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Belize

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ARV	Antiretroviral treatment
BOOST	Building Opportunities for our Social Transformation
BSS	Behavioral Seroprevalence Survey
BZD	Belizean Dollar
CAPS	Community Action for Public Safety
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARSI	Central American Regional Security Initiative
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CD4	Cluster of Differentiation 4
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CP	Community Policing
CRD	Community Rehabilitation Department
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
DPP	Director of Public Prosecution
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GF	Global Fund
GIS	Geospatial Imagery System
GoB	Government of Belize
HELP	Help for Progress
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICESR	International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights
ILAD	International Legal Affairs Department
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITVET	Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
IUD	Intra-uterine Device
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LSMSL	Living Standards Measurement Survey
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MTDS	Medium Term Development Strategy
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

NAC	National Aids Commission
NCFC	National Committee for Families
NCA	National Council for the Ageing
NCP	Non-Contributory Pension
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGBVAP	National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NHI	National Health Insurance
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NPA	National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents
NPESAP	National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan
NWC	National Women's Commission
NYCSC	National Youth Cadet Service Corps
OAS	Organization of American States
PM	Prime Minister
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Programme
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SIB	Statistical Institute of Belize
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOUP	Social Organizations United for Peace
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSB	Social Security Board
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIBAM	United Belize Advocacy Movement
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollar
WD	Women's Department
WHO	World Health Organization
WIP	Women in Politics Project

I. Introduction

1. Belize has a long history of democracy free from civil unrest and human rights abuses. It was the last country within Central America and second last within CARICOM to attain its independence in 1981. In the 1980's there was an influx of immigrants from Central America who fled civil unrest in the region.¹ This immigration continues today, albeit at a lesser pace. The *National Population and Housing Census 2010* states that 15% of the population is foreign-born with over 80% of these immigrants coming from Central America and Mexico.² Belize's population increased by 30.2% in the decade between 2000 and 2010 from 240,204 to 312,698.

2. After extensive national consultations the Government of Belize (GoB) developed in 2010 its long term national development framework called "Horizon 2030". This framework establishes a set of long term goals, targets and indicators to guide concerted action by all stakeholders involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M & E) of long-term and intermediate sector programmes.

3. There has been progress towards the mainstreaming of human rights within the national policy framework. The long term development framework for Belize, *Horizon 2030*, declares that "the state is respectful of people's human rights and citizens and visitors respect the rule of law and feel secure and safe" as part of the statement of stakeholders' vision for Belize. "Respect for the rule of law and for human rights" is listed as among the foremost guiding principles of Belize's long term development.

4. GoB is guided in the short term by its Three Year Medium Term Strategy, 2010-2013 called *Building Resilience Against Social, Economic and Physical Vulnerabilities* (MTDS). The strategy focusses on the challenges associated with economic and social shocks caused by natural disasters, and to which Belize is particularly prone. The successor MTDS for 2014-2017, still in its planning stage, proposes to have poverty alleviation as its central focus.

5. Persistent levels of poverty and widening income disparity continue to pose a serious challenge to the development of human rights and to the full expression of a person's dignity and freedoms. GoB is committed to eliminating poverty and has identified key priorities and launched a number of policy interventions to this end.

6. GoB recognizes that the external debt constrains not only national development prospects but also undermines the capacity to establish conditions for the realization of human rights. Prime Minister (PM) Barrow in his 2011-2012 budget speech stated that "it is a factual recognition that our country does not have the ability to meet all its commercial obligations under the current Super-bond terms, if it is to meet all its social obligations under the political, economic and existential compact with its citizens." At the end of 2012, the outstanding public sector debt stood at BZD \$2.37 billion, equivalent to 81% of GDP; of this, the debt held in unsustainable commercial arrangements stood at BZD \$1.06 billion.

7. The heavy debt service prompted GoB to initiate a process of renegotiation of the commercial bond. According to PM Barrow, the restructured commercial bond allows for greater focus on social protection and poverty reduction, citizen security, education, health and physical infrastructure.³

8. The efforts of the State in promoting and protecting human rights in Belize have been bolstered by the advocacy work done by members of civil society. The greatest challenge with the implementation of sector plans that seek to advance human rights continues to be the lack of financial resources. Notwithstanding such limitations, human rights in Belize are being advanced in many respects, as demonstrated by the response of

very active advocacy of various interest groups. For example, the United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM) formed in 2006, represents lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons (LGBT) and is challenging the constitutionality of the “unnatural crime” provision in Belize’s Criminal Code. The Council of Churches and the Belize Association of Evangelical Churches are interest groups opposed to the removal of the “unnatural crime” provision. The newly formed Generation Zero is another example of a human rights based organization, and its purpose is to decrease HIV-related stigma and discrimination. The Maya Leaders Alliance is still another example of an interest group fighting for entitlement to customary land tenure rights of Mayan villages in the Toledo District.

II. Legislative framework

9. Annex 1 is a compilation of substantive laws that specifically protect the fundamental human rights and freedoms of individuals in Belize. The set of laws contained in Annex 1 is accompanied by subsidiary laws, rules and regulations that protect the person.

III. Promotion and protection of human rights

A. Older persons

10. According to the SIB Census of 2010, older persons represent 4% (12,507) of the population. Even though older persons are in a minority, GoB is committed to their care as reflected in the progress made in guaranteeing their rights. The largest portion of GoB’s grants to social sector organizations is channeled through NGOs that provide care to older persons.

11. According to the *Poverty Assessment 2009*, the poverty incidence among the elderly is 34% while 40% of them live within poor family households.⁴

12. A Non-Contributory Pension (NCP) administered by the Social Security Board (SSB) continues to be made available to females age 65 and males age 67 and over. There are currently 3,000 beneficiaries countrywide, representing 24% of the older persons population. Older persons eligible for NCP are those older persons living on their own or as a couple. The number of beneficiaries in 2012 decreased by 25% compared to 2010 as a result of the more stringent application criteria implemented in 2011.

13. Elderly persons not benefiting from the NCP Programme can access other social assistance programmes such as the Building Opportunities for our Social Transformation (BOOST) or the Food Pantry programmes. Under the BOOST and Pantry Programme, there are 1,117 older beneficiaries representing 10% of the older person population. Beneficiaries cannot participate in more than one social assistance programme.

14. GoB continues to make improvements in access to health care facilities for older persons. The Mercy Clinic was designated in 2009 as the only National Health Insurance (NHI) paid Primary Care Provider in the country to provide services exclusively for the elderly. While there are 300 registered persons at the Mercy Clinic covered under GoB’s National Health Insurance Programme, services are offered to 4,000 elderly persons by the Mercy Kitchen and Mercy Centre. The Mercy Centre is the closest to a Day Care Centre for older persons because of the range of services it provides and its holistic approach to dealing with the issues and needs of older persons. There are 5,935 older persons, or 48% of the elderly population benefiting from NHI in the Belize, Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

15. GoB constructed a new replacement residential facility, Golden Haven, in 2013 in the Belize District for indigent older persons. The new facility provides a range of services, from semi-independent to assisted living, to older persons with varying degrees of self-care.

16. GoB continues to support the National Council for the Aging (NCA), an advocacy and coordinating body which facilitates the development and implementation of plans and programmes to ensure the protection of basic social and economic rights to secure the welfare of older persons. The NCA considers health care and income security to be the primary concern for the elderly. A *Situational Analysis* done in 2010 with the assistance of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) highlighted some of the constraints and challenges that older persons continue to face.⁵ It is now being used to inform the development of a strategic plan for the NCA.

