



UNITED  
NATIONS  
BELIZE



# Common Country Analysis 2022 UPDATE



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# Acronyms

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>BOOST</b>	Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation
<b>CARICOM</b>	Caribbean Community and Common Market
<b>CBB</b>	Central Bank of Belize
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CCCCC</b>	Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
<b>CCPR-OP2-DP</b>	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>CDB</b>	Caribbean Development Bank
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CESCR-OP</b>	Optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>CPA</b>	Country Poverty Assessment
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CRC-OP-IC</b>	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CRPD-OP</b>	Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
<b>DCO</b>	UN Development Cooperation Office
<b>DESA</b>	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>EOB</b>	Equal Opportunities Bill
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>GAP</b>	Government Accountability Project
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas
<b>GOB</b>	Government of Belize
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>HRCB</b>	Human Rights Commission of Belize
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>ICPD</b>	International Conference on Population and Development
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave No One behind
<b>LPG</b>	Liquified Petroleum Gas
<b>MEA</b>	Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements
<b>MF</b>	Mutual Fund
<b>MICS</b>	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

<b>MPI</b>	Multi-dimensional Poverty Index
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>MSDCF</b>	Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>NAC</b>	National AIDS Commission
<b>NHI</b>	National Health Insurance
<b>NBSAP</b>	National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan
<b>NCCPSAP</b>	National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan
<b>NCFC</b>	National Committee for Families and Children
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions
<b>NEMO</b>	National Emergency Management Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institution
<b>NWC</b>	National Women’s Commission
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commission for Human Rights
<b>OPHI</b>	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
<b>PAHO/WHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization
<b>PC</b>	Protected Characteristic
<b>PET</b>	Polyethylene terephthalate
<b>POC</b>	Persons of Concern
<b>SCP</b>	Sustainable Production & Consumption
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SERP</b>	United Nations Socioeconomic Response and Recovery Plan
<b>SIB</b>	Statistical Institute of Belize
<b>SMART</b>	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
<b>SOC</b>	Soil Organic Carbon
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS
<b>UN-HABITAT</b>	United Nations Human Settlement Program
<b>UNCAC</b>	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Program
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>UNIBAM</b>	United Belize Advocacy Movement
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WINS</b>	Wash in Schools
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WTTC</b>	World Travel & Tourism Council



# United Nations Country Team in Belize

<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PAHO/WHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Education, Scientific & Cultural Organization
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UN WOMEN</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme



UNITED NATIONS BELIZE



# Foreword



**Raul Salazar**

Resident Coordinator United Nations in Belize

**The Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Belize is an independent and participatory assessment conducted by the United Nations System to analyse the country's development challenges, risks and opportunities, serving as a foundation for coordinated and informed technical assistance aligned with national priorities.** This document presents a regular annual update of the CCA by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) to take note of the potential contextual changes that should be considered within the implementation of the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF) 2022-2026

The previous CCA was completed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021. Since then, Belize's economy has rebounded exponentially through growth in tourism, foreign direct investment (FDI) in business process

outsourcing, the reopening of the Corozal Free Zone and growth in agriculture. Economic growth for 2021 and 2022 was recorded at 15.2% and 12.15% respectively, allowing for full recovery to pre-pandemic level during 2021. Other key macro variables have also shown major improvement with public debt/GDP declining from 101% to 64%, while unemployment decreasing from 13.7% to 2.8% during the period 2020-2023.

Double-digit growth of the economy allowed Belize to invest resources and implement policies (strengthening of the Judiciary, significant increase in the minimum wage, land distribution, more targeted assistance to the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) population with increased access to low-income housing, education and extension of the National Health Insurance) in addressing the high-income poverty (52%) and high Gini income inequality index (0.49) facing the country pre-COVID19 (2019). A multidimensional poverty index based on factors of standard of living, health, education, and employment with 17 deprivations was prepared for 2021 by the Statistical Institute of Belize. The components of the index indicated a household head poverty count of 35.7% with average deprivation of household heads being 39.1%.

Negative shocks experienced by the country included the break of the Ukraine-Russia war, which resulted in inflation snowballing from 0.1% to 6.3% and affecting those most in need and the LNOB population. Other shocks included the impact of Hurricane Lisa during

the first week of November 2022. The damage from hurricane Lisa amounted to US\$96.85 million (4% of GDP), while the macro-impact was estimated to be around 0.4%. These shocks have amplified known vulnerabilities and SDG challenges facing Belize.

The progress on the 2030 Agenda is reflected as follows:

**SDGs on track** includes: 6 (Water), 7 (Energy) and 13 (Climate Action). **SDGs still facing challenges** in meeting the 2030 Agenda include the majority: 4 (Education), 5 (Gender), 8 (Growth/Employment), 12 (Consumption and Production), 15 (Life on Land), 16 (Peace and Justice) and 17 (Partnership). **SDGs facing significant challenges** include 3 (Health), 9 (Industry and Infrastructure), and 11 (Cities and Communities). **SDGs being left the furthest** behind include: 1 (Poverty), 2 (Hunger), and 10 (Inequality). This situation presents critical and complex challenges that Belize faces in its road towards the 2030 Agenda, as turning this trend requires addressing long-term structural root causes while having short to medium-term support for the LNOB population to ensure sustainable development. Henceforth, further efforts will be required to accelerate sustainable growth and to build a inclusive and just society with efficient institutions and a peaceful Belizean society.

In early 2023, the Government of Belize launched its Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026. The five main pillars of the strategy are: Poverty Reduction, Economic Transformation/ Growth, Trade Deficit Reduction, Citizen Security, Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources, and Good Governance. However, the overarching focus of the plan is to decrease income poverty by 50% by 2032. Plan Belize and the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF) 2022–2026 are consistent with each

other, and thus, we expect that much SDG progress should be made in the coming years of Belize’s development journey.

With “Leave No One behind” being the underlying principle of the 2030 Agenda and therefore of the MSDCF 2022-2026, an analysis was started of the population groups who have benefitted least from all the rapid economic growth achieved. Nonetheless, the scope of data was limited to some variables on standard of living, health, education, and employment at the district level and by ethnic groups. Disaggregated data collection, availability and analysis must, therefore, be a central effort of our work to sharpen policies, resource distribution, and social investment.

Results of the survey indicate that the profile of those most left behind may be described as Mayan and East Indian, rural, and residing in the districts of Toledo, Cayo, and Stann Creek.

On another note, we commend that the Government of Belize has expressed its interest in further discussing the possibility of implementing an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) with respect to Climate Financing. This would not only greatly facilitate connecting all the dots that relate to climate financing for greater efficiency through improved coordination and synergy among stakeholders, the private sector, Government, Donors and IFIs, but also create a solid basis for achieving greater SDG progress and impact.

With this said, we encourage all to read this document that updates the CCA 2021 by looking at a snapshot of the current state of Belize’s development progress across the three dimensions of economic, social, and environmental sustainability, and may you make the most use of it.



# 1. Introduction

**The Common Country Analysis (CCA) is an evolving document that undergoes iterative updates to provide data and analysis for tracking SDG progress. It will inform adaptive support by the UN to Belize in the dynamic and challenging post-COVID-19 era, as well as the current global and national cost of living crisis being confronted.**

The CCA identifies actual and anticipated shifts in the national development landscape. This update serves as a public analysis by the UN for stakeholders and partners, and will aid the UN with identifying necessary course correction within the Cooperation Framework and its Theory of Change. It also equips the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) with essential information to engage the government and other relevant stakeholders in discussions, advocacy, and decision-making regarding pathways towards achieving 2030 Agenda.<sup>1 2</sup>

The CCA is an analytical function of the UNCT, executed by the Programme Management Team (PMT) and inter-agency groups. The decision to revise the CCA was based on the recognition that the previous edition had been published in September 2021, highlighting the need to report on substantial developments that have occurred since then. The update process focuses on the following factors:

- Significant contextual changes in the four dimensions of the MSDCF 2022–2026:
  1. Economic resilience and shared prosperity;
  2. Equality, well-being, and leaving no one behind;
  3. Resilience to climate change, shocks, and sustainable natural resource management;
  4. Peace, safety, justice and the rule of law.
- Data updates with infographics and accompanying narratives
- Notable changes in the country relative to COVID-19 impacts and recovery, shifts in the financial landscape influencing the understanding of Belize’s development context, and consequently, the Cooperation Framework’s Theory of Change.
- New legal, policy, and regulatory changes, and their medium to long-term impacts on achieving the 2030 Agenda and LNOB goals.

The core objective of the CCA is to establish a foundation for programming among all the UN Agencies, Funds & Programmes, and for addressing SDG targets that have stagnated or fallen behind, as determined through a comprehensive analysis of the National SDG environment.

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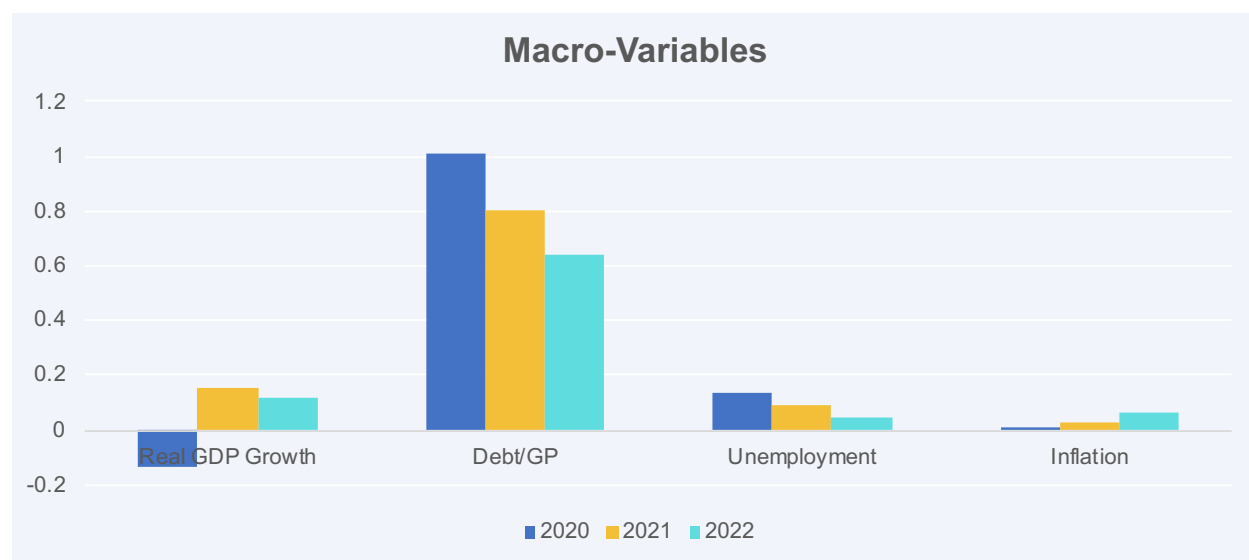
<sup>1</sup> Updating UN Common Country Analysis, Policy Guidance, 22 June 201, United Nations Development Coordination Office

<sup>2</sup> The CCA serves as the baseline for the MSDCF. It is the UN system’s independent, impartial and collective assessment and analysis of Belize’s socio-economic and developmental situation, progress gaps, opportunities and bottlenecks vis-à-vis Belize’s commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda. The CCA is the critical analytical foundation upon which the Cooperation Framework is developed and is an integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based joint UN analysis, prepared in such a way to be an up-to-date source of information on country context for the whole UN system to adjust UN programmatic actions and anticipated emerging issues.

## 2. Economic Update for 2021-2022

In 2021, a real GDP growth of 15.2% was realized. For 2022, growth was recorded at 12.1%, while 11.5% growth was achieved during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023. These achievements, enabled the Government to restore fiscal stability and reverse austerity measures (such as salary reduction and increment freeze for public officers) that had been implemented in 2021, while creating fiscal space for investment in greater social protection, initiating a program of low-cost housing, increasing the minimum wage, and making provision for greater access to education and health.

**Graph 1: Macro-Variables**

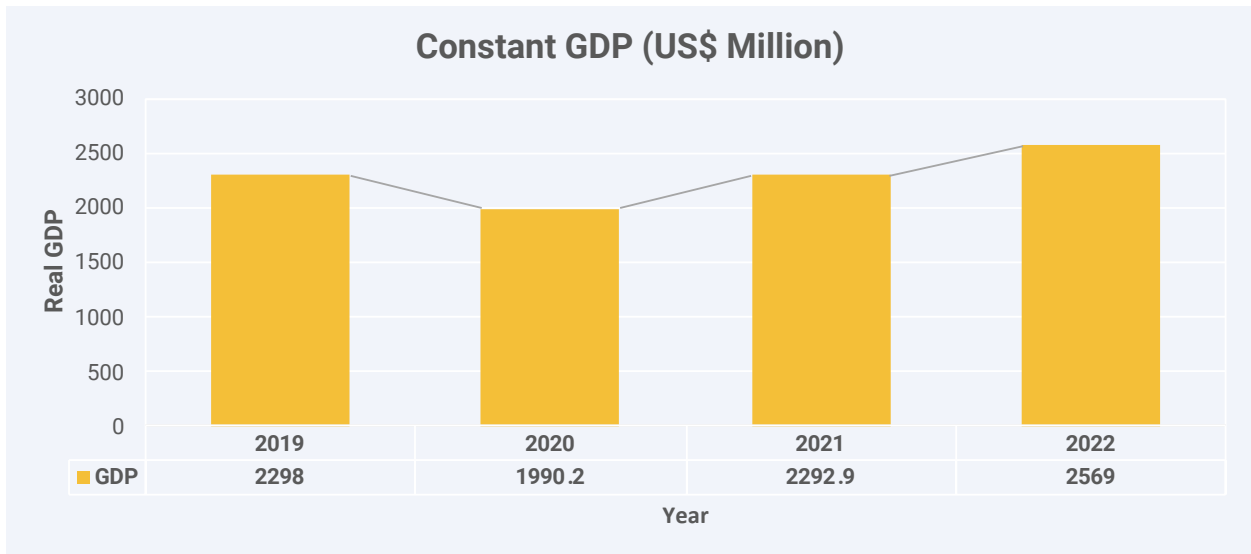


Source: <https://sib.org.bz/statistics/>

During 2021, growth recovery was driven by a 53% increase in tourism foreign exchange earnings, amounting to US\$140.3 million. Agricultural exports saw a rise of 9.4%, reaching US\$197 million. Additionally, the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector underwent rapid expansion and the Corozal Free Zone re-opened.

The cumulative impact of these growth factors resulted in a decline in unemployment from 13.7% in 2020 to 10.2% in 2021, with the labour force generating an additional 28,700 jobs. **By the end of 2021, Belize's economic output had effectively recovered at the macro-level, slightly exceeding the levels recorded prior to the pandemic in 2019.** By October 2022, unemployment rate had decreased to an unprecedented level of 5%. Furthermore, the unemployment rate for the first quarter of 2023 was reported at a historic low of 2.8%.

**Graph 2: Constant GDP**

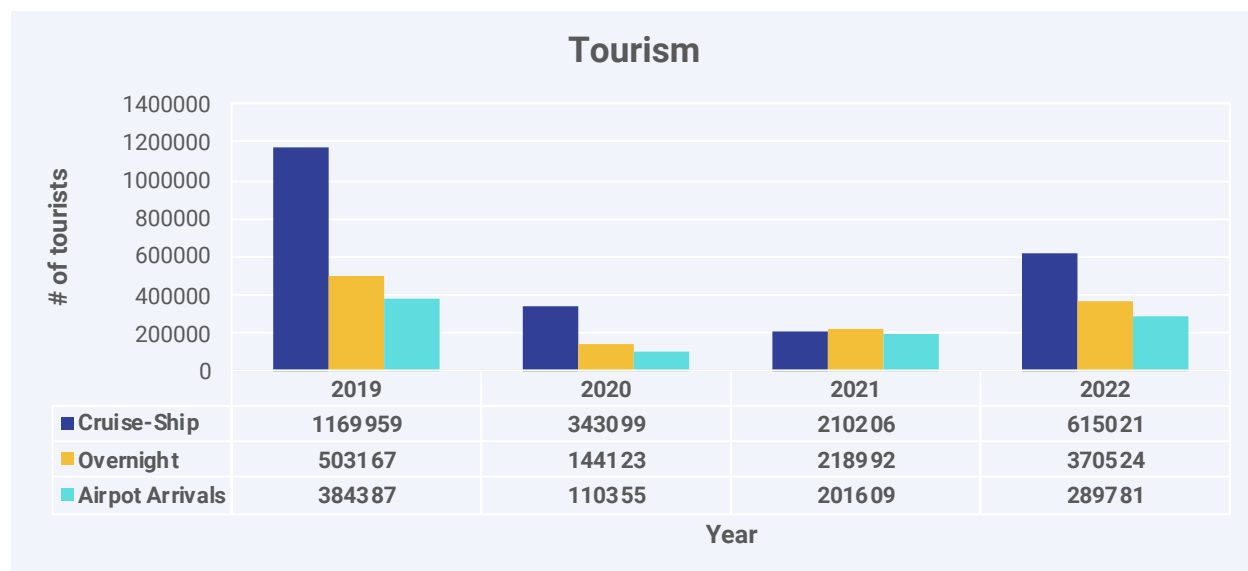


Source: <https://sib.org.bz/statistics/economic-statistics/>

The tourism sector continued to lead the recovery process in 2021, demonstrating a growth of 52%. This resurgence was driven by notable increase in stay-over arrivals, as airport arrivals surged by 83% compared to the previous year, despite the cruise-ship sector experiencing a decline of 39%.

