: # and % increase in the cadre of professional social workers in social sector Ministries.				
Strategies: research (stock taking), advocacy				
Actions	Timeline	Benchmarks	Potential Partners	Resources
1. Do research/stocktaking of personnel, resources and levels of training of social workers working across the social sector Ministries	3 rd Quarter of 2009	Needs assessment and gap analysis report developed and disseminated	WIN-Belize MHDST Women's Dept. NWC Police Dept.	Commissioners Consultant
2. Identify areas of focus for increasing resources– technical and geographical	3 rd Quarter of 2009	Criteria developed for identifying areas of focus	NCFC MOE MOH Min. Public Service SIB Mental Health Association	Commissioners Partners
3. Have a recommended program roll out with special emphasis on budgetary allocation and gender and cultural sensitization training for all social workers	4 th Quarter of 2009	Policy recommendations developed and shared with Ministry of the Public Service and Ministry of Finance		Commissioners Consultant
4. Advocate for increases in resources to enable the establishment of new posts within the Ministry of the Public Service	4 th Quarter of 2009 and 1 st Quarter of 2010	Advocacy plan developed and implemented		Commissioners
5. Monitor and evaluate program roll out with recommendations for amendments as necessary	2 nd Quarter of 2010 and ongoing	Progress Report on program rollout		Commissioners
Indicative Budget: \$30,000 to \$50,000 (depending on level of research and advocacy)				

F. Monitoring Plan (Program Targets)

Expected Results	Indicators	Verification	Indicative Budget
1. The NWC is a fully legalized statutory body with clear organizational policies and procedures and the human and financial resources to effectively carry out its mandate.	The NWC is a legal body % increase in resources to carry out the NWC mandate.	NWC legislation NWC staff size, budget and inventory of equipment (baseline and end of 2010)	150,000 to \$200,000
2. A realistic national gender policy (with linkages made to other related policies) complete with monitoring indicators and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.	A National Gender Policy passed by Cabinet and the legislature	Copy of National Gender Policy	\$40,000 to 50,000
3. A database of existing sex disaggregated data and information on women/gender-related programs has been developed and is being utilized to ensure that development planning becomes more gender sensitive.	sex disaggregated data on at least 70% of key priority issues outlined in a National Gender Policy; # of policies and programs developed using sex-disaggregated data	Database exists Survey of planners to assess level of use of the database for planning purposes	\$20,000 to \$75,000
4. A proposal of identified strategies aimed at increasing the level of women's participation in leadership. (note: ensure bi-partisanship for sustainability)	# of strategies outlined in the proposal document that have bi-partisan support	Women's Leadership Proposal document exists	\$30,000 to \$75,000
5. A strategy for developing gender-sensitive budgets.	Gender budgeting will be initiated in one Government Ministry	Initial steps taken to develop gender-sensitive budget in one Government Ministry.	\$75,000 in collaboration with WINBelize

Expected Results	Indicators	Verification	Indicative Budget
6. Increased knowledge of CEDAW and increased understanding among the general public and school children of women's rights as human rights.	% of target population indicates knowledge of CEDAW commitments and women's rights as human rights.	Survey of knowledge and attitudes of the general population (baseline and after implementation of public awareness strategy is implemented)	\$75,000 to 150,000
7. Government has an increased number of professional social workers working in social sector Ministries.	# and % increase in the cadre of professional social workers positioned across social sector Ministries.	Inventory of professional workers (baseline and after program)	\$30,000 to \$50,000
Total Indicative Budget (average \$210,00 to \$338,00 per annum to be mobilized in collaboration with partner agencies)			\$420,000 to \$675,000