B. HIV

17. GoB is committed to the global goal of “Getting to Zero” and the Ministry of Health has adopted, with some success, a progressive and inclusive approach to tackle the challenges posed by HIV.

18. During the period 2009-2011 there was a decrease in the total number of new HIV infections.⁶ In 2012, there was an increase of 10%; however, in light of a recent survey done with most at-risk populations, we now know that the greater incidence lies within one sector of society and we are in a position to better target national efforts to contain and reduce the risks.

19. GoB continues to provide universal access to antiretroviral treatment (ARV) to people living with HIV in line with its global commitment. With respect to treatment regimens, in 2012 the threshold for treatment eligibility with ARV was increased to CD4 500 consistent with international standards of treatment and the documented number of patients on ARV therapy was 1,040.

20. With the support of the Global Fund (GF) the level of psycho-social support has been increased for people living with HIV including dietary support to help with the compliance of medication. The GF supports 275 orphans and vulnerable children who are HIV positive or who are affected by HIV through a parent who may have the virus. In addition, nutrition and hygiene support are provided to persons living with HIV.

21. There are 66 locations across the country that provide HIV testing in accordance with National Standards; 54 in public and 12 in private care settings. The extension of HIV testing sites to the rural communities has improved coverage resulting in an increase of the total number of HIV tests conducted countrywide by 4.3% in 2012.

22. Since 2001 GoB continues to implement the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Programme (PMTCT) to reduce the risk of HIV infected pregnant mothers passing the virus to their newborns. The PMTCT has been integrated within the public health prenatal clinics countrywide to enhance its impact. In 2012, 93% of all pregnant women were tested for HIV of which 95% received treatment to reduce the risk of transmission. As a result, of the 44 exposed babies, only 2 were positive.

23. A *Behavioural Seroprevalence Survey (BSS)* was conducted in 2012, to obtain information on the characteristic of the HIV epidemic and to improve and guide the planning and policy development of the national response to HIV. The BSS confirmed that the HIV epidemic is concentrated in the men who have sex with men group at 14%, while the prevalence of HIV among female commercial sex workers was 1%. Health officials fully recognize the “priority that must now be concentrated on men.”⁷

24. The National Aids Commission (NAC) is spearheading a comprehensive legal exercise to ensure consistency of domestic legislation with the *National HIV Policy*. The legal review will make specific recommendations to modify those sections of laws that are discriminatory and introduce new laws addressing the protection of the rights of persons living with HIV.

25. The NAC has identified reducing stigma as one of the priority areas for its education and prevention campaigns. This approach is necessary given the findings in the BSS “that discrimination and violence against persons with HIV is prevalent and is directly tied to their HIV status.” In October 2012, a Conference on Stigma and Discrimination was held to create awareness among the general public and professionals as to the extent of the problem. At a Prevention Summit held in April, 2013, the NAC committed to redefine prevention initiatives.

IV. Recommendations

A. Women’s rights & gender: (R- 9, 20, 25, 27, 28, 33, 34)

26. GoB is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of women and to the implementation of the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. The Women’s Department and the National Women’s Commission (NWC) have specific mandates in this regard and work together with a number of NGOs.

27. The Revised *National Gender Policy* approved by the Cabinet in March 2013 builds on the efforts of the first policy (2002). It is based on an updated *Situation Analysis of Gender Issues in Belize (2010)* and aims at continuing national efforts to achieve gender equality and equity. The *Policy* identifies and examines the inequities experienced by both men and women and suggests actions to correct gender disparities in five priority areas: Health; Education/Skills Training; Wealth and Employment Generation; Violence Producing Conditions; and Power and Decision Making.

28. The NWC spearheaded the development of the Belize Gender Info, a monitoring system aimed at providing sex disaggregated data for public policy design, implementation and monitoring, while ensuring that Belize remains current with its international commitments, in particular, the CEDAW. The database also serves as a monitoring tool for evaluating the progress on the implementation of the *Revised National Gender Policy*.⁸

29. A *Situational Analysis of Gender and Politics in Belize* was launched on December, 2012.⁹ Like *Horizon 2030*, this *Analysis* points to the low participation of women in political and public life, among other things, and advocates for the introduction of Special Temporary Measures to increase the number of women candidates political parties include on their slate of candidates at all levels of the political process, particularly at the national level.

30. The NWC implemented the Award-Winning Women in Politics Project (WIP) which resulted in three successful cohorts of 98 trained women. The program, which was oversubscribed, saw increased participation of women and a few successes at the level of Municipal/Town Council and City Council Elections. Four women ran conventions at the national level in two of the main political parties but were unsuccessful. Women are, however, now represented at the highest level of decision making. Since 2012, two women now serve as Senators and are members of Cabinet with full ministerial rank whereas in the Administration of 2008 to 2012 there were none. Of the 31 elected Area Representatives in

Parliament, all but one are men. In the appointed Senate, there are 5 women of a total of 12.

31. Commitments have been made by the two major political parties to increase participation of women within their internal party processes to at least 30% in local and national elections.

32. In fulfilling its mandate to execute programs and activities geared towards the advancement of women and the attainment of gender equality, the Women's Department (WD) recognizes that the economic situation is reducing employment opportunities for women, particularly those with little or no formal education. The WD continues to offer traditional and non-traditional skills training throughout the country with the aim of promoting income generation or income substitution. With the assistance of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) the WD developed the "*Women's Entrepreneurship Manual (2012)*" which addresses the needs of women and the unique challenges encountered in business development.

33. *Horizon 2030* notes that the most urgent issue requiring a gendered approach appears to be that of crime and violence. Belize is committed to combating all forms of violence against women and girls. Within the legal framework of the *Domestic Violence Act 2007*, much progress has been made towards reducing violence against women. The Women's Department, the Family Violence Unit within the Police Department, and the Magistrates Court are instrumental in the implementation of the *Act*. This law now includes various orders inclusive of: Protection Order; Occupation/Tenancy Order; Counseling Order; Rehabilitation Order; and Order for Financial Compensation. The *Act* also provides for persons to apply for an Interim Order if the situation requires immediate attention and can be granted without the respondent being present in Court. Additionally, the Court can mandate perpetrators to relinquish firearms which have been utilized in domestic violence acts. Persons who are in visiting relationships, such as boy/girlfriend can also apply for the orders.

34. A comprehensive National *Gender-Based Violence Action Plan (NGBVAP) 2010-2013* was developed through an inclusive consultative process. The *NGBVAP* is designed to serve as a basis for advocacy work to halt gender-based violence in all its forms as well as a tool to assist policy and decision makers to contribute to the achievement of the national and international goals. In 2012, the WD received funding for its implementation.

35. The Family Violence Unit within the Belize Police Department in Belize City and the Officers assigned to the Unit in the districts collaborate with the Women's Department of the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, to implement activities and conduct sensitization sessions with the community. The Family Violence Unit works to raise awareness on the issue of domestic and gender-based violence with a focus on the role of the police officer in the reporting, investigation and prosecution of cases of domestic violence and the enforcement of the *Domestic Violence Act of 2007*. In 2011, the *Domestic Violence Protocol for Police Officers* was revised to include a Complaints Mechanism linked to the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate inadequate police response.¹⁰

36. Several publications have been developed since the last UPR Report, these include: the *Women's Handbook on Domestic Violence – Prepared by US Peace Corps Volunteer and Women's Department (Revised July 2009)*; *Handbook on Sexual Violence – A Resource Guide to Legislation Policies, Services and More (Women's Department and UN Women 2012)*; *A Situation Analysis of Gender & Politics in Belize* entitled —"*Toward Equality of Opportunity for Equality of Results*" prepared by the National Women's Commission and UNDP; and *The Revised National Gender Policy 2013* and its core

document, the *Situation Analysis of Gender and Politics in Belize*, commissioned by the NWC for GoB.