The recovery process during 2022 was again guided by the tourism sector, showing growth rates of 69% and 193% respectively for overnight and cruise ship arrivals compared to 2021. The growth for 2022 allowed the sector to reach 74% and 53% of pre-COVID-19 overnight and cruise ship tourist levels, respectively. The full recovery of tourism in terms of visitors to pre-COVID-19 levels is expected to take place during 2023.

Graph 3: Tourism Sector



Source: <https://www.belize tourism board.org/belize-tourism/statistics/>

In early November 2022, Hurricane Lisa impacted growth through its effect on the productive, social, and infrastructure sectors. The assessment of damage (US\$65.5 million) and loss (US \$31.35 million) amounted to US\$ 96.85 million (4% of GDP), while recovery needs were estimated at around US\$106 million. The macro-economic impact is approximately 0.4%. (*Hurricane Lisa, Belize Sector Reports, Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, UNDP, March 2023*)

The consumer price index reflects a rising inflation rate over the period of 2021 and 2022 at 3.2% and 6.3%, respectively. Transport remained the single greatest contributor to the national inflation rate, accounting for almost half of the increase in the consumer price index. For example, in 2021 and 2022, the transport sector experienced inflation rates of 9.7% and 18.23%, respectively. Another significant contributor to inflation is Food and non-alcoholic beverages, with inflation rates of 4.8% and 7.8% for 2021 and 2022 respectively. For 2023, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is forecasting an annual inflation rate of around 4%, with a medium-term expectation of approximately 2%.

At the macro-level, the labour market has shown signs of recovery. By 2021, data on labour force size, employed persons, and unemployment had all returned to pre-COVID-19 levels, consistent with GDP growth. **However, labour force statistics indicate that growth benefits are being distributed highly unequally.** Those most affected by COVID-19 and the impact of the Russian-Ukraine War are more likely to end up in a worst-case scenario in terms of monthly income, purchasing power, lost assets, reduced investments in education and basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education, relative to the pre-COVID-19. The pre-COVID19 average monthly earnings per employee were not reached until 2022. The gender gap between males and



females has narrowed during the period 2019–2022, both in terms of unemployment gap (from 9.1% to 2.8%) and the monthly wage earnings gap (from US \$121 to US \$25) in 2022.

**Table 1: Labour Force**

Labour Force	2019	2020	2021	2022
Labour Force	190,000	168,630	191,881	191,728
Employed Persons	170,000	145,000	174,237	182,084
Unemployment:	10.40%	13.70%	9.20%	5%
Males	6.60%	11%	6.70%	4%
females	15.70%	17%	13%	6.80%
Monthly Income (US\$):	\$ 567	\$ 585	\$ 584	679
Males	\$ 615	\$ 588	\$ 558	691
Females	\$ 494	\$ 581	\$ 598	\$ 656
Real GDP/Capita (US\$)	\$ 5,594	\$ 4,722	\$ 5,301	\$ 5,768
Real GDP/employed person	\$ 13,478	\$ 13,681	\$ 13,160	\$ 14,091

Source: <https://sib.org.bz/publications/labour-force-survey-reports/>

The IMF notes that risk to financial stability remains elevated; non-performing loans (NPL) increased from 5% of gross loans (2021) to 7% in 2022 as COVID-19 forbearance measures expired. This needs to be monitored closely given that 2 of the 4 commercial banks report net losses for 2022. Annual financial statements indicate net profit of US\$4.2 million for the sector but two of the commercial banks report aggregate losses of US\$18 million.

**Graph 4: Banking Sector**



Source: [https://www.centralbank.org.bz/docs/default-source/3.7.1-domestic-bank-financials/domestic-banks-quarterly-publication-december-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=86695c6f\\_3](https://www.centralbank.org.bz/docs/default-source/3.7.1-domestic-bank-financials/domestic-banks-quarterly-publication-december-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=86695c6f_3)

External trade level during 2021 also approached its pre-COVID-19 level, with Belize trade imbalance increasing by US\$45 million (a 20% increase). The rise can be attributed to imports increasing by \$113 million, while exports only experienced a \$68 million increase. The gross official international reserve increased in absolute terms but declined relative to GDP, largely due to the double-digit growth in GDP.

**Table 2: Balance of Payments**

Balance of Payment (US \$'000,000)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Domestic Exports	\$ 197.0	\$ 207.0	\$ 183.7	\$ 219.0	\$ 242.5
Gross Imports (Net of CFZ)	\$ 795.7	\$ 821.0	\$ 678.2	\$ 909.5	\$ 1,164.7
<b>Trade Balance</b>	<b>-\$ 598.7</b>	<b>-\$ 614.0</b>	<b>-\$ 494.5</b>	<b>-\$ 690.5</b>	<b>-\$ 922.2</b>
Gross Official International Reserves	\$ 295.6	\$ 277.9	\$ 348.9	\$ 415.0	\$ 409.0
Monthly Import Coverage	3.6	3.2	5.2	4.6	4.3
<b>Public Debt (US' Millions)</b>					
Gob Domestic Debt	\$ 522.7	\$ 551.7	\$ 656.6	\$ 657.9	\$ 657.4
Gob External Debt	\$ 1,284.5	\$ 1,321.8	\$ 1,463.2	\$ 1,338.5	\$ 1,364.0
<b>Total Gob Debt</b>	<b>\$ 1,807.2</b>	<b>\$ 1,873.5</b>	<b>\$ 2,119.8</b>	<b>\$ 1,996.4</b>	<b>\$ 2,021.4</b>

Source: [https://www.centralbank.org.bz/home/statistics/general-statistics/major-economic-indicators-\(2001-2021\)](https://www.centralbank.org.bz/home/statistics/general-statistics/major-economic-indicators-(2001-2021)); [https://www.centralbank.org.bz/docs/default-source/1.1.1-apsss/monthly-economic-highlights-august-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=a1029c4a\\_3](https://www.centralbank.org.bz/docs/default-source/1.1.1-apsss/monthly-economic-highlights-august-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=a1029c4a_3); <https://sib.org.bz/press-release-2022-09/>; <https://sib.org.bz/statistics/economic-statistics/merchandise-trade/>

For 2022, the trade imbalance worsened due to imports outpacing exports. Gross import growth of 34% and 28% during 2021 and 2022 outpaced export growth of 19% and 11% during the same period. In 2022, import growth was driven by mineral fuel/ lubricants growing by 58%, machinery and transport equipment, which grew by 32%, and manufactured imports, which grew by 18.6%. Food and live animals represented 91% of Belize's total exports, reflecting its agriculture base. Official international reserves ended the year at 4.3 months of import coverage.

For the period 2020–2022, Government debt declined from 133% to 64% on account of several factors. Public Debt/GDP reduced from 133% to 101% primarily because of GDP rebasing (2014). It further decreased from 101% to 64% (2021–2022) due to GDP growth and debt reduction achieved through the Blue Bond Agreement with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a haircut of US\$250 million, as well as debt reduction with Government of Venezuela, amounting to US\$125 million. Nevertheless, public debt during this period reduced in absolute terms by only US\$98 million due to overall deficits and the need to finance amortization. However, the debt reduction facilitated by TNC/Credit Swiss and the Government of Venezuela enabled Belize to finance its COVID-19 recovery process in 2020 and 2021 without accumulating additional debt.

For fiscal year 2022/23, the government outperformed its submitted budget. Total revenue increased by US\$49.5 million (a 19% increase) relative to what was originally approved in April 2022. Recurrent expenditure decreased by \$16 million relative to what had been approved. This

revenue increase, together with expenditure containment, contributed to primary surplus increasing from 0.24% (projected) to 1.20% (actual) while financing needs decreased by US\$38 million. Factors contributing to higher revenues and lower expenditure also included double-digit growth in GDP, the targeting of tax collection leakages, significant external trade growth, and a rebound in tourism.<sup>3</sup> All this allowed the government to have greater fiscal space for investment in social protection and infrastructure, as well as for expanding the National Health Insurance to one more district (Orange Walk) during 2023.<sup>4</sup> However, an overall deficit is still being experienced, as a primary deficit of 2% or more is required to have a positive overall fiscal balance.

**Table 3: Government Finance**

Government of Belize	Actual	Actual	Approved	Projected	Submitted
Fiscal Year (US\$'000,000)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24
Tax Revenue (Recurrent)	453	546	611.3	660	686.4
Capital Revenue	8.2	2.3	2.9	4.2	2.8
Grants	15.4	19.4	17.5	15.7	15
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>476.6</b>	<b>567.7</b>	<b>631.7</b>	<b>679.9</b>	<b>704.2</b>
Recurrent Expenditure	470	469.6	544	516.4	556.5
Capital Expenditure	217.3	131.2	139.1	181	191.7
Total Expenditure	687.3	600.8	683.1	697.4	748.2
Recurrent Surplus (Deficit)	-17	76.4	67.3	143.6	129.9
Debt Service	34.2	32.2	56	52.7	56.3
<b>Primary Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>-176.5</b>	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>12.3</b>
As % of GDP	-10.74%	-0.06%	0.23%	1.20%	0.39%
<b>Overall Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>-210.7</b>	<b>-33.1</b>	<b>-51.4</b>	<b>-17.5</b>	<b>-44</b>
Amortization	-35.5	-32.5	-48.8	-44.2	-61.4
<b>Financing (Borrowing)</b>	<b>-246.2</b>	<b>-65.6</b>	<b>-100.2</b>	<b>-61.7</b>	<b>-105.4</b>

Source: <https://www.pressoffice.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Budget-Speech-for-FY-2022-2023.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> More than US\$250 million remained in uncollected taxes as of 2021 (Prime Minister Budget Speech March 2021)

<sup>4</sup> Now 5 districts being covered and only the Cayo district is still not being covered.

# 3. SDG progress

At a very aggregate level, the Sustainable Development Report 2022 as depicted in **Figure 1** reflects Belize’s SDG status in relation to the 17 SDGs for 2021.<sup>5</sup> This global assessment of Belize’s performance will be complemented with a more granular National SDG assessment.

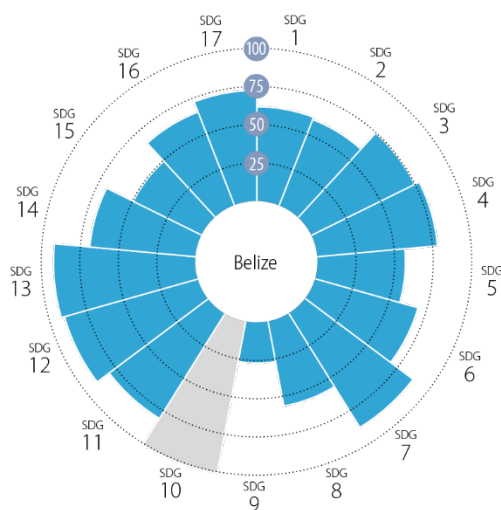
**Figure 1**



Note: The full title of each SDG is available here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/belize>

**Figure 2: Belize SDG Performance**



<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that this report is done annually by Cambridge University press, but it is not an official UN document. It is also important to note that these indicators were assessed during the time of the global COVID19 pandemic.



Source: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2022/2022-sustainable-development-report.pdf>

In terms of global comparison, Belize ranked below 99 countries with a score of 65.7. Belize also ranked below the regional average of 69.5. **Figure 2** illustrates Belize's performance for each of the SDGs. Average performance of 75% or above was achieved for the following SDGs: **SDG 3** Good Health and Wellbeing; **SDG 4** Quality Education; **SDG 7** Affordable and Clean Energy; **SDG 11** Sustainable Cities and Communities; **SDG 12** Responsible Consumption and Production; and **SDG 13** Climate Action. Performance with more than 50% but less than a 75% rating included **SDG 17** Partnerships, **SDG 16** Peace & Justice, **SDG 15** Life on Land, **SDG 14** Life Below Water, **SDG 8** Decent Work and Economic Growth, **SDG 6** Water, **SDG 5** Gender Equality, **SDG 1** No Poverty, and **SDG 2** No Hunger.<sup>6</sup> The worst performance rating was assigned to **SDG 9** Industry-Innovation and Infrastructure with a 25% performance.

## National SDG Assessment

The 2030 Agenda includes 17 SDGs which address the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and the underlying principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB). These goals are accompanied by 169 concrete targets, which are measured and monitored using 230 specific indicators.

The greatest challenge encountered during the national assessment has been the lack of readily available data. In cases where the data is accessible, it is often outdated, resulting in a lag of one or two years in most instances. In certain cases the lag is even greater.

A preliminary Assessment of Belize's SDGs Data Ecosystem, conducted by the Sustainable Development Unit of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, indicates that Belize has managed to submit data for 57 indicators (24%). The assessment also concludes that data for an additional 56 indicators (24%) could potentially be made available, but this requires resources and is currently pending.

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<sup>6</sup> No assessment was provided for SDG 10 Reduced Inequality. Based on the 2018 Poverty Survey, performance would be on the same par as "No Poverty"

## Equality & Well-being & Access to Social Protection/Social Services (SDGs 1 - 7)



### SDG 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

The SIB poverty study, using information collected from the 2018/2019 household budget survey, revealed that the annual General Poverty Line (GPL) was US\$3,980.50 (\$75.54/week), while the indigent line was US\$1,341 (US\$25.78/week). Of the total population, about 52% or 201,616 individuals were living in poverty. This is a significant increase compared to 2009 when 41%, or 136,640 persons, were living in poverty, indicating a worsening trend in income poverty. Among the poor population, about 9%, or 35,663 persons, were categorized as indigent, compared to almost 16%, or 52,185 individuals, in 2009. Additionally, 60% of children aged below 14 years old were found to be living in poverty. In 2018, about 11%, or 2,590 persons, were classified as vulnerable to poverty (Income Poverty Survey 2018/2019)

The Income Inequality, as measured by the Gini Coefficient, was estimated at 0.49 (Income Poverty Survey 2018/2019). This figure signifies a significant income inequality, approaching the threshold of severe income inequality. In contrast, income inequality in 2009 was estimated at 0.38%, indicating a worsening income distribution. It is essential to note that these poverty study results reflect data from 2018, which is just prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the UNICEF Belize Child Poverty study, the number of children living in monetary poor households increased to 65% in 2021. Before the onset of COVID-19, multidimensional poverty was already significant, with approximately 51% of children identified as multidimensionally poor (2015). Notably, multidimensional poverty increased between 2015 and 2021 in both Belize City Southside and Toledo. **In 2020, education was the main driver of multidimensional poverty.**

## SDG 1 progress

Indicator (5 out of 9 Indicators: 56%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
1.1.1) The proportion of the country's workers and their families living on less than 1.90 US dollars per person per day - UNSTAT	10.80%	13.40%	13.40%		↓
1.2.1) 1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age - SIB	52% (Income Poverty of 2018); 41% income poverty of 2009)				↓
1.2.2) Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions - SIB	13.9% MPI in 2021 (Incidence: 35.7% & Intensity" 39%) with a deprivation level of >=25%				●
1.3.b) Proportion of population covered by at least one social protection benefit (UNSTAT)		37.90%			●
1.3.e) Proportion of mothers with newborns receiving maternity cash benefit (UNSTAT)		19.90%			●
1.3.f). Proportion of population above statutory pensionable age receiving a pension (%) - UNSTAT		49.90%			●
1.3.g) Proportion of poor population receiving social assistance cash benefit - UNSTAT		7.40%			●
1.3.h). Proportion of vulnerable population receiving social assistance cash benefit - UNSTAT		4.60%			●
1.3.i) Proportion of employed population covered in the event of work injury, by sex (%) - UNSTAT		71.40%			●
<b>1.4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services (MPI)</b>					
1.4.1.a) Proportion of population using basic sanitation services, (%) - Unicef	90%	90.3%			→
1.4.1.b) Proportion of population using basic drinking water services (%) - Unicef	98%	98.4%			→
1.a.1) Proportion of total government spending on essential services, education (%)	25.35%	22.99%	24.74%	27.76%	↗
1.a.2) Proportion of total government spending on essential services, Health (%) (Min of Fin)		10.8%	13.8%	10.5%	→
1.a.3) Proportion of total government spending on essential services, Social Protection (%) (Proxy Mins of Human Dev, Rural Dev, Natural Resources) - Min. of Fin)		10.2%	5.4%	5.3%	→
<b>Major challenges remain ●</b>					

*Source: Ministry of Finance, Statistical Institute of Belize*

The Statistical Institute of Belize also conducted a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) household survey for 2021 (as part of the labour force survey September 2021), using four elements: health, education, living standards and employment (with 17 deprivations). A household was considered as poor if its deprivation level was  $\geq 25\%$ . The results of the MPI indicate an index of 0.139, with an incidence rate of 35.7%. This translates to 31,399 households or 133,516 persons living in multidimensional poverty, with an intensity rate of 39% being the average deprivation score of households. One of the advantages of the MPI is that it will be conducted annually, allowing for continuous monitoring of the deprivation levels associated poverty to facilitate targeted interventions.