Health

37. The *Rapid Assessment of Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Linkages (2010) Report* supported by UNFPA, International Planned Parenthood, World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS found that “The national policy framework in Belize is comprehensive and supportive of SRH and HIV integration.” The *Assessment* indicated that the framework and policies in place addresses structural determinants, such as gender, equality and human rights.¹¹ The recently *Revised National Gender Policy* also aims to reinvestigate attention to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) issues.

38. The Ministry of Health provides family planning methods such as Intra-uterine Devices (IUD), male and female condoms, oral and injectable contraceptives, targeting approximately 6,000 women or 10% of total women in reproductive age.¹² The Ministry of Health has also instituted measures to encourage cervical cancer screening. All health regions in Belize have access to colonoscopy services; this service is offered during specific campaigns in hard to reach villages.

B. Children and youth rights – (R: 8, 15–17, 26, 29–30, NC-2, NC-7)

Implementation of National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children and Adolescents

39. The *National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children and Adolescents 2004 – 2015* approved in 2004 is a comprehensive policy document designed to strengthen the coordination and impact of programs and projects that target children and adolescents in Belize.¹³ It encompasses six broad areas namely Education, Health, Child Protection, HIV/AIDS, Family, and Culture. In keeping with its mandate to track progress of the NPA targets leading up to 2015, the National Committee on Children and Families (NCFC) commissioned the preparation of an *NPA Monitoring Report* which was completed in 2010.¹⁴ The *Report* examines, within the context of the NPA M & E Framework, the status of the targets outlined in the NPA and maps key areas of concern to be addressed by the various implementing agencies.

40. The *NPA Monitoring Report* as well as recent status updates signals that many of the indicators will not meet 2015 targets. According to the *Report*, this is because the “institutional planning to meet these targets and goals are not clearly undertaken by implementing agencies.” The quality and documentation of data were cited as serious impediments in monitoring all indicators. There are also several indicators not being tracked which also contribute to the uncertainty of whether 2015 targets will be met. The indicators pertaining to health is the only area where every indicator is being tracked, and it is also the only area which has more than half of its tracked indicators in the M & E Framework on target for 2015.

Birth registration

41. In 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding with Vital Statistics and the Ministry of Health was drafted to facilitate the registration of births at all public hospitals given that at least 86% of births take place there. Since then a Vital Statistics Officer is now permanently present in these facilities, and birth registration is at 95% (2011), close to universal coverage.

42. UNICEF supported GoB to implement the *Make Your Child Count Campaign on Birth Registration* which reached over 17,000 children in 186 communities across the country in 2011. The program removed one of the major challenges to access birth

registration service by taking the services to remote communities. GoB also partnered with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to strengthen the system of birth registration which resulted in the electronic processing of applications. The Vital Statistics Unit is also in the process of reviewing its procedures to minimize the inefficiencies in the system and decrease the turnaround time for accessing birth certificates especially for those in rural areas.

Legislative measures: Protection of children

43. The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Prohibition Act (CSEC) was passed in January 2013. This Act gives effect to and implements the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Act outlines provisions to address commercial sexual exploitation of children from all angles and offers protection for children and adolescents to 18 years. The provisions in the CSEC Act are also consistent with regional and international standards.

44. The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act of 2003 was repealed and replaced with a more robust legislation, the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act of 2013. Included are stiffer penalties for human trafficking and related offenses as well as the expansion and clearer articulation of the offenses that are punishable under the law.

45. The Education and Training Act 2010, which came into effect in May 2010, introduced for the first time, a prohibition on corporal punishment in schools. This was the subject of extensive consultations and public debate which helped to promote greater awareness. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS) has developed A Positive Discipline Manual to promote alternative discipline in schools. There have been some public campaigns on non-violent forms of discipline in home and community settings.

Minimum age for marriage and criminal responsibility and labour

46. The *Marriage Act* was amended in 2005 to increase the minimum age of marriage with parental consent from 14 to 16 years. This amendment harmonized the minimum age of sexual consent and effectively removed a loophole used by perpetrators of sexual abuse.

47. The age of criminal responsibility is 12 years old and is on par with other Commonwealth and Central American countries. There are draft amendments to the *Labour Act* which will standardize the age of admission to work and there is a draft *Occupation Health and Safety Act* to address hazardous work and bring Belize in line with international standards by prohibiting involvement of children in certain types of hazardous work. In addition, the *National Child Labour Policy and the Decent Work Agenda* approved by GoB outlines national priorities to eliminate child labor in Belize.¹⁵

C. Implementing treaty obligations: (R- 1–7, 9, 19, 21–24)

48. GoB is committed to meeting its treaty and reporting obligations in respect of the various human rights treaties to which it is a party and has taken measures to implement those treaties with a view to promoting the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all. Nevertheless, as with many small states, the reporting requirements arising from human rights and other treaties are onerous and continue to pose a challenge. Financial, technical and human resource constraints have, despite the best efforts, impeded its ability to submit timely reports. This problem is compounded by the sheer number of different mechanisms requiring follow up and reporting. Aside from the reporting challenges, GoB remains committed to and is implementing its treaty obligations.

49. In order to address this challenge, the Attorney General Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are currently updating and improving the treaties registry. The registry will inform a basic country plan to ensure that the Government is meeting all its treaty obligations. An International Legal Affairs Department (ILAD) has been established within the Attorney General Ministry, to *inter alia*, strengthen the Government's support system in its efforts for timely reporting to the United Nations human rights treaty bodies and to consider and advise on adherence to human rights treaties. GoB is reviewing the possibility of adapting and ratifying the human rights treaties to which it is not yet a party, including the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESR) and the possibility of adhering to the optional protocols where applicable and as outlined in the recommendations. The ILAD has begun the revision process of looking at the outstanding treaties for ratification as well as the specifics of the outstanding optional protocols recommended, to advise on the best course of action.

50. The process of preparation of the Second UPR Report by Belize had the effect of increasing awareness and discussions of human rights not only across government agencies, but also within civil society. GoB has begun consultations with its partners to identify mechanisms and procedures related to the implementation of its treaty obligations. All recognized the need to systematize follow-up in order to ensure that concrete results are achieved during the four and half year period between reviews.

51. Another challenge is monitoring the implementation of the various legal human rights obligations and other pledges and the recommendations accepted by GoB. In consultation with partners, it was clearly identified that a comprehensive follow-up mechanism should be developed for Belize to reconcile implementation of recommendations and measures contained in national and sector plans developed by agencies of GoB. Additionally, links must be established between recommendations and pledges issued by all international and regional human rights mechanisms.

52. GoB remains committed to continue supporting the existing institutions which are tasked with monitoring and overseeing respect for human rights, including: the National Committee for Families and Children, the National Women's Commission, the National Council on Aging, the National Aids Commission, and the Office of the Ombudsman. In January 2013 a new Ombudsman was appointed and an attorney at law was added to the staff. GoB is also committed to continue engaging with representatives of civil society who contribute work in this area.

D. Strengthening of human rights capacity: (R-14, 43)

53. Aggrieved citizens who wish to take action against police officers, who may have committed an offense against them, can lodge a complaint to the Professional Standards Branch as provided for in *Section 24 (i) Police Act, Chapter 138*, the Laws of Belize.

54. The Professional Standard Branch's main office is located in Belmopan with branches in each district. In 2012, 239 reports were made against police officers for various offences ranging from unprofessional conduct to death in police custody. This represented a slight increase from 2011 of reports made against police officers, attributed largely to increasing public awareness of citizens' rights and a perception of an improved readiness by the Police Department to address such complaints.

55. All 239 cases were investigated and the action taken varied depending on the action the complainant requested. In many cases persons did not request criminal prosecution but requested that the officer under investigation be spoken to, which is also a form of reprimand. In addition, the incident would be placed on the officer's personal file. In 2012, 33 officers were placed on interdiction of which 31 were criminally charged. There were

also five cases (2012) where the complainant requested compensation. Usually, compensation is either deducted from the officer's monthly salary or paid forthwith in cash. The compensation in the latter cases averaged BZD \$500.

Refugees and asylum seekers

56. UNHCR's local implementing partner, Help for Progress (HELP), assists the Immigration Department to implement the standard operating procedure (SOP) that identifies asylum seekers and recognized refugees in need of protection. Once processed, GoB provides formally identified asylum seekers with free permits to remain in Belize until Refugee Status Determination (RSD) is completed and may seek employment if able to meet the financial requirements.

57. Refugees, asylum seekers and their families are allowed subsidized primary health care. Children ages 6-14 have access to subsidized primary school education. Children of asylum seekers who are born in Belize are provided Belizean citizenship with all its rights and responsibilities. The State assumes protection for the asylum seekers, refugees and their families. At present, Belize has an asylum population of 72 persons, of which 55% are women and girls and 45% are males between the ages of 4 and 65 years. Most refugees and asylum seekers live dispersed in urban and rural areas. Many have been granted residency as a durable solution.

58. An Eligibility Committee for Refugee Status Determination has been named, but has not yet met to review pending applications. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has sponsored two immigration officer training workshops locally and several officers benefitted from training abroad. No internally displaced persons have requested protection.

V. Challenges and priorities

A. Social protection

59. According to the recent Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), household poverty increased from 25% in 2002 to 33% in 2009 and the indigence rate increased from 10.8% to 15.8%. The all poor population is comprised of 136,640 persons. A revised *National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan* (NPESAP) outlines the measures to be undertaken toward eliminating poverty. Both the *National Poverty Assessment* and the *2010 SIB Census* show that female-headed households are not poorer than male-headed households.

60. GoB has mainstreamed pro-poor policies in its national policy framework. For example, its Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) valued at BZD \$591.9 million reflects the strategic objective of poverty reduction. The PSIP consists of infrastructure, economic services and social protection programmes.

61. The two key complimentary pro-poor initiatives, BOOST and Food Pantry Programme coordinated by the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, have been successful in reaching the poor. Together, these programmes provide assistance to approximately 17% (136,640) of the poor population and are financed principally by the GoB at an approximate cost of BZD \$7.5 million. There are plans to expand the number of beneficiary households during 2013/14.

62. BOOST was launched in 2010 as a national programme with both urban and rural coverage. It is an amalgamation and upgrading of existing social assistance programmes. The programme's overarching goals are twofold: first, to provide immediate relief to poor

families through small but steady cash transfers; and second, to reduce poverty in the long run through improvements in poor children's human capital potential. BOOST uses a targeting mechanism to identify eligible poor families with children ages 0 to 17 years. The BOOST platform is also used to administer cash transfers to persons with disabilities and older persons who are not receiving any form of pension. The programme has focused on connecting poor families to the formal financial system, therefore the monthly cash payments are made to beneficiary accounts with local credit unions, the vast majority of which GoB has helped beneficiaries to open. Three years into implementation, BOOST has more than tripled its beneficiaries, reaching 3,500 households and 96% of beneficiaries are now integrated into an alternative financial system.

63. The government subsidized Food Pantry Programme introduced in 2010 is targeted at the working poor families in Belize, Cayo and Toledo Districts. The LSMS shows that it costs BZD \$5 per day for an adult to purchase 2000 quality calories per day. Eligible beneficiaries are working families who earn less than BZD \$35 per person per week. Approximately 10,000 persons were directly benefitting under this scheme in 2012/2013.

64. According to the *Poverty Assessment 2010*, the poor are less likely to seek medical assistance due to high cost and access issues. The expansion of the health financing programs such as NHI supports health initiatives targeting those with low incomes by maintaining a safety net of health and social services for the poor. NHI is available to disenfranchised residents in South Side Belize City and the southern districts of Toledo and Stann Creek.¹⁶ Approximately 102,467 residents are registered with NHI, representing 33% of Belize's population. NHI finances primary health care services.¹⁷ The annual cost of the programme is covered by GoB through the Ministry of Health at a cost of approximately BZD \$15.2 million per annum. The programme has led to significant improvements in the quality of care and resulting health outcomes as it has reduced the barriers to primary health care in the rural and poorer population. The programme has contributed to a reduction in maternal mortality.¹⁸

65. GoB introduced a National Hemodialysis Programme in 2011 which provides free dialysis to a maximum of 32 persons at a government and a private facility. The programme is at a cost of approximately BZD \$2.7 million per annum.

66. To address specific interventions in key geographic areas such as in Belize City and Toledo – where the incidence of poverty is highest – a project called “*Improving Children's Health and Nutrition in Poor Mayan Communities in Toledo*” is being implemented by the Ministry of Health.¹⁹ This Project seeks to improve the health and nutrition of children in Toledo District, through an early childhood development approach focusing on pre-natal care, nutrition monitoring in the critical window of opportunity, and school health interventions at the primary school level. There are 24,700 community residents in the Toledo District that benefit directly or indirectly from this project. Another targeted intervention being implemented by the Ministry of Health is the *Salud Mesoamerica Project 2015*. This project seeks to improve reproductive, maternal, infant, and child health by improving access, usage and quality of services. This project has benefited from strengthening quality assurance systems, improving community platforms, and increasing the use of information in decision making.²⁰ The population of the communities being served through this project exceeds 160,000 persons.

67. In 2007, GoB initiated the *Belize City South Side Alleviation Project* which aims to reduce the poverty level in Belize City through infrastructure and social programmes that bolsters the standard of living in the Southside areas. The programme is valued at BZD \$50 million.²¹

B. Persons with disabilities

68. GoB is committed to fully integrating persons with disabilities into society and to provide for their care. The commitment has also included a pledge to increase public awareness of their rights and needs and to ensure that persons with disabilities are treated as equal citizens. This commitment was reaffirmed with the signing and ratifying of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in May, 2011. Ratifying this Convention represents a major milestone in the formulation of policies for the inclusion and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.

69. The *2010 Census* reported that approximately 4% (11,626) of the population have some form of disability. Under the BOOST Programme, there are 751 beneficiaries of 563 households who reported having a severe level of disability.

70. In 2008 Mrs Kim Simplis-Barrow, wife of the Prime Minister, was appointed as a Special Envoy to promote the welfare of women and children. One of the significant achievements of the Special Envoy is that of raising the visibility and awareness of concerns related to children with special needs. This led to the promotion of the concept of the Inspiration Centre, now under construction and which will contribute to the care and protection of children, and to the development of services, particularly for the disabled. The Centre, to be completed in 2013, will offer special care and a safe space for children and adolescents to interact, to gain self-esteem and skills, and will address the disparity between non-disabled and disabled children in accessing community-based recreation programmes.