The top eight most significant deprivation levels contributing to the MPI are:

1. Access to Internet
2. Improved Sanitation
3. Food Security
4. Asset Ownership
5. Over Crowding
6. Dependency
7. Informal Employment
8. Housing material

Toledo emerged as the district with the highest MPI, while the Belize district exhibited the lowest level. The Rural MPI (0.189) exceeded the Urban MPI (0.082). Regarding ethnicity, the Mayas had the highest MPI, while Garifunas and Creoles had the lowest MPI.

For Fiscal year 2023/2024, poverty is expected to continue to facing major challenges. Despite ongoing dialogues since 2020/2021 aimed at establishing a national social protection strategy for Belize, which includes responsiveness of systems and programs to disasters and other types of shocks; the Government’s Social Protection budget (Mins. of Human Development, Rural Development and Natural Resources) is projected to decline from 5.3% to 4.4% between fiscal years 2022 and 2023. With public debt (interest and principal payments) consuming 21.6% of Government’s budget, fiscal constraints will remain a significant obstacle to poverty reduction through social protection measures.



## **SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

Hunger is a major challenge. Surveys on COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihood Impact carried out during 2021 and 2022 by WFP and CARICOM indicate that COVID-19 and the inflationary impact triggered by the Ukraine-Russia War are having far reaching effects on the livelihoods and cost-of-living of the most vulnerable. High inflation resulting from the war is compounding the negative socio-economic repercussion caused by COVID-19. WFP notes that, based on their Food Security & Livelihoods survey in 2022, an estimated 51% of the Belizean population is food insecure, with 15% of survey respondents experiencing severe food insecurity and another 36% experiencing moderate food insecurity. Food insecurity is arising from the following factors, inter alia:

- ❑ *66% of respondents are facing disruptions to their livelihoods through job losses and/or reduced income.*
- ❑ *Food consumption and diets have deteriorated, with 65% of respondents skipping meals or eating less preferred foods, sometimes going an entire day without eating.*
- ❑ *People are increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods in smaller quantities than usual.*
- ❑ *Respondents compromising their future livelihoods by selling productive assets (48%), spending savings (80%), or reducing expenditures on health and education (55%) to meet their immediate needs.*
- ❑ *Differences in impacts are most pronounced when comparing income groups: households with reported below and well below average incomes show the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being and are at risk of falling further behind economically.*
- ❑ *Persons with disabilities and indigenous people are facing additional unique challenges due to the cost-of-living crisis. Both groups have highlighted that their mobility has decreased due to higher transport costs, severely restricting their access to health and other essential services when needed*



## SDG 2 Progress

Indicators (Based on 6 indicators: 43%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
2.1.1) Prevalence of undernourishment (%) - UNSTAT	6.80%	7.40%			↓
2.1.2) Prevalence of severe food insecurity (%) - UNSTAT	6.05	6.00%			→
2.1.3) Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (%) - UNSTAT	35.70%	42.30%			↓
2.2.1) Proportion of children moderately or severely stunted (%) - UNSTAT	13.70%	13.30%			→
2.2.2) Children moderately or severely overweight - Unicef/WHO	7% (2015)	8%			↓
2.a.1) Agriculture share of Government Expenditure (%):	1.48%	1.50%	1.58%	1.71%	↗
2.a.2) Agriculture orientation index for government expenditures	3.50%	3.64%	3.80%	5.35%	↑
2.a.3) Agriculture value added share of GDP (%)	8.64%	9.73%	8.54%	7.9% (9mths)	↓
2.a.5) Indicator of Food Price Anomalies (IFPA), by Consumer Food Price Index	0.60%	1.10%	4.80%	7.80%	↓
<b>Major challenges remain</b> ●					

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize

Nutrition faces a major challenge for 2023. With an 8% overweight rate for children under 5 years and a 13.3% stunting rate for children under 5 years. UNICEF profile (2020) on Belize notes that there is a need to implement measures to accelerate progress in these two indicators in order to align with SDG targets. Malnutrition is a multidimensional issue with several underlying factors, including poverty and exclusion.

Consequently, no single programme or project implemented in isolation will be sufficient to sustain a significant reduction in the rate of stunting. To improve child nutrition, there is a need to address its immediate determinants (diets and care), underlying determinants (food, practices, and services), and enabling determinants (resources, norms, and cultural beliefs) through key systems: social protection, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, as well as social and behavioural change.<sup>7</sup>



### SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

SDG 3 on Health faces **significant challenge**. Belize is committed to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and has been striving to strengthen its healthcare system towards this goal. The UHC essential service coverage index (SDG 3.8.1) for Belize has been increasing over time, with an estimated score of 67% in 2019 on a scale of 0 to 100, as set by WHO. Belize has progressively improved its performance on this indicator, with a significant increase from the score of 46% recorded in 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Communication from United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Leveraging Nutrition and Social Protection Programming to address Malnutrition and Poverty, including in Fragile and Humanitarian Contexts. New York: UNICEF, February 2023

In addition, according to the WHO Global Health Expenditure database, government health spending in Belize as a percentage of total health spending has steadily increased over the years, rising from 53.1% in 2005 to 71.8% in 2020. Conversely, out-of-pocket spending has decreased over this 15-year period, dropping from 32% in 2005 to 21.9% in 2020. This trend indicates that increased government investments in public health are, to some extent, reducing individuals' out-of-pocket expenditures, thereby alleviating some of the financial burdens associated with healthcare, especially for the poor.

Belize is in the process of implementing an integrated health service delivery network and developing a new model of care. Primary care services in the public sector are provided without out-of-pocket charges. Efforts are being made to strengthen the primary healthcare approach and improve health financing, including expanding coverage for primary care services under the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme. A Policy brief on fiscal space for the health sector, developed with the support from PAHO/WHO, has identified various resource mobilization options to support the expansion of the NHI.

The gradual expansion of the NHI to the entire country aims to increase access to diagnostics and treatment at the primary care level and reduce health inequalities, while advancing a performance-based financing model that encourages adherence to defined service quality standards by healthcare facilities. Effective April 1, 2023, NHI has been extended to all districts of the country except for the Cayo district (Western Zone).

However, Belize continues to face challenges in achieving health-related SDG targets. For example, in 2021, WHO reports that 6.2% of the population incurred health expenditures above 10% of the total expenditure or income, and 3.1% exceeded 25% of the total expenditure or income.

Belize's country profile (UNSTAT, DESA) indicates the following update for the country during the period 2019-2022:

- An increase in the infant mortality rate.
- A more than 50% increase in Maternal Mortality Rate.
- The absence of new-born health strategy to address new-born mortality, which contributes to 56% of infant mortality rate.
- A decline in Measles vaccination coverage.
- Improvement in the death rate due to traffic incidents.
- Reduction in adolescent birth rates.
- Reduction in new diagnoses of human immune-deficiency virus.
- Zero cases of malaria since 2018, making Belize Malaria-free certified.
- Belize life expectancy reached 74.9 years in 2021.
- Belize Human Development Index has been growing at a slower rate than both regional and global improvement in HDI.

As of December 1, 2022, after five waves of infections, Belize had reported 69,048 confirmed cases of COVID-19, resulting in 688 deaths. While the highest number of cases was observed among individuals aged 20-39 years, deaths were disproportionately concentrated among older persons in the 50-65+ age group. Most persons who succumbed to the virus had underlying

comorbidities such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and chronic renal failure. However, 254 deaths were reported in individuals with no known underlying comorbidities.<sup>8</sup>

Healthcare delivery was affected in various ways during the pandemic, as priority was placed on the fight against COVID-19. Visits to healthcare facilities decreased from 426,327 in 2019 to 291,197 in 2020, primarily due to COVID-19 measures or fears of becoming infected. This decline also reflected a decrease in the vaccination coverage in 2020. Vaccination coverage for BCG dropped from 95% in 2019 to 76%; DTP3 from 98% to 79%; MMR1 from 96% to 82%; and Polio 3 from 98% to 79%.<sup>9</sup> However, by end of 2022, with the gradual re-opening of health services at the primary healthcare facilities and enhanced community outreach services, the coverage for BCG, DTP3, and Polio 3 had all increased (92%, 84%, and 84%, respectively).<sup>10</sup>

In Belize, there were a total of 2,519 deaths in 2021, with the five leading causes being COVID-19 (360; 14.3%), diseases of the heart (358; 14.2%), malignant neoplasms (273; 10.8%), diabetes mellitus (165; 6.6%), and homicide (153; 6.1%)<sup>11</sup>. While the leading causes of death among females, apart from COVID-19, were all related to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), males were also significantly affected by homicide and unintentional injuries.<sup>12</sup>

According to the UNAIDS Spectrum estimates 2022, the number of people living with HIV for all ages in 2021 was 3,515 (CI 3,200– 3,700). Data from the Belize Health Information System reveals that among this population, 2,893 (82%) are aware of their HIV status, 1,561 (44%) are on anti-retroviral therapy (ART), and 790 (22%) have achieved suppressed viral load. Belize, therefore, still requires greater efforts to achieve its 90-90-90 targets. The HIV prevalence among adults is 1.1 (CI 1.0-1.2), with no difference between males and females.<sup>13</sup> However, the country is currently undergoing validation of its initiative to eliminate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis, which has shown significant progress in implementation and compliance with the validation requirements in recent years. Belize is also in the process of repealing sections 46A (1), (2), and 73A (1), (2), (3) of the Criminal Code Cap 101, of the 2020 Revision of Laws, which criminalized the non-disclosure, exposure, and transmission of HIV, including transmission of HIV from mother to child in the country. Furthermore, a bio-behavioural surveillance survey among men who have sex with men and transgender people is planned for 2023 to establish updated HIV epidemiological and response data to improve programming for key populations.

The incidence of TB has shown a decreasing trend, with a total of 62 new cases diagnosed in 2021 (21 females and 41 males), including 21% HIV co-infection. The tuberculosis mortality rate per 100,000 population decreased from 5.5 in 2013 to 0.7 in 2021 with only three TB-related deaths reported.<sup>14</sup>

In June 2023, the World Health Organization certified Belize as being malaria-free. Over the last three decades, Belize achieved a dramatic reduction in its malaria burden, from a peak of about 10,000 cases in 1994 to zero cases since December 2018.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: *Belize Health Information System and Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health and Wellness*

<sup>9</sup> <https://opendata.paho.org/en/core-indicators>

<sup>10</sup> <https://immunizationdata.who.int/pages/profiles/blz.html> and 2022 Electronic Joint Reporting Form for Belize.

<sup>11</sup> Abstract of Statistics. Statistical Institute of Belize. Source: Ministry of Health

<sup>12</sup> Sources: *Abstract of Statistics, Statistical Institute of Belize and Ministry of Health and Wellness*

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/belize>

<sup>14</sup> Source: *National Tuberculosis Program, BHIS, Epidemiology Unit, MoHW*

In terms of sexual and reproductive health, the UNFPA State of World Population Report 2022 indicates that in Belize, contraceptive prevalence rate is only 45%, with 71% of the demand satisfied with modern methods among women aged 15–49 (SDG indicator 3.7.1). Adolescent pregnancy remains a challenge, contributing to other harmful practices such as child marriage and early unions (SDG indicator 5.3.1), which stands at 34% (2020); 8% higher than the global average (26%) and 11% higher than the LAC average (23%).

Belize's population over 65 years has remained constant over the past 4 decades (4.5%-5%) but is forecasted to increase to 16.8% by 2060. This is expected to create a burden on the working-age population, particularly, as it relates to the national public and social security schemes given that Belize is experience declining fertility rate from more than 6 birth per woman during the 1960s to the current rate of 2, which compares with the world average of 2.3 (UNFPA, 2022).

According to the UNFPA State of World Population Report 2022, the life expectancy at birth for Belizeans is 72 (Male) and 78 (women) years. Global life expectancy reached 72.8 years in 2019; an increase of nearly 9 years since 1990. The fact that people are living longer and healthier lives than at any time in human history should be celebrated. It also underscores the need to establish mechanisms that promote healthy ageing, social protection, and demographic resilience.<sup>15</sup>

In Cairo in 1994, at the ICPD, governments agreed that the aim of any population policies should prioritize reproductive rights, choices, and sexual health of people, rather than achieving demographic targets. Therefore, fertility targets should not become goals in and of themselves; rather, very high- or low-fertility rates are often a symptom of widespread loss of bodily autonomy and reproductive choice. In 2010, the housing and population census report recommended the development of a population policy for Belize. With the world's population reaching 8 billion in November 2022, and the current availability of data from the 2022 census, Belize has another opportunity to plan for its population's future.

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<sup>15</sup> Demographic resilience describes the ability of a system to adapt to, anticipate, and thrive amid demographic changes.

## SDG 3 Progress

Indicators (Based on 9 indicators: 35%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
3.1.1) Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,00 live births) - UNICEF/WHO	86	130			↓
3.1.2) Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (%) - UNSTAT/WHO	95.30%	94.60%			→
3.2.1) Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) - UNSTAT/WHO	10.55%	12%			↓
3.2.1) Under-five mortality rate, by sex (deaths per 1,000 live births) - WHO	12.3	11.7			↗
3.2.2) Neonatal mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) - WHO	8.1	7.7			↗
3.3.1) Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex and age (per 1,000 uninfected)	0.54	0.53			↗
3.3.2) Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population		23			●
3.3.3) Malaria incidence per 1,000 population		0			↑
3.3.4) Hepatitis B incidence surface antigen prevalence among children under 5 years (%) (WHO)		0.60%			●
3.3.5) Number of people requiring interventions against requiring interventions against NTDs - WHO		2,785			●
3.4.1) Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease (probability)	16.50%				●
3.4.2) Suicide mortality rate, by sex (deaths per 100,000 population)	7.1				●
3.5.2) Alcohol consumption per capita (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year (litres of pure alcohol)	6.36				●
3.6.1) Death rate due to road traffic injuries, by sex (per 100,000 population)	22.6				●
3.7.1) Adolescent birth rate (per 1,000 women aged 15-19) - UNSTAT	58.2	55.4			↗
3.8.1) Universal health coverage (UHC) service coverage index	67				↗
proportion of population with health expenditures above 10% of total household expenditure or income	6.2% (2018)				●
the proportion of population with health expenditures above 25% of total household expenditure or income	3.1% (2018)				●
8.9.1.a) Age-standardized mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution - UNSTAT	43				●
8.9.1.b) Age-standardized mortality rate attributed to household air pollution - UNSTAT	22				●
8.9.1.c) age-standardized mortality rate attributed to ambient air pollution - UNSTAT	23				●
8.9.3) Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisonings, by sex (deaths per 100,000 population)	0.4				●
3.a.1) Age standardized prevalence of tobacco use among persons 15 years and older (%) - WHO	8.80%	8.50%			↗
3.b.1) Proportion of the target population with access to 3 doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP3) (%)	98%	79%			↓
3.b.2) Human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization coverage estimates among 15 years old girls (%) - WHO		11%			●
3.b.3) Proportion of the target population with access to measles-containing-vaccine second-dose (MCV2) (%)	95%	87%			↓
Medical doctors for every 10,000 persons in the population - UNSTAT	11.23	10.78			↓

**Significant Challenges remain** ●

Source: UNSTAT



## **SDG 4. Ensure inclusive & equitable quality education & promote lifelong learning opportunities**

SDG 4 on Education is a significant challenge. Income poverty data for 2018 indicates strong correlation between level of education attainment and income poverty. Households headed by individuals with no level of education completed had the highest poverty and indigent rates at 64% and 18%, respectively. On the contrary, households headed by persons with completed tertiary-level education had the lowest poverty and indigent rates at 12% and 1%, respectively.