C. Citizen security and access to justice

71. Since 2009, there have been several key advances in dealing with the challenges of citizen security. The development of *The National Security Strategy of Belize, 2009* was a comprehensive response to the obvious threats to Belize's security such as the drug trade, corruption, and the breakdown of social systems.

72. Most of the initiatives to address weaknesses in the criminal justice system mentioned in the *National Security Strategy* have been completed, such as: a National Identification System incorporating biometrics; a crime pattern analysis GIS database to track crime; a modern forensic lab with a National Ballistics Identification System; the strengthening of the Canine (K-9) Unit for detection of firearms and explosives; a witness protection programme; trials by video-conference; the creation of a Victims Support Services Unit; and the formation of a Gang Violence Prevention Unit.

73. GoB's launching of the RESTORE Belize Programme in 2010 reflects the "high priority" it places on "improve[ing] the quality of life for each citizen through the restoration of law and order and community building". The RESTORE Belize Coordinating Unit operates out of the Office of the Prime Minister. Its mandate is to coordinate all relevant government agencies as well as civil society and private sector partners in the development, implementation and monitoring of inter-sectoral programmes aimed at re-establishing security in Belize.

74. Since its establishment, RESTORE Belize has been actively mobilizing resources to implement social crime prevention with a focus on increasing access to social services for the marginalized population of urban males. Some of the initiatives covered in the Programme regarding *Peace Building* are: conflict mediation training to youth service providers; peer mediation; community dialogues; youth-policy dialogues; peace in the parks; and midnight basketball. With respect to *Keeping Children in School*, initiatives undertaken include the Health for Life Feeding Programme, computer-assisted literacy and

numeracy, “I AM Belize” scholarship programme, and “TOMS” Shoes Distribution. RESTORE Belize coordinates a forum called Social Organizations United for Peace (SOUP) which ensures greater collaboration and coordination towards a targeted and systematic approach to reducing crime and violence among the youth population.

75. The authorities have also recognized the value of Community Policing (CP) so that 15% (225) of the total police force is involved in Community Policing with the focus being on building community partnerships and problem solving. There is a 12 month action plan which includes about 20 defined activities involving CP such as the Neighborhood Watch Programme, the Gang Resistance and Education Training, School Feeding Programme, and the Jasmine Alert Programme.²²

76. To augment social efforts at curbing violent crime, the Police Department has taken measures to improve the caliber of the police, including the introduction of new criteria such that recruits are now required to have a minimum of a high school diploma. As of December 2012, recruits joining the Belize Police Department are given 10 days human rights training, administered by staff of the Human Rights Council, as a standard component of their training.

77. Since 2011 recruits joining the Belize Defence Force receive one week of human rights training as a standard component of their training. Since 2013, the Red Cross has provided an additional week of human rights training to soldiers. There are plans to extend the duration and increase the frequency of this training.

78. Much has been done to strengthen the legislative framework to ensure successful prosecution of offenders. The lack of co-operation of witnesses and members of the public in the prosecution process resulted in the *Evidence (Amendment) Act 2009*, the *Indictable Procedure (Amendment) Act 2009*, the *Juries (Amendment) Act 2011*, the *Indictable Procedure (Amendment) Act 2011* and the *Evidence (Amendment) Act 2012*. The *Evidence (Amendment) Act 2009* and the *Indictable Procedure (Amendment) Act 2009* both enable the admission of statements as evidence by witnesses who are unwilling to give oral evidence because of fear of death or bodily injury.

79. The *Juries (Amendment) Act 2011* and the *Indictable Procedure (Amendment) Act 2011* both amend the law to enable trial by judges sitting without a jury for the offences of murder, attempt to murder, abetment of murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

80. The *Evidence (Amendment) Act 2012* addresses the issue of witnesses who present themselves for trial, but do not testify in accordance with the previous statements given to the police. The amendment enables the Crown to admit an inconsistent statement into evidence as proof of the contents of that statement. Previously under the Common Law position, a Judge or Magistrate was required to advise that a previous inconsistent statement could not be admitted as to its truth.

81. To ensure that only viable charges are laid and that cases are not later discontinued because of a lack of evidence, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) as of 2009 vets the submission of statements by the police in all major investigations. In 2011, the DPP assigned one Counsel per district in order to facilitate direct contact with Police Officers, to advise on specific cases and to determine and meet Police Officers’ training needs.²³

82. In the *Annual Report of the Judiciary of Belize for the period 2011–2012*, the Chief Justice noted that the Criminal Justice System continues to be tested by the large volume of cases involving violent crime. This growth has compromised the capacity of the criminal justice system to dispose of all cases in an expeditious time-frame. In addition, the lengthy remand time of at least a third of the prison population creates a level of distrust in the Justice System. To deal with this, the membership of the Bench has since been expanded,

and a consultant is presently working with the Supreme Court Registry for the establishment of a system for the proper and efficient management of cases. Judges have also started to do case management themselves by encouraging use of alternative dispute settlement mechanisms.²⁴

83. With respect to accessing justice, the Legal Aid Office under the Attorney General's Ministry has been strengthened, with the addition of two full time attorneys, bringing the total to three. Furthermore, the honorarium paid to private attorneys to represent persons accused of capital offenses and who cannot afford an attorney has been increased. Work is underway to extend the Legal Aid Services to the districts in the form of a legal mobile clinic.

84. There is an ongoing collaboration with the UNDP and the Community Rehabilitation Department to carry out a series of lectures for vulnerable young people in conflict with the law. The possibility of having an attorney dedicated only to juvenile justice is being considered. Efforts are underway to publish a simplified legal booklet.

D. Indigenous persons

85. A mutually agreeable framework for the implementation of the judgment in the Cal case is still pending. While communications between the parties continue, a consensus on the matter has not yet been reached. There is an ongoing litigation in the Court concerning the nomenclature "indigenous" as it relates to Mopan and Ketchi peoples living in southern Belize. GoB will obviously be guided by the Court's determination of the issue.

E. Good governance

86. Belize is a State Party to the *Inter American Convention against Corruption* since 1996, and has subjected itself to the Convention's peer review mechanism to improve implementation of the Convention.

87. Through Belize's participation in the *Inter-American Convention against Corruption*, a Plan of Action was developed by the Attorney General Ministry with the support of the OAS to address the weaknesses in the legal and administrative framework to support ethical behavior by public officials.

88. Free and fair national elections were held in 2012 which resulted in the governing United Democratic Party's return to power for a second consecutive term. There were four election petitions in respect to complaints of election irregularities. The cases were filed in the Supreme Court and were all properly dealt with by the Judiciary. Free and fair Village Council Elections were also held in May 2013.

89. The Integrity Commission, which is responsible for the implementation of the *Prevention of Corruption in Public Life Act*, has not been active for quite some time. Nonetheless, GoB undertook several studies to identify the public financial management reforms needed to strengthen accountability and effectiveness. In this regard, two important pieces of legislation were passed. The first is Statutory Instrument 95 of 2010, *Fiscal Transparency and Regulations* which aims to "enhance fiscal transparency and accountability in the conduct of its affairs" and provides a framework for sound fiscal discipline and public scrutiny of fiscal policy and performance at all levels. The new regulations became effective April 1, 2013.

90. The second important piece of legislation to strengthen the Governance Framework was the *Finance and Audit (Reform) (Amendment Act, 2010)*. The amendments provide for a number of positive elements: the provision of sanctions for violations of the Act;

enhanced transparency in the tendering process for the Government procurement and sale contracts; enlargement of the regulation-making power of the Minister in the interest of expediency; and restoration of the Financial Orders and Stores Orders to their original status as subsidiary legislation. There was also the reinstatement of the main Tender Committee in the Ministry of Finance which serves as a final vetting of the procurement recommendations made by other government ministries.

91. In addition to those important legislative changes, a *Government Procurement Handbook* has been drafted and it is hoped that it will obtain executive clearance by the end of 2013. The Ministry of Finance is also working on establishing a portal that would allow public access to procurement laws, rules, regulations and tendering advertisements. It is anticipated that this portal will be ready for public accessing by the end of 2013 and this will be a step towards greater transparency relating to government procurement.

F. Education

92. GoB recognizes that education plays a critical role in the social and economic development of our people. GoB's commitment to education is strong as manifested in actual education expenditure, which as a proportion of total recurrent expenditure exceeds 22%. Over the last nine years education's share of the budget has risen and remained constant at 26% with an annual real growth rate of six percent. Education expenditure represents approximately 6% of GDP.

93. Despite the relatively high investments in education, challenges persist and the *Education Strategy, 2012* speaks to the need to "do things differently" in order to align increased outputs and outcomes with the relatively high rate of investment in education.²⁵ The development of the *Strategy* itself is a concerted policy response to address some of the associated challenges of access, quality and governance of education. The *Strategy* proposes three principal objectives to change the present condition: first, increase equitable access to all levels of education; second, to improve the quality and relevance of education at all levels; and third, strengthen governance throughout the sector with emphasis on increased accountability for student achievement.

94. One of the more pressing challenges of access to all levels of education is the level of enrolment (with the exception of primary education, which is compulsory).²⁶ Enrolment at preschool level is well below the regional average of 65%; only one in three children of three and four year old is enrolled in pre-school. Regarding primary school, the MDG goal of universal access shows promising progress of being achieved with a Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of 94%.²⁷

95. The desire to increase secondary enrolment has not yet been realized, though transition rates from primary to secondary have improved, reaching 89.2% in 2009/2010. The challenge remains in the need to increase enrolment in secondary education and to avoid high dropout and high repetition rates.²⁸ In addition, the gradual departure of boys from the education system poses a major challenge in Belize, the consequences of which are felt in terms of high levels of unemployment and rising crime rates.²⁹

96. Although there have been positive increases in tertiary education, overall participation remains low compared to regional averages. University enrolment continues to expand annually with females dominating enrolment, accounting for two-thirds of the total. Despite this progress, gross enrolment rates estimated at between 10% and 13% are at best, still less than half that of the regional average of 27%.

97. GoB's response includes core support aimed at addressing the fundamental challenges associated with access, quality, and governance of education. This includes the policy of providing free transport to offset private costs associated with distance,

particularly in Belize's rural areas.³⁰ There are a number of services provided by the Ministry of Education that support enrolment and attendance at both primary and secondary levels, including a free textbook scheme, and in the case of secondary students, a subsidy for eligible, low economic status students who are enrolled in the first two years of secondary school. This subsidy is given automatically to standard six students in the Stann Creek and Toledo districts. There are also several school feeding programmes.³¹

98. The secondary school financing reform is in its final stage of preparation. This seeks to achieve a more equitable distribution of public resources in the secondary school level. The focus is on incentives to reduce repetition and drop-out rates and to reduce the financial burden of fees paid by needy students through the introduction of a standardized fee structure.³²

99. With respect to improving the quality of education at all levels, several measures are proposed in the Education Strategy: increasing the number of appropriately certified teachers at all levels; improving school leadership and management for school effectiveness; and preparing a Teacher Education Programme to raise the quality of Belize's teaching profession.³³ In line with these goals, legislative changes were made to the Education and Training Act which came into effect in May 2010. The Revised Education and Training Act established the Teaching Service Commission to enforce "standards set by the Ministry for entry into teaching to assure the quality and status of the Belize teaching profession and the quality of the delivery of education".

G. Youths

100. The Department of Youth Services in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is GoB's Department which is responsible for coordinating and assisting in the development of programmes and initiatives that create an enabling environment for youth to be empowered and become productive individuals. To address the challenges faced by youths, the Department of Youth Services coordinated the *National Youth Development Policy, 2012*. This policy influenced the development of the *Strategic Plan 2012-2015* which has four programmatic pillars under which interventions for young people are characterized: first, Youth Governance and Leadership; second, Youth Enterprise and Skills Development; third, Behavior Modification and Violence Prevention; and fourth, Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness and Education.³⁴

101. Belize has a young population with 64% or 218,208 of its people being under 29 years of age and 28% or 96,915 between the ages of 15–29.³⁵ GoB recognizes that some of the challenges that face youth include low levels of education attainment, increased risk to involvement in criminal activity, high incidence of HIV, limited access to sexual and reproductive health care, reduced access to justice, and lack of unemployment opportunities. The SIB reported that the youth population (ages 14–24) registered the highest rate of unemployment at 30% or 11,559 young people, almost double the national unemployment rate of 16.1%.³⁶ GoB has adopted a multi-sectoral approach to address these challenges, employing a number of strategies and instruments for improving the opportunities available to young people and providing support for their development.

102. The *Youth Policy* notes that Belize is still struggling with low levels of completion rates for secondary and tertiary students and the substantial decline in levels of enrolment and sustained attendance through secondary school.³⁷ The challenge is to ensure increased enrolment in secondary education and to avoid high dropout and high repetition rates.

103. Closely linked to the foregoing is the "direct inverse relationship between education and violence."³⁸ National data shows that approximately 13% or 138 convicts are between the ages of 16–20, and the age group 21–25 represented the highest number of convictions,

with 19% or 209 prisoners.³⁹ Of persons charged but not convicted, the youth representation is even higher with the age groups 16–20 and 21–25 recording the highest number of persons on remand, comprising 25% and 24% respectively, or 376 and 363 remanded youths.

104. GoB recognizes this challenge with respect to juveniles within the juvenile justice system. Currently, there are four centers that provide specialized institutionalized care to youth. The Community Rehabilitation Department (CRD) manages juvenile cases and provides community counseling services to families in crisis. The Youth Hostel serves as a residential facility for children who are at-risk, children with uncontrollable behavior and children who have committed minor criminal offenses between the ages of 12–14.⁴⁰ The Hostel seeks to rehabilitate and re-integrate children within their families and communities. There are 47 juveniles at the Facility, with 28 girls and 19 boys.

105. The Wagner’s Facility serves as a correctional facility for juveniles who are convicted and are on remand. The offenses for which they are being held include murder, attempted murder, robbery, theft, burglary, aggravated assault, drug trafficking, handling stolen goods and illegal entry. The Wagner’s Facility houses 67 persons, with 17 year olds comprising the largest number of juveniles at the facility at 52% or 35 youths, followed by 18 year olds at 22% or 15 persons.

106. The National Youth Cadet Service Corps (NYCSC) is a ten month residential programme catering for youths who have dropped out of school and have chronic behavioral problems. It is a voluntary alternative programme which focuses on specific behavior modification while encouraging youths to complete a literacy and vocational programme. Currently, there are 57 youths in the Cadet Corps.