This highlights the challenge facing the SDGs, as more than 51% of the labour force possesses just primary school level education or less. In 2021, the percentage with a tertiary level education was 21.6%, showing an increase over the past two years. Secondary education was reported at 25.8%, primary education at 38.2%, and those with no primary school accounted for 13.5%.<sup>16</sup> In addition, there are persistently low enrolments on Technical Vocational Education and Training (ITVET), the education path that contributes to the acquisition of competences to find decent work. According to Belize's Education Sector Plan 2021-2025, the ITVET system was designed to accommodate 1200 but had a total of 803 students in 2020, with only 171 young females compared to 632 young males.

Recent research on early brain and child development has revealed that modifiable factors in a child's early experience can greatly affect that child's learning trajectory. However, the current school readiness indicator is concerning, with MICS 2015 indicating that only 63.3% of children are school-ready at 4 years of age. Although the percentage of children aged 36-59 months attending an Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme in Belize increased from 32% in 2011 to 55% by 2015, disparities persist as preschool is still not mandatory, and only one in five of the poorest children currently attend ECE.

On the delivery of quality and inclusive education, only 86.0% of primary school teachers are adequately trained. There is inadequate performance in primary and secondary schools, with a high number of teachers not trained to teach in the level they are placed in and weak management/ coordination in the school system. Only 11% of teachers at the early childhood level are trained in early childhood. The remaining 89% lack the skills and competencies to effectively deliver the preschool and lower primary curriculum. This is even more prevalent in the rural areas where there is a larger population of indigenous boys and girls. Relatively high gross enrolment rates in specific districts provide, in part, a quality statement on primary education as adolescent boys and girls, who should be in a post-primary stage of the life cycle, are still in primary school. Limited support exists for children with disabilities and in the indigenous communities; and approximately 65% of children 1-14 experience violent discipline (MICS5).

The adequacy of training of instructors in TVET also needs to be improved. According to Belize's Education Sector Plan 2021-2025, most instructors hold an Associate's or a lower degree in the


<sup>16</sup> Migration Data analysed from the 2021 Labor Force Survey showed that 36.6% of the immigrant population had not completed any formal schooling, 34.3% had completed primary school only, 13.3% had completed up to secondary school, and 14% had completed up to tertiary school.



trade area they teach. Furthermore, a total of 37% of the ITVET instructors hold bachelor’s degrees in non-technical areas.

Despite receiving the highest portion of the Government’s overall budget for 2023/2024 at 18.9%, the environment for education remains significantly challenging. The pandemic has had a substantial impact on the participation rate of children in pre-primary or primary education (in the year prior to the official year entrance age for primary school), decreasing significantly from 84% in 2020 to 42% and 48% during 2021 and 2022, respectively. The adoption of the Belize Education Sector Strategy for the period 2021-2025 represents a step towards the commitment to provide free access to education from preschool to junior college.<sup>17</sup>

### SDG 4 Progress

Indicators (3 Indicators: 27%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
4.2.2.a) Participation rate of children in pre-primary or primary education in the year prior to the official entrance age for primary school - UNICEF	MICS 2015 (63%)	84.40%	42.50%	48.90%	↓
4.2.2.b) Gender parity index for participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age) - UNICEF	1.02%	0.98%	1.04%	1.07%	↗
4.b.1) Total official flows for scholarships (US\$)	411,010	209,180			↓
4.c.1) Proportion of primary school teachers who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching - UNICEF	82.27%	86%	87.70%	88.20%	↗
<b>Challenges remain</b>					

Source: UNSTAT

Skills and Lifelong Learning (LLL) are also of crucial importance for workers’ organisations, both as actors and as stakeholders. This is even more evident today as the world of work has been changing rapidly. In this transformation, jobs are being disrupted, certain job categories are disappearing, existing jobs are undergoing reshaping, while new jobs emerging. Therefore, in a world of work in constant transition, skills development and LLL are critical for all workers, whether they are currently active or unemployed, in the formal and grey (informal) economy. It is critical to ensure that no one is left behind, especially women, youth, persons with disabilities, workers in rural areas, migrants or refugees, and those engaged in non-standard forms of employment.

Skills and LLL are essential for enhancing all workers’ capabilities to fully participate in decent work, contribute to inclusive development and active citizenship, and strengthen democracy while promoting social justice. Skills and LLL systems need to be designed with the participation of workers’ organisations, ensuring that workers can acquire the skills of their choice to secure and maintain jobs, and to be equipped to navigate the transitions they will face throughout their working life.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Belize Education Sector Plan 2021-2025, page 33.

<sup>18</sup> The Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV)



## SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Good progress is being made with respect to SDG 5; however, **challenges persist**. Nevertheless, Belize still ranks 96<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries in the 2022 Global Gender Gap Index, and 21<sup>st</sup> out of 22 in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Data from the Labour Force Survey 2018-2022 shows the gender gap in terms of unemployment has narrowed from 9.1% to 2.8%, while the monthly wage gap has declined from 20% to 5.6%. Given that women, for example in the LFS 2021, worked 3 hours per week less than men (8.2%), this would mean that in terms of wages women have a positive wage gap. However, UNICEF highlights that for Belize, pattern of exclusion for girls and women are linked to factors such as age, place of residence, sex, gender (the LGBTQI+ community), health status (people living with HIV) and minority or marginalized status, including people with disabilities. These have serious implications for the rights and well-being of children and youths. For example, the October LFS 2022 by SIB, revealed that youths have the highest unemployment rate at 11.8%, with males at 8% and females at 17.8%, during a time when national unemployment was 5%.

Thus, the major gap for women and men remains the difference in their participation rate in the labour force, with men at 73.4% and women at 44.4%, resulting in a combined rate of 58.7%. Furthermore, the gap is even greater for the married population, with men at 80.4% and women at 39.3%. The main reason for married women not participating is due to domestic duties or caring for a child or elderly person. Persons with a tertiary level education had the highest participation levels at 80.5%, compared to those with only a primary level education at 48.5%. The Belize district had the highest rate of labour force participation at 64.7%, while the Toledo district had the lowest at 45.9%.

Another gender equality gap is in women’s political empowerment. According to the 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, Belize was rated at 0.075 for women’s political empowerment. Collectively, women parliamentarians account for 22% of the National Assembly, marking the highest number of women serving in parliament Belize’s history. However, women still constitute a minority in parliament.

Notably, the Women Parliamentarians Caucus (WPC) was established in 2022. The WPC will function as a space for women parliamentarians from different political parties to unite in championing and promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) and advocating for policy and legislative priorities for women. The WPC will also strengthen women’s voice in the National Assembly of Belize and encourage gender perspectives in the day-to-day operations of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and raise awareness of the importance of gender equality and equity, and inclusion.

Gender equality still faces **major challenges** with respect to youths. Among women aged 15-49 years, about one in twenty were married before age 15, and among women aged 20-49 years, about one in four (29 %) women were married before age 18. About one in five young women aged 15-19 years is currently married. The latter proportion does not vary much between urban (22 %) and rural (20%) but is strongly related to the level of education and household wealth. Regional variations range from one in ten in the Orange Walk region to as high as, about one in three in the Stann Creek region for women aged 15-19 years who are currently married or in a common-law-union.

In the context of promoting a better life, gender equality, and the empowerment of rural women, it is crucial to consider the proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex, as well as the share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure. These metrics provide insights on the status of women's land ownership and tenure rights, which are vital for their economic empowerment and overall well-being.

According to Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MAFSE/GOB), approximately 20% of agricultural/farms in Belize are owned by women, representing progress in terms of women's land ownership and their involvement in agricultural activities. However, it is essential to recognize that these statistics underrepresent women's contribution to agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. Many women's contributions in these sectors often go unnoticed or are not adequately captured by conventional statistical samples. This can be attributed to various factors, including their contribution domestic duties and responsibilities, which are not always accounted for in traditional data collection methods.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the female labor force in agriculture, forestry, and fishing in Belize has experienced a decline. According to ILO Stats,<sup>19</sup> the female labor force in these sectors dropped from 4.6% in 2019 (pre-COVID-19) to 3.2% in 2021. This decline might be influenced by several factors, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment.

**To achieve true gender equality and empower rural women, it is essential to address data collection limitations and ensure that women's contributions to agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are accurately captured. Recognizing and valuing the significant role that women play in these sectors will not only enhance their economic empowerment but also contribute to sustainable development.**

According to the UNFPA State of World Population Report, only 43% of Laws and regulations guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health care, information, and education (SDG indicator 5.6.2). The denial of sexual and reproductive rights undermines the achievement of true gender equality, which would afford women the choice and increased participation in the labour force or the ability to pursue opportunities. Advancing gender equality is an often-overlooked solution for many ageing, low-fertility countries with labour productivity concerns. However, achieving gender parity in the workforce is considered one of the most effective way to improve productivity and income growth.

Gender-Based Violence is another area that requires increased attention. While there has been a marked improvement in the national response to GBV, there continues to be an increase in the number of reported cases of GBV. In 2022, there was a 21% increase in reported cases, relative to the same period in the previous year.

Various national policies and plans have been developed that address the different aspects of gender-based violence. These include the Revised National Gender Policy and the Gender-based Violence Action Plan (2021-2030), a National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan (2018-2020), The National Children's Agenda (2017-2030), Draft Citizen Security Policy and Plan (2019) and the

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<sup>19</sup> <https://ilostat ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>

Police Crime Fighting Strategy (2019-2020). Plan Belize Women’s Agenda (2020) also provides a framework for responding to gender-based violence.

In addition, the Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls, which was implemented in 2020, is supporting the revision of the Domestic Violence Act, which will ensure improved access to justice, particularly for LNOB populations. Other key legislative improvements include current revisions to the Sexual Harassment Act.

## SDG 5 Progress

Indicators (2 of 14 Indicators: 14.3%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
5.2.2) Proportion of ever-partnered 15 to 49 years old women and girls subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months - UNSTAT/WHO	(7.8% 2018)				●
5.3.1 Proportion of women who were married or in a common-law-union before 18 years - UNICEF	(33.5%, 2016)				●
5.5.1) Proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of parliament	9.38%	9.38%	12.50%	12.50%	↗
5.5.2) Proportion seats held by women in deliberative bodies of local government		31%		31.50%	●
5.6.1) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education to women and men aged 15 years	43%				●
5.6.2) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education on HIV and HPV to women and men aged 15 years and older	60%				●
5.6.3) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexuality education to women and men aged 15 years and older	50%				●
5.6.4) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to contraceptive and family planning to women and men aged 15 years and older	0%				➔
5.6.5) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education on maternity care to women and men aged 15 years and older	55%				●
5.6.6) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexuality education curriculum topics to women and men aged 15 years and older	100%				↑
5.6.7) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexuality education curriculum laws to women and men aged 15 years and older	0%				➔
5.6.8) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to emergency contraception to women and men aged 15 years and older	0%				➔
5.6.9) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to contraceptive consent to women and men aged 15 years and older	0%				➔
5.6.10) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to HIV confidentiality to women and men aged 15 years and older	100%				↑
5.6.11) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to abortion to women and men aged 15 years and older	19%				●

5.6.12) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education on life saving commodities to women and men aged 15 years and older	100%				
5.6.13) The extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education on maternity care to women and men aged 15 years and older	0%				
5.6.14) The extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to HIV counseling and test services to women and men aged 15 years and older	60%				
5.6.15) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to HIV treatment and care services to women and men aged 15 years and older	80%				
5.6.16) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to HPV vaccine to women and men aged 15 years and older	0%				
5.6.17) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to contraceptive services to women and men aged 15 years and older	0%				
5.6.18) Extent to which country laws and regulations guarantee full and equal access to post-abortion care to women and men aged 15 years and older	100%				
<b>Challenges remain</b> 					

Source: UNSTAT



## SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

With respect to water and sanitation, the country remains **on track** with access to safely managed drinking water exceeding 94.8% as last reported in 2020.

### SDG 6 Progress

Indicators (6 out of 10 indicators: 40%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
6.1.1) Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services - UNICEF		94.80%			↑
6.2.1) Proportion of population with basic handwashing facilities on premises - UNSTAT/ UNICEF	90%	90%			→
6.3.1) In 2020, the proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality		79%			●
6.3.2) Proportion of river water bodies with good ambient water quality		60%			●
6.3.3) Proportion of groundwater bodies with good ambient water quality		100%			↑
6.4.4) Water Use Efficiency per cubic meter.		\$13.90			●
6.4.2) Freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources		1.30%			●
6.5.a) The degree of integrated water resources management implementation		21%			●
In 2021, lakes and rivers permanent water area was 0.0% of total land area.		0.01%			●
6.b.1) The level of definition in procedures in law or policy for participation by service users/communities in planning program in rural drinking-water supply (where 10 = Clearly defined; 5 = Not clearly defined ; 0 = NA)		10 points			↑
6.b.2) The level of participation by users/communities in planning programs in water resources planning and management, by level of participation (where 3 = High; 2 = Moderate; 1 = Low; and 0 = NA)		2 points			●
6.b.3) The level of definition of legal or policy procedures for participation by service users/communities in planning program in water resources planning and management (where 10 = Clearly defined; 5 = Not clearly defined ; 0 = NA)		10 points			↑
6.b.4) The level of participation by users/communities in planning programs in rural drinking-water supply (where 3 = High; 2 = Moderate; 1 = Low; and 0 = NA) stood at 2 points.		2 points			●
<b>SDG achieved</b>					●

Source: UNSTAT

Nevertheless, access to safe drinking water is challenging in many parts of Belize, particularly rural areas and the Southside of Belize City. The last Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools Assessment and Evaluation took place in 2011, revealing that over 20% of schools reported an unreliable water supply, and 25% had to use untreated water for their students and staff. In terms of sanitation, only 30% of Belize’s schools meet the internationally accepted standard of one toilet per 25 girls, and only 33% meet the standard for boys of 50 boys per toilet. Only 13% of our schools provide bathroom access to children with physical disabilities. Basic cleaning materials, such as toilet paper and soap, are often unavailable, with 40% of surveyed schools not providing toilet paper and almost 30% lacking soap for the children to use while washing hands. A data gap exists regarding WASH in schools, and unless there is a shift,



achieving SDG 6 objectives with respect to sanitation and hygiene will remain challenging. In the context of the pandemic, WASH is essential for a safe educational environment.

Preliminary results from a UNICEF-conducted WASH in Schools (WinS) assessment show that there are increasing costs of WASH facilities, with repairs being done only on an as-needed basis. While WinS interventions are visible in schools (i.e., hand hygiene posters, additional handwashing stations, and hiring of bathroom wardens), there continues to be a gap in resources (i.e., available soap and paper towels, replacement of light fixtures, and periodic repairs to address water leakage). In 2022, the WASH Multi-sectoral Body (MSB) led by the Ministry of Health & Wellness, initiated interventions and activities with a new focus to build climate-smart resilient schools and communities. UNICEF supported work to give vulnerable children access to water, sanitation and hygiene in schools and communities.

A comprehensive WinS Strategy for all primary schools will be completed in 2023. A WASH assessment has commenced, with the refurbishing of WASH facilities for climate-smart resilience is underway in 8 primary schools in migrant communities. Water tanks were distributed in migrant communities, including Bella Vista School and San Juan Community, to support 12,500 beneficiaries (8,457 residents & 3,955 students) to alleviate water shortages in times of emergency.


The situation of WASH and Menstrual Hygiene Management is particularly difficult for girls in primary and secondary school who are menstruating. In 2018, UNICEF conducted the first Menstrual Health Management (MHM) study in Belize. The report shows that gender inequality and discriminatory social norms, cultural taboos, poverty, and lack of basic services often result in unmet menstrual hygiene needs, especially for those living in rural communities. In collaboration with WASH, the MHM study revealed a pressing need for improved latrine design and the increased availability of supplies like pads and tampons, and trash cans in the stalls to facilitate good menstrual hygiene practices and ensure privacy for menstruating girls. The report also underscored the lack of adequate water supply and need for more bathroom facilities, as well as hygiene awareness and sensitivity training in schools to prevent embarrassment and bullying that some menstruating girls face.



### **SDG 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**

In terms of sustainable energy, the country is on track with 98% accessibility and with more than 50% of energy for electricity being sourced from renewable sources. Government in partnership with the Saudi Development Fund, will be investing US\$77 million in a 60 MW Solar Energy Plant, along with investment in battery storage and supply and installation of solar panels. This will contribute to reducing and further diversifying Belize renewable energy mix (mainly hydro and bio-mas) and significantly reduce dependence on foreign energy imports, based on fossil fuels, from Mexico.

### SDG 7 Progress

Indicators (2 of 6 Indicators: 33%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
7.1.1) Proportion of population with access to electricity (CCA 2021)	98%				↑
7.1.2) The proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology (35% in 2015, CCA 2021)		82%			
7.2.1) The share of renewable energy in the total final energy consumption (56.7% in 2018)	29.10%	51.30%			→
<b>SDG achieved</b>					

Source: UNSTAT

## Shared Prosperity/ Economic Resilience (SDGs 8 - 11)

During 2022, Belize experienced **strong macroeconomic recovery** with a real GDP growth rate of 12.1%, despite the impact of Hurricane Lisa, and a 3.0% growth rate is projected for 2023.<sup>20</sup> Growth recovery was led by the tertiary sector, which expanded by 13% through the tourism and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sectors. The secondary sector expanded by 11.9%. This economic growth contributed to a decline in the unemployment rate from 10.2% in 2021 to 5% in 2022 and to further 2.85 during the first quarter of 2023.



### SDG 8: Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment

SDG 8 indicates an improving trend, but the environment still **remains challenging**. Double-digit economic growth and improved fiscal space is providing the impetus for improvements in five indicators. However, these indicators point to challenges being faced in growth not trickling down to the working population. There are gaps in per capita growth, and more important in terms of employed persons not seeing their wages correlated with growth. The declining number of bank branches is a result of Belize Bank acquiring Scotia Bank in 2021.

In 2021, despite an environment of 15.2% real economic growth, wages of employed persons did not increase. For 2022, with an economic growth of 12.1%, GDP per employed person is expected to grow by 7% indicating a gap of 5.1%. All this may be indicating growth through greater physical effort but lower productivity, which is neither good nor sustainable in the long run. With respect to the gender gap, it has improved over the past three years and is moving in the right direction for both wage equality and employment. Tourism employment recovery has reached 72% of pre-COVID-19 level.

**Economic growth and continued reduction in unemployment are expected to persist. However, it is uncertain at this point whether this growth is sustainable and inclusive. We**

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/02/17/belize-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2023-article-iv-mission>

need at least three years of data on LNOB, particularly data on the multidimensional poverty index and the 17 deprivations.

### SDG 8 Progress

Indicator (6 out of 17 indicators: 35%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
8.1.1). Real GDP/capita Growth		-15.6%	12.3%	8.8%	
8.2.1). Real GDP/employed person growth		1.5%	3.8%	7.1%	
8.5.1). Real Average hourly earnings (Proxy Median Monthly Earnings): US \$	\$ 567	\$ 584	\$ 566	\$ 638	
Females	\$ 494	\$ 580	\$ 541	\$ 617	
Males	\$ 615	\$ 587	\$ 579	\$ 650	
8.5.2). Unemployment rate : (2.5% for 1st Quarter 2023)	10.40%	13.70%	9.20%	5%	
Females	15.70%	17.00%	13%	6.80%	
Males	6.60%	11.60%	6.70%	4%	
8.6.1) Proportion of youths (15-24) not in education, employment and/or training (UNSTAT)	24.90%				
8.9.2.a). # of jobs in tourism industries as a proportion of total jobs	17%	8.10%	11.80%	12.30%	
8.9.2.b). Growth rate of jobs in tourism		-60%	74%	9%	
8.10.1) # of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults (proxy per population) (CBB)	48	46	46	29	
<b>Challenge Remain</b>					

Sources: Labour Force Survey/ SIB; Central Bank of Belize



### SDG 9: Build Resilient Infrastructure, Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization and Foster Innovation

Based on three indicators (limited data), the assessment shows **an improving trend but significant challenges remain** on account of a manufacturing sector that is neither stable nor growing in terms of output and employment. Official development assistance, while unstable, is growing. Although no data was available for access to mobile network for 2021 and 2022, data for 2019 to 2020 indicates that growth in 4G mobile stagnated. The assessment of this SDG was limited due to a 25% data availability constraint.

**Greater public investments are required in climate-resilient infrastructure, research & development, and the development of an industrial strategy with green and blue policies to achieve carbon neutrality. These efforts should contribute to a more sustained level of long-term industrialization with greater inclusiveness.**

## SDG 9 Progress

Indicator (3 out of 12 indicators: 25%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
9.1.a) Passenger volume by air transport in passenger kilometres ('000,000) - UNSTAT	80.7	59.6			●
9.1.b) Container port traffic (maritime transport) in twenty-foot equivalent units ('000) - UNSTAT	129	124			●
9.1.c) Freight volume by road transport in tonne kilometres ('000,000) - UNSTAT	442.4	434			●
9.2.1.a) Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP	7.00%	7.50%	7.20%	7.39	➔
9.2.1.b) Manufacturing value added per capita	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	➔
9.2.2 Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment	7.73%	10.20%	7.60%	8.10%	➔
9.4.1) CO <sub>2</sub> Emission per US \$1000 GDP (ECLAC)	328.9				●
9.a.1) Official development assistance (US\$) plus other official flows to infrastructure (WB)	35.4 million	69.3 million	77.2 million		➔
9.b.1) Share of medium and high-tech industry in total value added	18.50%				●
9.a.1) Proportion of population covered by at least a 4G mobile network (%) - UNSTAT	70%	70%			●
9.a.2) Proportion of population covered by at least a 3G mobile network (%) - UNSTAT	98%	98%			●
9.a.3) Proportion of population covered by at least a 2G mobile network (%) - UNSTAT	98%	98%			●
<b>Significant Challenge</b>					●

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, ECLAC, World Bank



## SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities

For SDG 10, the assessment shows a **Decreasing Trend with Major Challenge Remaining**, based on 33% indicators. The Gini coefficient was used to proxy income distribution among the bottom 40% of the population. The period 2009-2018 shows significant growth in income inequality, increasing from 0.38 to 0.49. With respect to income per capita, there is an improvement, contributing to greater income through more employment opportunities. For remittance costs, these have remained constant over the past three years. The indicator that shows a

worsening situation is the proxy used for financial soundness of the banking sector. The impact of COVID-19 has clearly impacted the banking sector, with net income declining from US\$35.1 million pre-COVID-19 to just \$4.1 million (an 88% reduction). Two of the four commercial banks reported net losses for 2022.

## SDG 10 Progress

Indicator (Based on 4 out of 12 indicators: 33%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
10.1.a) Growth rate of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40% of the population	Data Not Available (Proxy Assessment based on increasing GINI Coefficient from 0.38 to 0.49 between 2009 and 2018)				↓
10.1.b) Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita		0%	-16%	12%	↑
10.4.1) Labour share of GDP (%) - UNSTAT	45.20%				●
10.5.1) Financial Soundness Indicators (Proxy Net Income US\$ Milli	\$35.10	\$7.90	\$14	\$4.10	↓
10.a.1) The proportion of tariff lines applied to imports with zero-tari	67.18%	67.60%			●
10.b.1) Total assistance for development - UNSTAT	\$61.45	\$94.88			●
10.c.1) Remittances cost as a proportion of the amount remitted (Based on Moneygram & Western Union)	Data Not Available (Proxy Assessment Based on Western Union and Money-gram, cost is stagnant at > 8.2%)				→
<b>Major Challenge</b>	●				

**Source:** Statistical Institute of Belize, Central Bank of Belize;  
<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/blz#goal-10>

The UNDP survey for 2021 on Human Development shows income inequality of 37%, education inequality of 14.8%, and life expectancy inequality of 9.2%. These disparities result in Belize’s HDI being 21.7% lower than its potential due to inequality. This underscores the link between equality and pro-poor growth together with sustainable and inclusive development.

**At this point we are unable to determine whether income inequality is decreasing or increasing under the policies of the current Government and during the period of rapid economic growth (November 2020 – June 2023). This limitation arises because data on income inequality is for 2018/2019, and we only have data on multi-dimensional poverty for 2021. The high level of income inequality, low wages, a significant working poor population, and high deprivation levels as reported by the MPI need to be addressed. These factors contribute to a high level of LNOB population and are linked to high crime endangering sustainable economic recovery.**



### SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

For SDG 11, the lack of data precludes us from making a **robust assessment**. However, based on the limited amount of data available, the country is vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change, with an increasingly negative impact.

There was no data available for the urban population living in slums for 2021 and 2022; however, for 2020, it is estimated that 15.7% of the population was living in slums. On the issue of physical or sexual harassment, proxies of rapes and unlawful sexual intercourse indicate that the latter incidence remain high, except for 2021, which may be an outlier due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## SDG 11 Progress

Indicator (Based on 4 out of 15 Indicators: 26%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
11.1.1) Proportion of urban population living in slums (%) - UNSTAT	15.80%	15.70%			→
11.2.1) Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and person with disabilities					●
11.5) 1 # of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disasters per 100,000 people (Proxy from WB: Affected persons per 100,000 population)		14,236		38,703	↓
11.5.2) Direct disaster economic loss including disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services					●
11.6.1) Proportion of urban solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated by cities					●
11.6.2) Annual population-weighted average mean concentration of fine suspended particles of less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) - UNSTAT	11.6				●
11.7.2) Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months (Proxies from SIB):					
a). Unlawful sexual intercourse	67	55	46	60	↓
b). Rape	30	25	12	24	
11.1.a National urban policies or regional development plans that respond to population dynamics, ensuring balanced territorial development and increase local fiscal space ( <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/cities">https://sdg-tracker.org/cities</a> )		NO			↓
<b>Major Challenge</b>					●

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, World Bank; <https://bco.gov.bz/>, <https://sdg-tracker.org/cities>

An assessment of SDG 11 is provided by UNDP in **Annex A**. The assessment confirms that urban slums has stagnated in terms of growth. It also concludes that the public transport system is characterized by high fuel consumption and is one of the greatest contributors to GHG emissions. The government needs to fully implement the new standards for low-carbon transportation alternatives and the upgrading of bus fleet.

Other highlights of the assessment note that 64% of the urban centres are located on the coast, emphasizing the need for national and local disaster risk reduction strategies to reduce losses and increase resilience. The government estimates that 1.69% of GDP is lost annually on account of natural disasters.

Another aspect of the assessment reveals that 34% of urban waste is not properly landfilled, and air quality is considered moderately unsafe. **Therefore, there is a need to address the data gap, establish proper urban development plans, pay attention to air quality, and implement proper urban waste management strategy.**



## Resilience to Climate Change/ Shocks & Sustainable Natural Resource Management (SDGs 12 -15)



### SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

With respect to SDG 13, the environment situation **remains challenging**. There are no national statistics available on food losses. However, at the regional level, food losses amount to 15%, and at the global level they are estimated at 6%.

#### SDG 12 Progress

Indicator (3 out of 13 indicators: 23%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
12.1.1 Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) National Action Plans mainstreamed as priority and incorporated into national policies	Sectoral plans (agriculture, tourism, blue economy) exist but no Sustainable Consumption and Production National Plan developed (UNDP)				→
12.3.1 Reduce Food Loss Index by 50% by 2030 (Food waste per capita in kgs (Retail + out of home consumption + household = Aggregate - <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/">https://sdg-tracker.org/</a> )	World Average for 2019 was 89 15+28+53=9 kilograms				●
12.4.1 Party to international conventions, treaties and agreements on the environment and hazardous waste ( <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/">https://sdg-tracker.org/</a> )	Thirty (2020) inclusive of Montreal Protocol, Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm (UNDP)				↑
12.c.1 Fossil fuel subsidies ( Consumption & production) as proportion of GDP	0%	0%			↑
<b>Challenge Remain</b>					●

Source: <https://sdg-tracker.org/sustainable-consumption-production>

**Target 12.1 (Sustainable Consumption and Production)** Belize, as a country, has not yet presented a comprehensive action plan for sustainable production and consumption. However, there are several sector plans contributing to this target. Belize’s National Agriculture Policy and Food Policy 2025-2030 outline a pathway to sustainable production, productivity, and competitiveness for the country.

In 2022, the recently appointed Ministry of Blue Economy launched the process for national Marine Spatial Planning. This initiative aims to determine the optimal distribution of human activities across marine areas to achieve the country’s ecological, economic, and social objectives. With the support of the United Nation System, Belize is seeking donor funding for the elaboration of an Industrial Policy with Green and Blue Policies for Carbon Neutrality.

**Target 12.4 (Intermediate Agreements) Belize** is currently party to approximately thirty international conventions, treaties, and agreements with respect to the environment. These Include:

- The Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol Amendments,
- The Basel Convention, the Rotterdam convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedures for Certain Hazardous Chemicals, and Pesticides in International Trade,
- The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants,
- The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter of 1972 and its 1996 London Protocol.
- The International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (CLC and Fund Convention);
- International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC).
- The Cartagena Convention and its Protocols on Oils Spills and Land Base Sources of Marine Pollution
- The international Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships as Modified by the 1978 MARPOL Protocol.

It is noteworthy that the government enacted regulations on Hazardous Waste Management in 2009. In 2021, the government further enacted regulations for the treatment of hazardous medical waste. However, sites for disposing hazardous materials are often located near vulnerable communities, greatly impacting children, women, and elderly people.

**Considering that less than 23% of SDG indicator data is available, there is an urgent need to compile data on the 13 indicators committed by member states.** Critical indicators would include resources dedicated to Research & Development for Sustainable production and consumption, as well as efforts dedicated to integrating Sustainable Consumption and Production into the school curriculum. For greater synergy and more effective coordination, Belize also needs to integrate all sector plans, policies, and strategies into a Comprehensive National Action Plan for Sustainable Production and Consumption. The Belize Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2026 was a good first step in the latter direction.



### SDG 13 Climate Action

Adaptation remains a high priority for the country, with over 50% of the population living near the coast, and annual losses of close to 4% of GDP due to climate change.

#### SDG 13 Progress

Indicator (5 out of 7 indicators: 71%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
13.1.a National disaster risk reduction strategy	Climate Change Strategy (CCS) 2021-2026 (UNDP)				↑
13.1.b Local disaster risk reduction strategy	Not Available				●
13.1.2 Number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected per 100,000 people (Exposure to:)	Population exposed to heat (32%), to floods (21.4%), to storm surge (16%), 100% exposed to hurricanes. During the last decade 75% of the population affected by natural disasters. Recent profile not characterized by loss of human life. (UNDP)				↓
13.2.1 Integration of Climate Change into national policies	Belize's New Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Master Plan: outlines national measures for strengthen resilience & adaptive capacities. Belize Updated National Determined contribution responds directly to the Paris Climate Change Accord: Represents a 5% increase in overall commitments in the updated NDC with 63% increase removal related to agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU) sector and an increase to 75% of renewable energy in electricity generation (UNDP)				↑
13.3.1 Integrate mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning into primary, secondary and tertiary curricula	Action being taken to fully integrate Climate Change into the Secondary School Curricula. National Climate Change Office/Ministry of Education working on integrating adaptatio/resilience building and adaptation into the Primary school curricula (UNDP)				↑
13.a.1 Developed parties commit to mobilize US\$100 billion annually to address the need of Developing countries for the Green Climate Fund by 2020	US\$52 billion (2018) with an increasing Trend. ( <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/">https://sdg-tracker.org/</a> )				↗
13.b.1 Support received for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate-related planning and management					●
<b>Significant Challenge</b>	●				

Source: <https://sdg-tracker.org/>

**Target 13.1 (Human Impact Due to Disasters)** According to the Natural Disaster Hotspot study by the World Bank, Belize ranks as the 61<sup>st</sup> highest exposed country for relative mortality risk from multiple hazards in the world and ranked 8<sup>th</sup> out of 167 countries for climate risk. However, the country's recent disaster profile is not characterized by the loss of human lives.