107. In November 2012, a policy decision was made to activate *Section 18 of the Crime Control and Criminal Justice Act, 102 of the Revised Laws of Belize*, which provides for “sentencing of youths, under the age of 21, to corrective training.” This corrective training would apply where a youth under 21 is “convicted of the offence of loitering or any other misdemeanor or petty offence” or “has been convicted on at least one previous occasion of the same or any other petty misdemeanor or petty offence”. A youth can be sentenced to this Facility if “he is not employed or in a school or other educational institution” or the Court feels that “it is expedient with a view to his reformation and the prevention of crime that he should receive training of a corrective character.” The sentencing can last up to four years and the facility is expected to be operational very soon.

108. The National 4H Youth Development Centre is a semi-residential facility under the Department of Youth Services, targeting youth, male and female, who are out-of-school or unemployed between the ages of 13–17 years. The National 4H Youth Development Centre is also a ten month programme that provides preparatory training for trainees into vocational institutions, such as the Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ITVET) countrywide. The Centre is unique in that it incorporates an agricultural-based component into its programme. Students also develop and master vocational skills through an incorporated literacy programme.

109. GoB sought to deal with the challenge of juvenile justice principally through a project called Community Action for Public Safety (CAPS) being implemented by the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation.⁴¹ The objective of CAPS is to contribute to the reduction of youth involvement in major violent crimes in Belize City in a number of ways: first, by reducing youth involvement in criminal activities and youth violent behavior in the schools which are beneficiary of the programme resources; second, by reducing recidivism among youth in the intervened juvenile rehabilitation institutions; and third, by enhancing GoB’s capacity to formulate and implement evidence-based policies on public safety.

VI. Technical assistance

A. Capacity building

110. To strengthen understanding of human rights and the practical application thereof, ongoing human rights education is necessary in both the public and private sectors. GoB has identified the need for further capacity building at the technical and policy levels in all branches of government to infuse a rights-based approach into the decision making and planning processes and especially for frontline agencies to better prevent abuses, or identify and address the needs of victims of human rights abuses.

B. Technical assistance

111. Consideration continues to be given to the establishment of a national Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in line with the Paris Principle. Resource constraints do not, however, make it feasible, practicable or sustainable at this time.

112. Belize is in need of technical assistance in several areas including human rights education, human rights monitoring and reporting. A sustained and effective human rights education campaign that is accessible to all Belizeans could be developed and implemented with technical and financial assistance.

113. Belize has requested technical assistance in preparing its national reports for various human rights treaties. While support has been obtained in some areas, no meaningful international support was available during the preparation of this Report.

114. In order to better monitor the impact of the measures in place for the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, Belize would benefit from assistance in implementing an appropriate and manageable system of timely data collection.

Annex

List of Substantive Legislation to protect the fundamental human rights and freedoms of individuals in Belize

<i>Name of Act</i>	<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Name of Act</i>	<i>Chapter</i>
Interpretation Act	1	School Teachers Pensions A	42
Belize Constitution	4	Social Security Act	44
Ombudsman	5	Social Service Agencies Act	45
Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act	13	Village Councils Act	88
United Nations Resolutions and Convention (Enforcement)	24	Court of Appeal Act	90
Pensions Act	30	Supreme Court of Judicature	91
Widows' and Children's Pensions	32	Family Courts	93
Education Act	36	Evidence Act	95
Public Health Act	40	Indictable Procedure Act	96
Criminal Code	101	Protection Against Sexual Harassment	107
Juvenile Offenders	119	Probation of Offenders	120
Genocide Defence Act	110	Certified Institutions (Children's Reformation)	121
Prisons Act	139	Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Act	150
Immigration Act	156	Belizean Nationality Act	161
Refugees Act	165	Married Persons (Protection) Act	175
Families and Children Act	173	Married Women's Property Act	176
Marriage Act	174	International Child Abduction	177
Domestic Violence	178	Administration of Estates	197
Wills Act	203	Labour Act	297
Trade Disputes (Arbitration and Inquiry)	299	Trade Unions	300
Wages Council Act	302	Workmen's Compensation Act	303
International Labor Organization Convention Act	304	Belize Red Cross Society Act	309

Non-Governmental Organizations	315	General Registry	327
Penal System Reform (Alternative Sentences) Act	102	National Institution of Culture and History	331
Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act		Prevention of Corruption Act	105
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Prohibition) Act		Juries (Amendment) Act 2011	128
Evidence (Amendment) Act 2012	95	Finance and Audit (Reform) (Amendment Act, 2010)	15

Notes

- ¹ Most countries of the Caribbean and Central America, including Belize, have experienced net outward migration in the last 30 years. Yet Belize has also experienced high levels of gross inward migration since independence. Belizeans may have migrated, in other words, but at the same time many others have come to Belize to take their place. “The Economic History of Belize: From the 17th Century to Post-Independence.” Barbara Bulmer-Thomas & Victor Bulmer-Thomas. April, 2012.
- ² 2010 Population & Housing Census, Belize. Statistical Institute of Belize.
- ³ In the Budget Presentation Speech for 2013/2014, the PM Barrow said “At the close of 2012, overall outstanding external public debt stood at US \$1,0178.8 million, more than half of this amount being the Super Bond. Domestic public debt stood at BZD \$417.2 million for a total public debt of BZD \$2,452.8 million or approximately 77.6% of GDP. If for the remainder of this decade, as was the case in FY 2012/2013, GoB’s net financing requirement remains neutral in relation to the overall public debt, then even with a modest 2.5% annual GDP growth, Belize’s ratio of public debt to GDP would fall beneath the 60% level considered eminently acceptable by international standards.
- ⁴ 2009 Belize Country Poverty Assessment. August, 2012.
- ⁵ Situation Analysis of Older Persons. Belize, 2010.
- ⁶ This decreasing trend also reflects better data collection and processing, and elimination of duplication. The reported new number of cases in 2008 was 425, in 2009 was 365, in 2010 was 244, in 2011 was 226 and in 2012, there was a slight increase to 249 cases. Source: Ministry of Health, Belize
- ⁷ Of particular relevance is the increasing number of males that are affected with a widening of the gap when compared to the female population. Source: Ministry of Health, Data, 2012.
- ⁸ PowerPoint Presentation - Ministry of Health.
- ⁹ A Situational Analysis of Gender and Politics in Belize. December, 2012.
- ¹⁰ Statement of Purpose “Protocols for Multi-Sectoral Response to Sexual Violence”.
- ¹¹ This summary is based upon: Report: Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Linkages in Belize, Belize, ISIS Enterprises and UNFPA, May 2010.
- ¹² Under the Mesoamerica Health Initiative, tubal ligation and vasectomy will also be made available upon request.
- ¹³ The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents 2004-2015. Belize, 2004.
- ¹⁴ National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents 2004-2009. Monitoring Report: September, 2010.
- ¹⁵ Belize is a signatory to the ILO convention 138 and in 1999 passed the International Labour Office Conventions Acts to pass all ILO Conventions ratified by Belize into Law in Belize. The Situational Analysis of Children and Women in Belize 2011 – An ecological review page 103 Compliance of Laws and Policies with CRC.
- ¹⁶ The Mercy Clinic was contracted as an NHI provider in 2009 and caters solely for the health care needs of the elderly.
- ¹⁷ According to the Poverty Assessment 2009, there were 25,390 all poor households, making up a population of 136,640 persons.
- ¹⁸ Belize Scorecard and Outlook Report, 2010. Millennium Development Goals.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. Page 62. These increases have affected urban and rural areas alike, but poverty (especially severe poverty) remains substantially higher in rural areas. The changes at district level have been much more varied. All districts except Toledo have experienced increases in poverty and indigence due to the above factors, from which Toledo has remained to some degree immune as a result of its low connectivity to the mainstream economy. The level of severe poverty in Toledo, however, remains far higher than in the rest of the country.
- ²⁰ The Mesoamerica Health Project is valued at BZD \$3 million. Although Toledo shows the highest rate of rural poverty, slightly above Corozal, trends in the evolution of the poverty rate demonstrate that the situation in Toledo has improved dramatically between 2002 and 2009, while to the contrary, it has deteriorated in all other districts, most notably in Corozal, Orange Walk and Cayo, respectively.
- ²¹ The Project contains the following components: first, infrastructure, comprising drainage works for primary, secondary and tertiary drainage systems, sewage disposable systems, land filling and landscaping, and improvement of roads, streets and housing facilities; second, education, training and