The 2022 disaster management analysis highlights that 32% of the population is exposed to extreme heat, 21.4% to floods, 16% to storm surge, and 100% of the population exposed to tropical cyclones. Physical exposure to multiple hazards is compounded by prevailing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Within the past decade the country has reported more than 282,000 persons have been affected by natural disasters, which represents more than 75% of the population in 2021.

#### Major Disaster Impacts (2010-2022)

- Toledo and Stann Creek Districts: Tropical Cyclone Matthew (2010) 10,000 affected
- Belize City: Heavy Rains and Floods (2015) 20,000 affected
- Belize and Cayo Districts: Tropical Cyclone Earl (2016) 10,355 affected
- Cayo, Belize, Stann Creek, and Toledo Districts: Hurricane Eta (2020) 60,000 affected
- Belize, Cayo, Orange Walk Districts: Hurricane Lisa (2022) 172,000 affected

In 2023, the National Emergency Management Organization is undergoing an institutional assessment to determine its fitness for purpose and to provide guidance for an appropriate framework for disaster risk reduction and response. This process includes the institutionalization of a national disaster recovery framework.

**Target 13.2 (Integration of climate change into national planning)** Belize's New Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Master Plan outline national measures to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacities. National adaptation measures prioritize Belize's productive sectors and address population vulnerability through urban resilience programs. In 2022, with national endorsement of the climate change management architecture, efforts are underway to localize adaptation by integrating it into various sector development plans. Adaptation plans for the health, fisheries, water, and agriculture sectors have been elaborated or are currently under review. In 2023, Belize initiated steps to develop a multisectoral adaptation plan considering land use, human settlement and infrastructure, tourism, human health, agriculture, and forestry.

Ensuring water-agricultural security in Belize requires quantifying and qualifying water resources to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate and enable sustainable water resource management. This is particularly crucial as Belize is a downstream country with a water dependency ratio of 13%. Strengthening water-related disaster management mechanisms, integrating water into disaster risk management policies, and improving ecosystem-based adaptation processes are also essential.<sup>21</sup>

Belize's updated National Determined Contributions (NDCs) directly align with the Paris Climate Change Accord, obligating parties to communicate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The 2021 updated NDC benefits from more robust data on land use trends and emission factors compared to the 2016 version. The updated NDC aims to achieve long-term mitigation goals, reducing GHG emissions and increasing GHG removals related to land use change by 2,053

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<sup>21</sup> UNESCO. 2023. *Water Management and Gender in the Rural Farming Ecosystem of Belize*. Kingston, UNESCO Publishing

KtCO<sub>2</sub>e cumulatively from 2021 to 2030. Belize also commits to a transformational shift towards a long-term low emissions development strategy, including mitigation targets in key sectors until 2050.

Belize's Updated NDC document supports its climate commitment as a member of the Global High Ambition Coalition under the Paris Climate Change Agreement. The updated NDC includes targets that are estimated to avoid cumulative emissions of 5,647 KtCO<sub>2</sub>e across all sectors between 2021 and 2030, peaking at 1,080 KtCO<sub>2</sub>e in avoided emissions in 2030. This represents a 5% increase in overall commitments, with key sector targets such as a 63% increase in GHG removals related to the Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector and a shift to 75% renewable energy in electricity generation.

**Target 13.3 (Integration of Mitigation, Adaptation, and Impact Reduction on School Curricula)**

The country has taken action to fully integrate climate change into the country's secondary school curriculum. The new curriculum has been accompanied by training of trainers' events meant to prepare teachers to deliver the new curriculum's content. The National Climate Change Office is working with the Ministry of Education to integrate adaptation/ resilience building and mitigation into the primary school curriculum.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Over the past decade, Belize has made significant strides in the usage of alternative energy sources such as biomass and hydro power, but the primary source of energy is still petroleum fuel. Most recent data shows that emissions have continuously increased in the energy sector, with the transport subsector continues to contribute the highest number of emissions in the form of carbon dioxide.

Summary of Energy Sector GHG Emissions for 2012 – 2019 (Gg CO<sub>2</sub> eq)<sup>22</sup>

Subsector	2012			2015			2017			2018			2019		
	CO <sub>2</sub>	CH <sub>4</sub>	N <sub>2</sub> O	CO <sub>2</sub>	CH <sub>4</sub>	N <sub>2</sub> O	CO <sub>2</sub>	CH <sub>4</sub>	N <sub>2</sub> O	CO <sub>2</sub>	C H <sub>4</sub>	N <sub>2</sub> O	CO <sub>2</sub>	C H <sub>4</sub>	N <sub>2</sub> O
<b>Overall Total</b>	538.07			781.36			786.36			674.63			845.92		
<b>Energy Industries</b>	27.8 56	0.0 17	0.1 16	80.1 89	0.0 43	0.06 4	96. 998	0.0 51	0.0 15	75. 32	4. 34	6. 96	139 .09	4. 76	7. 68
<b>Transport</b>	529. 455	0.4 813	7.1 7	715. 307	0.6 803	10.1 121	732 .21	6.5 53	9.7 871	451 .21	2. 95	6. 55	532 .99	3. 26	7. 79
<b>Others (residential)</b>	78.6 1	4.4 2	0.8 70	88.7 3	4.9 92	0.98 2	93. 451	5.2 57	1.0 35	122 .02	4. 45	0. 80	144 .78	4. 69	0. 88

<sup>22</sup> Belize's Fourth National Communication to the UNFCCC

## Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2022 Climate Change Country Scorecard

COMPONENT	RANK	EPI SCORE	10-YEAR CHANGE
FILTER: <b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>			
Climate Change	61	47.10	-5.60
CO2 growth rate	116	27.30	-7.00
CH4 growth rate	108	37.00	14.80
F-gas growth rate	NA	NA	NA
N2O growth rate	172	10.10	-38.70
Black Carbon growth rate	102	62.70	16.70
Proj. GHG Emissions	27	72.40	-5.10
CO2 from land cover	94	41.20	-15.90
GHG intensity trend	158	23.50	-33.20
GHG per capita	75	59.30	-1.20

As part of the Government’s efforts to mobilize resources for climate change mitigation and adaptation, commitments have been made for the continued implementation of the Climate Change Strategy (CFS 2021 – 2026). The CFS is a direct response to the Belize National Climate Change Office request for support from the NDC Partnership to provide technical assistance for the updating of the country’s NDC, including the development of an implementation plan, a financing strategy, and a monitoring tool.

National commitments in terms of policies, strategies, and actions are on track. However, the environment is described as **significantly challenged since these national commitments are being hampered** by insufficient financial resources on account of limited financing space, with developed countries’ annual commitment being just around 52% for the Green Climate Fund. Continuous lobbying and advocacy for developed countries to honour their commitments is required. The formulation of an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) may also facilitate access to greater levels of climate financing.



### SDG 14 Life Below Water

Currently, 21% of Belize’s national waters are under protection, surpassing the SDG target of 10%. By 2026 Belize has committed to increasing the ocean area under protection to 30% under the Blue Bond Issue Agreement (Debt for Nature Swap) with The Nature Conservancy.<sup>23</sup> The Country 2022 EPI scorecard ranks Belize 60 out of 180 countries as it relates to fisheries management, which is a steep decline from rank 21 reported in 2020. This drop in rank is largely due to

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/TNC-Belize-Debt-Conversion-Case-Study.pdf>



the low abundance and small size of commercial and herbivorous fish revealed in the Mesoamerican Reef Report Card 2022, which cited a critical need for increased fisheries protection and management, primarily by a rapid and sustained increase of fully protected areas—as well as an increase in enforcing those protections.

## SDG 14 Progress

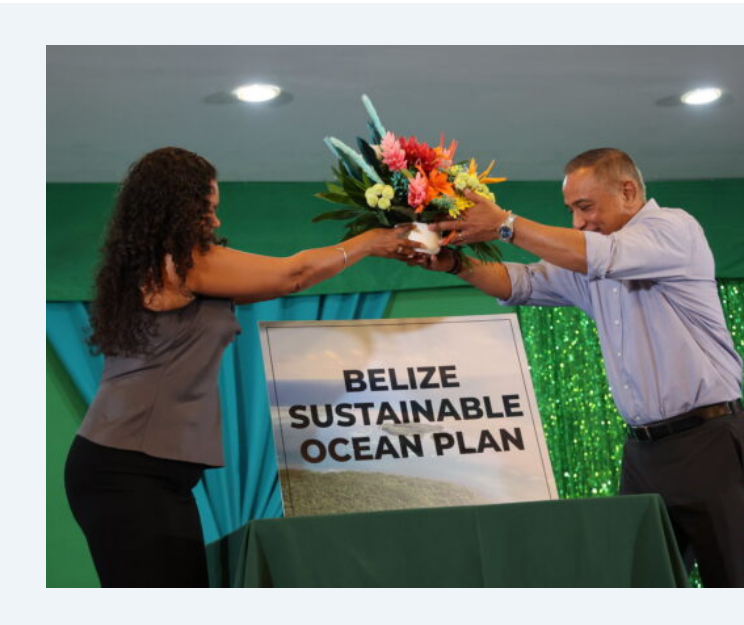
(Based on 7 out of 10 indicators: 70%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
14.1.1 Index of coastal eutrophication and floating plastic debris density	1.18 million plastic items per square km (2018), <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans">https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans</a>				●
14.2.1 Proportion of national economic zones managed using ecosystems based approaches	Using Eco-system based approach applying principles of Sustainable Development. Management Perspective considers ecological, social and economic factors (2016), <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans">https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans</a>				↑
14.4.1 Proportion of fish stocks within biological sustainable levels	Out of 54 Fish Stock - % over-fished; 2% facing over-fishing Pressure and the rest stock assessment is sustainable. Lobster production, Belize most important fishery commodity has remained stable over the past 3 decades. The fisheries Resource Act (2020) mandates the maintenance of fish stock health and the rebuilding of depleted stock (UNDP)				↑
14.5.1 Average proportion of marine key biodiversity areas (KBAs) covered by protected areas (exceeds target of 10% by 2020) - UNSTAT	31.2%	31.2%	31.2%	31.2%	↑
14.6.1 Progress in degree of implementation of instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing ( <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans">https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans</a> )	4 (where 1 is lowest and 5 is highest)				→
14.7.1 Sustainable Fisheries as % of GDP (Fisheries & Aquaculture GDP) - Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB)	0.52%	0.46%	0.57%		→
14.b.1 Protection of the Rights of Small-Scale Fisheries ( <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans">https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans</a> )	5 which is the highest level (where 1 would be lowest level)				↑
14.c.1 Ratification of and accession to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea ( <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans">https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans</a> )	UNCLOS fully ratified and acceded (2021)				↑
<b>Challenge Remain</b> ●					

Sources: <https://sdg-tracker.org/oceans>

**Target 14.1, Marine pollution Indices of Coastal Eutrophication**, is not presently a nationally prescribed development indicator, however research studies carried out within Belize's coastal zone provide evidence of the state of the coast. Remote measurement of chlorophyll-a concentrations via satellite data for waters outside of Belize City suggests an increase in chlorophyll-a concentrations during the winter months, indicating that those months experience more eutrophication. This could be explained by several processes, one of which could be the dry period experienced from November to February, leading to less dilution of nutrients. This trend is similar for waters offshore between Hopkins and Placencia. Chlorophyll-a measurements in Belizean waters spiked in years 2020-2021. Further studies are required to determine the impact/influence of sargassum blankets on the recently recorded spikes.

**Target 14.2 Sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems** <sup>24</sup>The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (ICZMP 2016) sought to introduce an ecosystem-based approach to coastal and marine spatial planning with the use decision-making tools for zoning such as the Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and Trade-offs (InVEST). In 2020, a strategic plan for the CZMAI was introduced to facilitate the planned development and sustainable use of Belize's coastal resources. With support from the regional Smart Coast Initiative and The Nature Conservancy, the CZMAI generated relevant baselines for the national marine spatial planning process, currently, underway. This spatial plan represents a key conservation milestone, as stipulated in the Blue Loan Agreement and the Conservation funding agreement signed in 2021.

In 2022, approximately 31.2% of Belize's territorial waters were under protected status or directly benefited from measures for the sustainable management of natural resources. In 2019, the country approved a plan to expand its marine areas designated as no-take zones to cover approximately 12% of its total waters. Currently, no-take zones account for 15.84% of territorial waters (approximately 0-20 nm offshore) and 6.28% of the EEZ (approximately 20-200 nm offshore). Global consensus suggests that at least 10 percent, and preferably much more, of marine waters should be closed to extraction for successful marine biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. Belize's Marine Spatial Planning process is linked to the country's efforts to develop its first Blue Economy Development Policy and Strategy (BEDPS 2022 - 2027) and the first Belize Maritime Economy Plan (MEP). The BEDPS aims to address the ongoing impacts of climate change on marine and coastal resources and contribute to the achievement of SDG 14 – Life below water, as well as other national and regional environmental priorities.



Between 2018 and 2020, Belize's reef health index (RHI) improved, increasing from 2.8 to 3.0. However, Belize's RHI significantly decreased in 2022 to 2.0. The Meso-American Reef Report for 2022 indicates that most sub-regions have declined in conditions since 2020, with the Southern Barrier Complex experiencing the most significant decline due to a decrease in herbivorous and

<sup>24</sup> A Vulnerability and Livelihood Assessment was conducted for the coastal zone and fisheries sector of Belize: Similarly, a Sustainable Fishing Operations, Practice and Technology: Value Chain Assessment was conducted in Belize City, Caye Caulker and Dangriga Town which speaks towards the proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels and instruments required to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Similarly, a Climate Data and Information Gap Assessment and Action Plan for the Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector of Belize has been developed, with research budget allocated for marine technology.

commercial fish populations. Additionally, while the COVID-19 pandemic tested health systems' response, the reefs were also facing their own pandemic in the form of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD). This coral disease was first observed in Mexico in 2018 and reached its peak damage in 2022.

**Target 14.4 (Fish Stock Within Biological Sustainable Levels)** The Fisheries Resources Act (2020) mandates the maintenance of fish stock health and the rebuilding of depleted stocks. Belize's fisheries sector employs approximately 2,500 fishers directly and more than 15,000 Belizeans indirectly (UNCTAD 2020). In 2021, Belize unveiled a plan to sustainably manage 47 of the country's most important finfish species. These new additions are monitored alongside lobster and conch through a national catch data collection program.

Belize's catch data contributes to the development of sustainable catch levels for various species, including sharks, sea cucumber, lobster, and conch. It also informs the country's Managed Access Programme, which is a rights-based approach to fisheries management. It's worth noting that lobster production, Belize's most important fishery commodity, has remained stable since the early 1990s.

An audit of the Fisheries sector conducted in 2021 revealed that 4% of all fish stocks (2 out of 54 stocks, specifically conch and lobster) have known status as determined by ongoing comprehensive stock assessments. Among all the stocks, 0% are considered overfished, 2% are facing overfishing pressures, and 7% of national stocks have defined catch limits, with these species subjected to catch effort controls.

Additionally, in 2021/2022, Belize introduced Amendment Regulations for Sharks and Spiny Lobsters – S.I. No. 128 of 2021 and elaborated on its new Mariculture Policy.

#### **Target 14.5 (Coverage of Protected Areas in Relation to Marine Areas)**

Belize's network of marine protected areas (MPAs) covers some 20.3% percent (6,841.42  $km^2$ ) of the country's total marine waters<sup>25</sup>; with 11.65% (3927.59  $KM^2$ ) designated as High Protection MPA. Sustainable management of these MPAs is directly linked to the fisheries and tourism industries. Belize designates MPAs to improve marine biodiversity and protect endangered, aquatic species that are also important for the economy. Despite designation efforts to conserve marine resources, there are still adverse effects due to commercial and other development activities, marine exploitation, and natural pressures due to climate change. The network of MPAs include Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve, recognized as Belize's largest marine reserve, and the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (BBRRS), which is well known as the second-largest reef system globally.

**Target 14.7 (Sustainable Fisheries as a Percent of GDP)** Belize's fisheries sector is the third-largest contributor to the national GDP, following crops and livestock. In 2019, seafood production (including capture fisheries and aquaculture) accounted for approximately 0.57% of the annual GDP (as of 2021), signifying a 70% decline in revenue from its peak in 2013. This decline can be attributed to the collapse of the aquaculture industry due to Infant Mortality Syndrome disease. However, trend data suggests some stabilization in production figures. Conch

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<sup>25</sup> Marine Conservation Institute – Marine Protection Atlas

and lobster serve as the cornerstones of Belize's fisheries economy, generating over US\$20 million in export earnings and providing employment for more than 90% of the country's registered fisherfolk. These two seasonal marine commodities contribute to over 75% of the gross domestic product derived from fisheries.

From data available, significant progress has been made with respect to factors endogenous to Belize. However, further progress regarding Life Below Water (SDG 14), **remains challenging given the need to monitor and maintain these achievements. This requires partnerships with the private sector and international donor community to ensure sustainability.**



### SDG 15: Life on Land

Despite a high level of forest areas, forest cover declined from 74% to 56% since 1981. More than half of Belize's forest cover loss occurred in areas where the dominant driver of loss is commodity-driven deforestation.

#### SDG 15 Progress

Indicator (Based on 7 out of 13 Indicators: 54%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
15.1.1 Proportion of Land area covered by Forest	56.48%	55.99%			↓
15.1.2.a Proportion of freshwater key bio-diversity areas (kba) covered by protected areas	15.25%	15.25%	15.25%	15.25%	→
15.1.2.b Proportion of terrestrial key bio-diversity areas (KBAs) covered by protected areas	43.26%	43.26%	43.26%	43.26%	→
15.2.1.a Forest area under an independent verified forest management certification scheme (1,000 hectares)	197,000	197,000	101,000	101,000	↓
15.2.1.b Forest area within legally established protected areas	56.81%	56.81%			→
15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area	7.46%				●
15.4.1 Average proportion of mountain key bio-diversity areas (KBAs) covered by protected areas	87.10%	87.10%	87.10%	87.10%	↑
15.5.1 Red List Index	0.773	0.771	0.770	0.769	→
15.8.1 Reported # of standard material transfer agreements (SMTs) transferring plant genetics resources for food and agriculture to Belize	15	16	17	17	↗
15.a.1 Official Development assistance for bio-diversity (millions of constant 2021 US \$)	0.426	0.139	0.369		↓
<b>Significant Challenge</b> ●					

Source: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/blz#goal-10>

**Target 15.1 (Forest Areas as Proportion of Total Land Area) For Belize** 56% of forest area is land under natural or planted stands of trees of at least 5 meters in situ). Total area of humid primary forest in Belize decreased by 11% between 2002 and 2021. Tree cover loss is primarily

attributable to expansion of urban areas and land use conversion linked to expanding agriculture sector. Losses in the Cayo and Orange Walk Districts accounted for the greatest rate of deforestation/ cover loss across this period. From 2000 to 2020 Belize experienced a net change of -134kha (-8.4%) in tree cover. In 2021 Belize joined High Ambition Actors in the Bonn Challenge, pledging 5.66% (130,000 ha) restoration by 2030. In 2022, the government launched its National Landscape Restoration Strategy which outlines the necessary actions to ensure that Belize meets its commitment to the Bonn Challenge<sup>26</sup>. A total of 383 thousand hectares of opportunity areas were identified, of which 130 thousand hectares of the national landscape are planned to be restored between 2020 - 2030<sup>27</sup>.

### Protected Areas (PA)

Based on figures derived from the 6<sup>th</sup> national report to the UNCBD, 37.5% of Belize's terrestrial lands are under protected areas designation, with most of these protected areas undergoing periodic management reviews. It is worth noting that Belize has surpassed the 30% PA goal set within the CBD post-2020 Framework. The country can report on the meeting of AICHI target 11 (By 2020, at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative, and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes). Recent activities related to the establishment of macro and micro corridors, enabling connectivity, have also led to a noticeable improvement in lands under sustainable management practices.

In 2022, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management officially entered public-private partnerships for several protected areas across the National Protected Areas System (NPAS) with several conservation partners. The ministry and the National Biodiversity Office continue to implement these initiatives geared towards strengthening the governance, management effectiveness and financial sustainability of the NPAS.

**Target 15.2 (Progress Towards Sustainable Forest Management)** The Government of Belize, in collaboration with NGO co-management partners, has established sustainable forest management plans for its forest reserves and large corridor areas. These plans are put into action through long-term concession agreements. In 2023, the government is initiating pilot community conservation agreement programs to expand the areas managed sustainably through formal processes.

**Target 15.5 Biodiversity and loss of natural habitats (Red List Index)** The Red List Index (RLI) is one way of representing the status of biodiversity from The IUCN Red List. It measures changes in aggregate extinction risk across groups of species and expresses changes in an index ranging from 0 (all species extinct) to 1 (all species are categorized as least concern). The RLI for Belize is relatively constant with only a slight decline over two decades. This means that over time, the overall extinction risk for the five taxonomic groups (birds, mammals, amphibians, cycads, and warm-water reef-forming corals) is mainly unchanged. Policies such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016–2020) and the National Climate Resilient Water Sector Strategy (2019) have aimed to safeguard food security and guide the sustainable exploitation of natural

<sup>26</sup> The **Bonn Challenge** was launched by the Government of Germany and the IUCN in 2011 with the revised goal to restore 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes by 2030.

<sup>27</sup> National Landscape Restoration Strategy for Belize 2022 - 2030

resources. The National Climate Resilient Water Sector Strategy (2019) elaborates measures that tackle climate change by enhancing the sustainable management of natural resources<sup>28</sup>.

Based on the country’s 2022 EPI score card, Belize ranks 1<sup>st</sup> out of 180 countries in its protection of biodiversity and habitats. The ‘*Biodiversity and Habitat*’ issue category assesses countries’ actions toward retaining natural ecosystems and protecting the full range of biodiversity within their borders using seven indicators. **However, the environment for this SDG faced significant challenge giving the stagnation for progress on some indicators and the need for financial resources for investment and further progress. Henceforth, further advancement will require greater partnership with the private sector and donor community to ensure sustainable management of land resources.**

### Country Scorecard

COMPONENT	RANK	EPI SCORE	10-YEAR CHANGE
FILTER: <b>BIODIVERSITY</b>			
<b>Biodiversity</b>	1	91.90	4.30
Terrestrial biomes (natl)	49	99.30	0.50
Terrestrial biomes (global)	61	96.60	2.80
Marine protected areas	1	100.00	17.80
Protected Areas Rep. Ind.	3	96.80	7.40
Biodiversity Habitat Index	57	50.40	NA
Species Protection Index	7	89.90	0.40
Species Habitat Index	147	36.30	-53.70

## Safety, Justice/Rule of Law, Governance & Political Environment (SDG 16)



SDG 16 is most aligned to the recommendations and concluding observations of the UN human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies. Since CCA (2021) there is some notable progress for some of the indicator targets of this goal. However, concerns remain over those targets where there is slow or no progress.

The Homicide rate for Belize has come down over the last few years. Belize recorded 113 murders and its homicide rate for 2022 was 25 per 100,000 persons. It was a slight decrease from the previous year which saw 125 murders at a rate of 29 per 100,000 persons.<sup>29</sup> Violence remains predominantly urban

<sup>28</sup> UNESCO. 2023. Water Management and Gender in the Rural Farming Ecosystem of Belize. Kingston, UNESCO Publishing

<sup>29</sup> See Belize Crime Observatory (BCO) Homicide Report, 2021: <https://bco.gov.bz/annual-analysis/>. Accessed: December 2022



(southside Belize City) and is tied to social exclusion, lack of access to social services, fragile food security and other issues that have impacted the area over decades. Many youths from these areas have been pulled into local gangs that propagate the violence. However, it is the deeper structural issues and underlying causes of the violence that need to be addressed.

The official capacity of the prison which has been established at 2100 had an occupancy rate at mid-year 2022 of 53.0% of which 3.1% was female and 1.6% were inmates under the age of 18 years. The prison population rate was 27.1 or 271 per 100, 000 of the national population in this same period.<sup>30</sup>

The foreign-born population in prison constituted 13% of the overall population.<sup>31</sup> This means that in general, the national prison system is not overcrowded but, children (young people under the age of 18) are still accounted for in the population count of the Belize Central Prison.<sup>32</sup> Notably, the rate of pretrial detainees on remand as a percentage of the overall prison population, declined from 50.8 in 2019 to 36.5 in 2022.<sup>33</sup> Yet, access to and capacity to afford justice, remains beyond the reach of many. Access to justice in Belize registered at 0.5 in 2020 on a scale of 0-1 with 1 being the best.<sup>34</sup>

### SDG 16 Progress

Indicator ( 9 out of 23 indicators: 39%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
16.1.1 Murder rate per 100,000 population ( <a href="https://bco.gov.bz/crime-statistics/">https://bco.gov.bz/crime-statistics/</a> )	32.80	24.33	29.06	25.60	
16.1.2 Conflict Related Deaths per 100,000 population, <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice">https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice</a>	0	0	0	0	
16.3.2 Unsented detainees as a proportion of overall prison population (UNSTAT), ( <a href="https://bco.gov.bz/crime-statistics/">https://bco.gov.bz/crime-statistics/</a> )	50.77%	58%		36%	
16.6.1 Primary Government Expenditure as a proportion of original approved budget ( <a href="https://data.worldbank.org/indicator">https://data.worldbank.org/indicator</a> )	102.00	103.00	0.89		
16.7.1 Representation of women in the upper chamber of parliament (1 meaning equality and less than 1 meaning less women than men), <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice">https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice</a>			0.70	0.70	
16.8.1 Voting rights in International Organizations (WTO, IFC, IBRD, IMF and UN General Assembly) - <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice">https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice</a>		0.5% - 0.6%			
16.10.2 Policy guarantee for public access to information, <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice">https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice</a>				Yes	
16.a.1 Accredited Independent National Human Rights Institution, <a href="https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice">https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice</a>			No		
<b>Challenge Remain</b>					

**Source:**<https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice>;<https://bco.gov.bz/crime-statistics/>;  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

<sup>30</sup> See <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/belize>. Accessed: December 2022.

<sup>31</sup> IN 2019, IOM conducted a Belize Prisoned Migrant Profile with respect to the total prisoned migrant population. The imprisoned migrant population was composed of different ethnic groups, with the majority originating from Central American neighbouring countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Most offences over a four-year were that of illegal entry.

<sup>32</sup> The Government is implementing a National Diversion Programme, that support children prior to arrest, at the discretion of the Police, and also prior to the commencement of a trial at the discretion of the Court. The programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Human Development. This is a promising initiative.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/static/profiles/pdfs/SDR-2022-belize.pdf>: Accessed: December 2022.



In 2014, only 50% of the population felt safe walking alone at night in Belize city or in an area where they live. No new data on this indicator is available but a brief assessment of the growing urbanisation may offer that this number has not decreased. More women live in urban areas than men, hence the perception of safety may have decreased given that gender-based and domestic violence remain pervasive in Belize.

There are, however, some areas of progress in this goal one of which can be attributed to the high level of birth registrations (95.7% in 2020) indicating some uptake of registration of children soon after their birth.

Notably, the Press Freedom Index in Belize stands at a decent 27.6 on a scale of 0 -100 and this would indicate there is a measure of journalistic freedom and freedom of speech in Belize.<sup>35</sup> The Constitution of Belize<sup>36</sup> guarantees freedom of expression under Article 12 including freedom to hold opinions without interference and freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference. A Freedom of Information Act<sup>37</sup> was adopted in 2000, revised in 2003 with further revisions made in 2008 and 2011. The Libel and Defamation Act was repealed on 8 August 2022 and replaced with the Defamation Act 2022. The Act imposes civil penalties, in the form of payment of damages and legal costs.

A Digital Government Act<sup>38</sup> was adopted in 2022 to increase participation in Government and make Government of Belize more transparent and accountable and provide enhanced access to Government information and services in a manner consistent with laws regarding the protection of personal privacy, national security, records retention, access for persons with disabilities and other relevant laws.

On the matter of children involved in child labour, Belize has made some progress since the government approved the development of the National Child Labour Policy and Strategy. In March 2022, Belize completed the update to the 2009 policy framework to address child labour. This update to the policy framework will assist in address the matter of child labour, especially for boys since they are more likely than girls to be engaged in hazardous work.

Land distribution for indigenous populations in rural areas has been a source of some tension. The Caribbean Court of Justice issued the Maya Land Rights Consent Order ruling in 2022 that was an important victory for indigenous groups in Belize. The Government has noted the ruling and has reaffirmed its compliance with it. Government is currently developing a draft Maya Land Policy that it has promised to release shortly. The government has committed to consult with the Maya population and broader public on the draft policy.

Belize's level of Control of Corruption was calculated at 45.67% out of 100%, indicating that Belize ranks around 47<sup>th</sup> to 52<sup>nd</sup> of 180 countries and territories ranked by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI).

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<sup>35</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Belize-Constitution-Chapter-4-2021.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> <https://ombudsman.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Freedom-of-Information-Act.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Act-No-24-of-2022-Digital-Government-Act-2022.pdf>

Progress has been made on this **SDG as it relates to human rights and freedom of information but significant Challenge Remains given the high crime rate** whose root causes need to be addressed to ensure positive spillover into the other 16 SDGs and ensure long-term sustainability of the tourism, backbone of the Belizean economy. More efforts need to be made for the permanent establishment of a fully functioning “National Human Rights Institution,” and further advocacy for achieving gender equality at the political level.

In November 2022 government began a constitutional reform exercise with the establishment of “The People’s Constitution Commission”. The commission is comprised of 23 different organizations. The process will take up to 18 months and will include an educational campaign and consultations across the country and with the diaspora. The final Report with recommendations will be submitted to the Prime Minister and a referendum will be called, following consultations within the government. The current process is different than last process in 1999 which was driven by Civil society. This time the process was initiated in response to parliamentary attempts to change the constitution in an ad hoc fashion. The question of whether Belize will be a republic will be included in the process. The evolving demographics, language, culture and ethnic shifts, particularly the increased Central American social influence could impact on the proposed constitutional reforms, which will be a break from traditional Creole civic and political interests.

## Partnership (SDG 17)



Regarding Partnerships for the Goals, the assessment of 8 out of 25 indicators show that some **Challenges Remain**. A key challenge is the lack of data for several indicators. A general perspective on the five key areas under SDG 17 can be complemented by qualitative analysis. These five areas include: (i) Finance, (ii) Technology, (iii) Capacity-building, (iv) Trade and (v) Systemic Issues.

### SDG 17 Progress

Indicators (8 out of 25 Indicators: 32%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
17.1.1 GoB revenue as a proportion of GDP	24.73%	23.94%	23.07%		→
17.3.2 Remittances (US dollars) as a proportion of GDP received by Belize	4%	5.80%	5.40%		↗
17.4.1 Belize debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services		23%	15%		↘
17.6.1 Fixed internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	7.61%	9.12%	9%		↗
17.8.1 Proportion of individuals using the internet	57%	60%	62%		↗
17.9.1 Dollar value of financial and technical assistance (including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation) received by Belize (In US \$ billions and uses PSIP data proxy)	\$0.84	\$0.78	\$0.71	\$0.78	→
17.10.1 Belize weighted (average) import tariff	11.20%	18.70%			↓
17.11.1 Belize share of global exports	0.01%	0.00%			→
<b>Challenge Remain</b>					●

*Source: IMF, World Bank, OECD and PSIP (Ministry of Economic Development)*

#### (i) Finance (17.1 to 17.5)

Based on the financial indicators analysed, some moderate improvements were noted. In terms of total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, this has tended to remain stagnated averaging 24% between 2019 to 2021. There is room for additional domestic resource mobilization based on the proportion of GDP. According to the OECD, net ODA flows to Belize have increased twofold from US \$35.5 million in 2019 to US \$77.3 million in 2021. A major challenge remains Belize's classification by the World Bank as a small upper-middle income economy. Regarding the volume of remittances as a proportion of GDP, this has also shown moderate improvement. Finally, debt service as a proportion of total GDP has also shown moderate improvement from 23% in 2020 to 15% in 2021. This improvement comes at the heels of the Government's continued efforts to restructure its debt, including the recent Blue Bond Agreement with The Nature Conservancy (haircut of US\$250 million) and debt reduction with Government of Venezuela (US\$125 million debt reduction).