- social development, comprising textbook rental schemes, school nutritional programmes, entrepreneurial and small business support, employment access and training programmes; and third, institutional support, comprising operational expenses for a project implementation unit to manage the project implementation, supervision and inspection of works.
- ²² Established in memory of Jasmine Lowe, a 13 year old girl who was abducted/kidnapped and brutally murdered. The goal of Jasmine Alert is to instantly galvanize the entire community to assist in the search for and the safe recovery of the child.
- ²³ The Office of the DPP will also, in July 2013, assign a Senior Crown Counsel with the sole responsibility of looking after the training needs of the police in so far as the work of both Departments is affected. This is so as to ensure that police officers are kept abreast with changes in the law that impact on their work and with new techniques and requirements on a regular basis.
- ²⁴ In 2011, an additional Judge was appointed to assist in the hearing of criminal cases at the Supreme Court. The objective was primarily to increase the number of cases being heard and in so doing reduce the backlog of pending cases. In addition, on many occasions judges who are primarily assigned to the civil jurisdiction of the Court would be reassigned (temporarily) to the criminal jurisdiction. This too was done in an effort to reduce the back log of criminal matters. Currently, the Chief Justice sits in both the civil and criminal jurisdiction which assists to expedite hearings and reduce back log.
- ²⁵ The *Long Term National Development Framework for Belize 2010-2030* has education as one of the 2 main pillars for Belize's long term development and it calls for a "fundamental change in order to see education as a basic human right." The importance of education is visibly impressed on policy makers across the spectrum, as reflected in other core policy documents, for example, *The National Security Strategy of Belize*, *RESTORE Belize Draft Strategic Plan*, and the *National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan 2009-2013* (NPEASP). Like the NPESASP, most of these policy documents acknowledge the "clear link between levels of educational attainment and poverty [and that] increasing access to adequate education is, therefore, a priority for poverty reduction."
- ²⁶ The link between education and poverty was seen in the *Country Poverty Assessment, 2010* which showed that among indigent households, only 12% of heads of family had a secondary or post-secondary education compared with 35% for heads of households nationally.
- ²⁷ The 2010 Census data from the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) estimates that the total number of children who are not enrolled in primary school is 2,235.
- ²⁸ According to Official Statistics from the Ministry of Education, in 2010-2011 the dropout rate for secondary school was 8.1% and the repetition rate was 7%. For primary school, for the same period, dropout rate was 0.6% and repetition was 6.8%.
- ²⁹ Even in programmes that traditionally tend to be male dominated such as business and natural science, girls outnumber boys. *"Improving access, quality and governance of education in Belize."* Education Sector Strategy: 2011-2016, p. 24.
- ³⁰ According to the Education Strategy, pre-primary children in rural areas generally have far less opportunity to attend pre-school than their urban counterparts. For primary education, 75% of children not enrolled in school are in the rural areas. With respect to secondary school, the young people in the rural areas of Toledo, Stann Creek and Orange Walk are the least well served, whilst all urban areas other than Corozal are better served than any rural area. Regarding higher education, enrolment favors the urban areas where the majority of colleges are situated. Rural students are disadvantaged in having to find both transport and accommodation costs if they attend urban colleges away from their home.
- ³¹ Three schools are recent beneficiaries under the School Feeding Programme: Belize River Valley, Dangriga Town and South Side Belize City.
- ³² One element of the fee structure that is being considered is the identification through a Proxy Means Test of students who are most vulnerable in regard to the capacity to pay fees for secondary education with a view to implementing a fee waiver system for such students.
- ³³ The CDB is supporting GoB with its education sector reform based on the Belize Education Sector Strategy, valued at USD \$2.5 million. The Project seeks to enhance learning outcomes across all levels of the education sector. The ultimate impact will be enhancement of the human capital in Belize and poverty reduction. It focuses on 3 key policy objectives: first, strengthened governance of the sector; second, improved quality and relevance of education; and third, increased equitable access.
- ³⁴ Regarding Pillar 1, the Department hosts annual leadership exchanges, youth leadership workshops

and camps and supports the development of youth governance structures in an effort to build youth participation and capacity in decision-making. Work is underway to establish the National Youth Council in which it is anticipated that the youths on the Council would undertake programmes at the Community Level and support the work of the Department through the youth empowerment coordinators, who are found in each district. With respect to pillar 2, entrepreneurial and job preparedness training, business fairs and mixers, and the job placement services are a few of the activities that are supported alongside a coordinated approach with other youth stakeholders that support youth enterprise in Belize. This includes an entrepreneur training programme aimed at rural youths done in Ketchi, Spanish and English in 2012-2013. The Department is currently seeking to integrate this programme as part of its regular activities related to this pillar. Regarding Pillar 3, the Department works with at-risk youth, in-and-out-of-school youths in providing alternative programmes to support life skills development and create better awareness of factors that affect a healthy transition to adulthood. An Alternative to Suspension Programme reaches the in-school youth on the verge of suspension and expulsion and helps to catch these youths before they drop out. The Ministry of Education also has an Apprenticeship Programme of which two of three cohorts have already completed. The Programme seeks to provide life skill training, job placement and monitoring. There is also a 2 year programme aimed at at-risk young men, called South Side Youth Success Project that is funded by CARSI and UNDP. This programme has a cohort of 25 at-risk young men who go through a 3 month literacy programme, life skills training and have access to resources to assist them with social integration in society. The Ministry will assume ownership of this programme in October 2013. Other initiatives in the pipeline include partnering with tourism to develop a more structured apprenticeship programme. Regarding Pillar 4, behavior modification is also promoted along the lines of Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness and Education Workshop in an effort to improve sexual behavioral practices and decrease incidence rate of persons living with HIV and AIDS in Belize.

³⁵ Statistical Institute of Belize: 2012 Belize Mid-Year Population Estimates. Population estimate is 340,397.

³⁶ Statistical Institute of Belize: 2012 Labour Force Survey.

³⁷ Almost complete enrollment is reported for primary education. Gross enrollment of 95.1% and a net enrollment rate of 83.7%. For secondary education, in 2011/12, there was a net enrollment rate of 50.4% and gross enrollment rate of 65.1% which is a decline in young people's representation within the formal education system.

³⁸ Restore Belize Strategic Plan 2011-2015, p. 29.

³⁹ 32% of all charges were "other offenses" while 22% were for dangerous drugs, representing the second highest area of convictions.

⁴⁰ Increasing pressure has resulted in the use of the facility as a detention and remand center.

⁴¹ An IDB loan valued at USD \$5 million.