In terms of leveraging partnerships for additional financial resources to support SDG acceleration, a Financial Landscape Analysis concluded in 2022 shows a total of US \$981 million in financial flows from various domestic and international sources. Opportunities remain to leverage additional financial sources including but not limited to foreign direct investment (FDI), remittances, international NGOs, and the private sector. Indicator 17.5.1 calls for investment promotion regimes. Belize is now implementing its National Investment Policy and Strategy (NIPS) launched in July 2022. The NIPS focuses on nine policy pillars to improve the business climate in Belize while establishing a public framework to steer domestic and foreign investments.<sup>39</sup>

### **(ii) Technology (17.6 to 17.7)**

In terms of technology, Belize has entered into several science and technology cooperation agreements and programmes contributing to indicator 17.6.1. These vary across sector; however, some of the most notable technology partnerships can be highlighted in education. For example, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MOESCT) is partnering with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to develop the Itz'at STEAM Academy to open September 2023. The partnership aims to prepare secondary students for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). This is further complemented by the recent partnership with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for Skills for the Future Program in Belize for a total of US \$20 million with US \$5 million in grant funding from GPE and US \$15 million as a loan from the IDB.<sup>40</sup> Apart from MIT, another example is the partnership launched on 11 May 2023 between the Government of Belize and GIGA, a global initiative by UNICEF and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to connect every school to the internet. Belize has also engaged with other technology partners including Google, Microsoft and also the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) which signed an agreement with the U.S. Embassy and MOECST to work towards making the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program available to students in Belize.<sup>41</sup> Under the SDG indicators, Belize shows a moderate improvement in terms of fixed internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants which has increased from 7.61% in 2019 to 9% in 2021. This is lower than the world average of 16.92% according to the World Bank. There has also been moderate improvement in the proportion of individuals using the internet (mobile or fixed broadband) which increased from 57% in 2019 to 62% in 2022. In responding to the 38% population gap, the Government continues to implement its National Digital Agenda 2022-2025 to support national connectivity efforts.

### **(iii) Capacity-building (17.9)**

Belize also continues to obtain support to implement effective and targeted capacity-building for national development plans and SDG implementation, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. Though there is a lack of data on indicator 17.9.1 on the total dollar value of financial and technical assistance committed to Belize, an analysis of the government's Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) can be used as a proxy. The data

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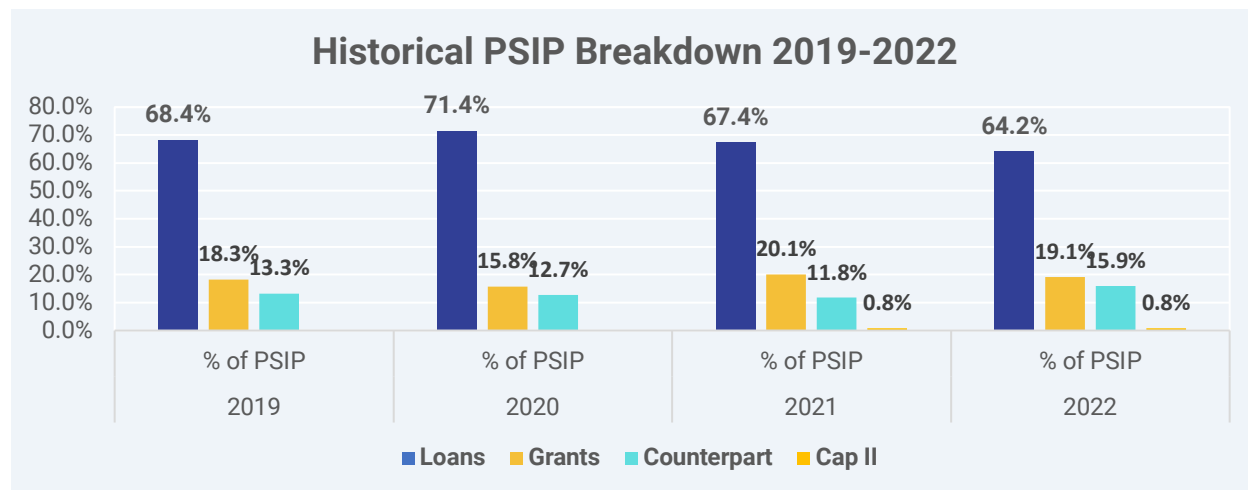
<sup>39</sup> <https://edition.channel5belize.com/archives/237971>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.stvincenttimes.com/inter-development-bank-idb-gpe-to-fund-belize-school-reforms/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://edition.channel5belize.com/archives/240532>

between 2019 to 2022 shows a slight stagnation over time with a dip in the total PSIP value of US \$0.84 billion in 2019 to US \$0.78 billion in 2022. Over the period, the portfolio included an average of US \$0.52 billion in loans and US \$0.14 billion in grants. The **chart** below provides a breakdown of the PSIP by type where it is noted that on average, loans encompass 67.9% of the portfolio while grants make up 18.3%. A **key consideration in expanding the PSIP partnership and donor pool is the Government’s uptake capacity for programme implementation.**

**Graph 5: Public Sector Investments 2019-2022**



**Source:** Ministry of Finance, *Economic Development and Investment*  
<https://med.gov.bz/quarterly-psip-reports/>

**(iv) Trade (17.10 – 17.12)**

Regarding trade, the indicators highlight a general decreasing trend. The weighted tariff average for Belize shows an increase from 11.2% in 2019 to 18.7% in 2020 based on World Bank data. This is much higher than the average LAC rate of 3.5% and global rate of 2.6%. It indicates that generally, imports to Belize face higher tariffs causing higher cost of goods. Under indicator 17.11.1, Belize’s share of global exports highlights a stagnation for several years since 2014 between 0.01% (2019) to 0% (2020). Despite having a low share of global exports, Belize has witnessed export growth of 16.7% from US \$244 million in 2019 to US \$286 million in 2022.<sup>42</sup> According to the International Trade Centre, Belize’s top export partners include the U.S. (24.9%), the U.K (20.2%), followed by Guatemala (11%). Belize is a part of the CARICOM regional trade agreement (RTA) and currently has 19 trade agreements in force. It is currently in negotiations with El Salvador and Mexico for potential Partial Scope Agreements (PSAs) such as the PSA negotiated with Guatemala. Belize export is based on food and live animals making up 92% of all exports. Four commodities (sugar/molasses, bananas, marine products mostly lobster conch and shrimp, and citrus products: orange/ citrus concentrate, squash, oil, pulp) make up 72% of all exports. Seven commodities (wood, papayas, crude petroleum, pepper sauce, red kidney beans, black eye peas, corn meal and animal feed) makes up an additional 18% of all exports.

<sup>42</sup> <https://intracen.org/our-work/regions-and-countries/latin-america-and-the-caribbean/belize>

This highlights the need for export expansion and diversification to increase Belize's share of global exports under SDG 17.

**(v) Systemic Issues (17.13 – 17.19)**

Systemic issues encompass policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships, as well as data, monitoring and accountability. Indicator 17.14.1 assesses the mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development. In Belize, a dedicated Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) created in 2012 serves as the country's focal point to the 2030 SDG agenda. The Unit's mission is to support national processes to achieve sustainable development through an integrated and participatory approach. It is also tasked with reporting on SDG indicators. As the Unit builds its strategic plan, it has also been identified as a key actor in the Government's implementation of the #PlanBelize Medium-term Development Strategy (MTDS) 2022-2026. This plan is also linked to indicator 17.15.1 assessing the extent of use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools by providers of development cooperation. The Government has launched its MTDS in early 2023 sharing it with a wide array of development cooperation partners; however, data remains lacking on the extent to which it is used in planning and programming. A Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework for the MTDS is also being finalized with a request for support from the UN. Regarding multi-stakeholder partnerships, indicator 17.17.1 assesses the amount of US \$ committed to public-private and civil society partnerships. Though data remains lacking on the dollar amounts, the Cabinet of Belize has approved a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) policy and the creation of a PPP Unit. Its aim is to mobilize private sector capital that support large scale investment in infrastructure and other development projects aligned with the government's priorities.

Finally, regarding data, monitoring and accountability, indicator 17.18.3 assess whether countries have a national statistical plan that is fully funded and under implementation. The Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) has had attempts to organize Belize's National Statistical System (BNSS) through a National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) 2011-2012. In developing an updated strategy, the SIB has launched consultations in partnership with PARIS21 to develop an updated NSDS for Belize. Technical support has also been sought from the UN to seek funding for elements of the BNSS implementation. Finally, related to indicator 17.19.2, Belize also recently completed its 2022 population and housing census with the last conducted in 2010.

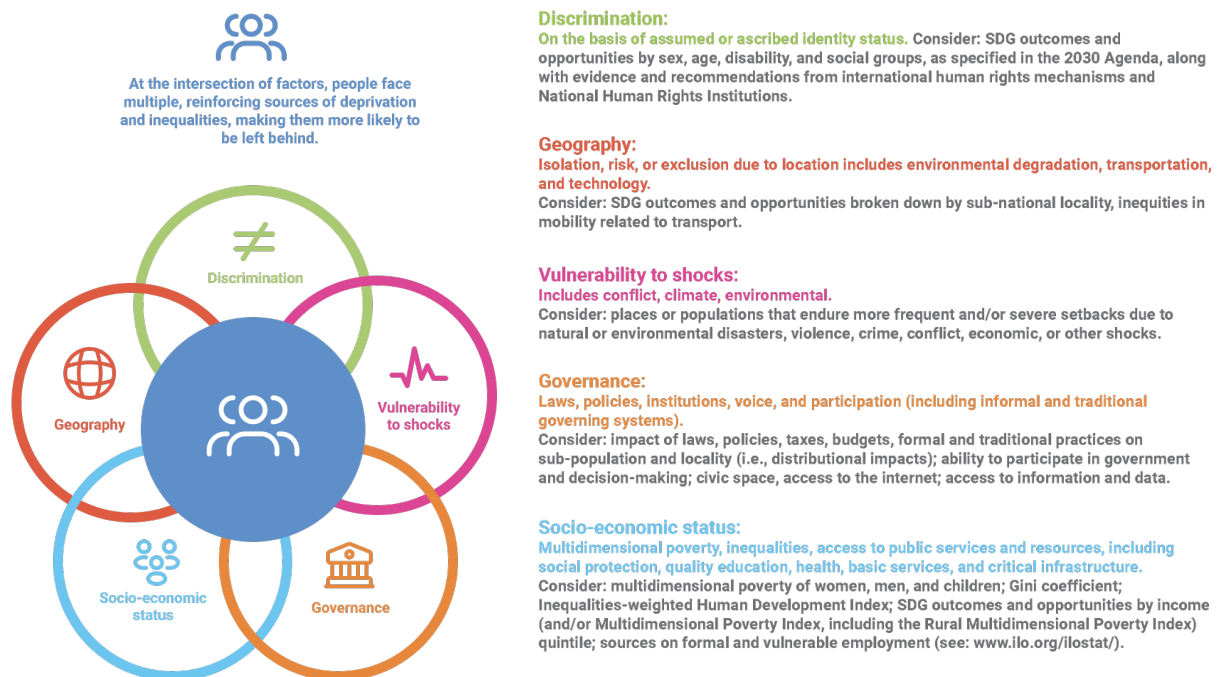
Furthermore, the importance of the systematic collection and use of sex-disaggregated data used and integrated across all sectors should be addressed. This serves as an enabler for policy and decision-makers in fostering a more inclusive and equitable landscape, that facilitates the appropriate allocation of resources for men and women and contributes to sustainable gender-responsive development.

# 4. Leaving No one Behind (Income Inequality, Economic Exclusion & Discrimination)

Operationalizing the principle of Leaving No-one Behind (LNOB) is central to achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2030. Furthermore, Agenda 2030 envisions a world ‘of universal respect for human rights and human dignity’.<sup>43</sup> As Belize, moves closer to the target date of the 2030 Agenda, this CCA update brings into sharper focus Belize’s progress towards achieving the SDG goals, the populations who should be better served by them and the underlying rights that govern these goals. Indeed, over 90 percent of SDG targets overlap with human rights obligations. The CCA update will further strengthen the alignment of UN country level planning and programming to improve attention to the operationalization of LNOB. The following diagram illustrates the key factors and their intersection in determining Belize’s LNOB population.

**Figure 3: LNOB Factors**

**Five factors of LNOB: Assessing the evidence of who is left behind and to what degree?**



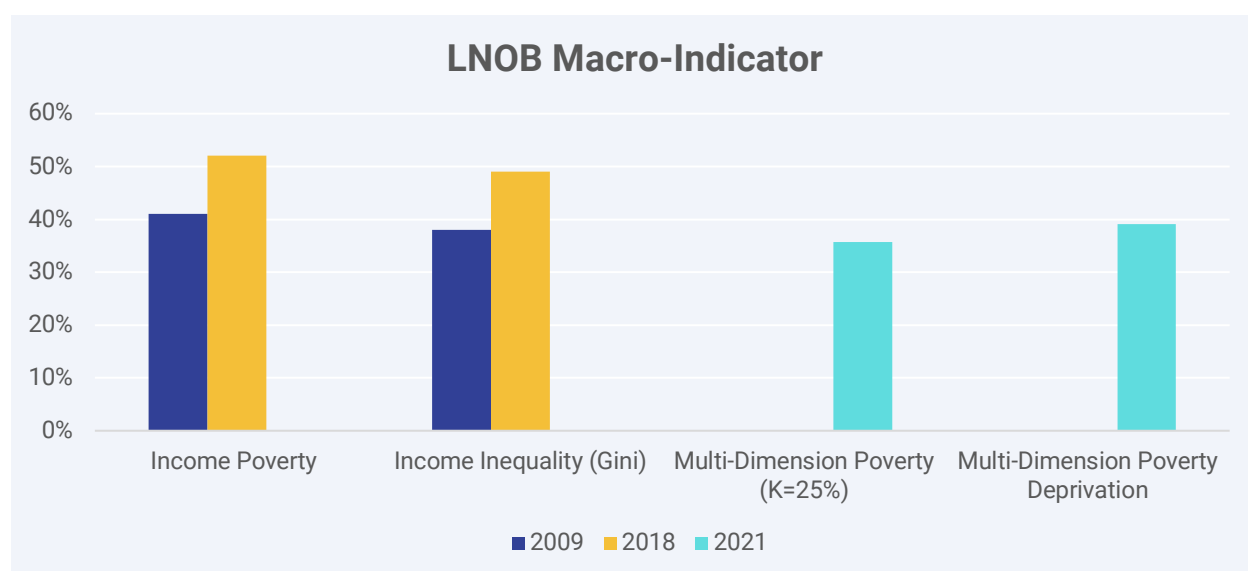
<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/leaving-no-one-behind-unsdg-operational-guide-un-country-teams>

<sup>43</sup> Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986.



Economic progress should enable that government policies and programs to reach the populations left furthest behind, unfortunately, some groups have not benefited from the improvements in the economy in the post-pandemic period. Belize’s economic output at the end of 2021 had recovered to levels exceeding those recorded in the pre-pandemic period, **but some populations in Belize are yet to gain equitable access to the surplus generated that the economic recovery had accumulated.** Henceforth, the importance of the state to begin to halt and reverse the emergence of populations that are being pushed into socio-economic marginalization and conditions that erode their human rights. In the wake of the pandemic, some populations were able to access Government services aimed at buttressing the direct impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and households, yet others fell further behind owing to increasing vulnerabilities that were exacerbated by COVID-19.

**Graph 6: LNOB Macro-Indicators**



**Source:** Poverty Study 2018/2019; Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index 2021, SIB

## Who is most likely to experience economic discrimination and marginalization in Belize?

Following the UN Belize conducting strategic dialogues in 2022, supporting the UN Secretary General’s Call to Action on Human Rights (C2A), the UN Country Team (UNCT) identified that some populations more than others were experiencing conditions that were negatively impacting their human rights and their abilities to live a dignified life. The UNCT identified that some of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations disadvantaged by social and cultural norms included women, children, adolescent, and youth, (including male and female youth from impoverished and high crime urban communities), people living with disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers and migrant populations. Additionally, this CCA update also provides a brief focus on those who are left behind owing to their geographic location.

## Women, Mothers and the Female Labour Force

### Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

In the period constituting this CCA update, women were experiencing diminishing access to sexual and reproductive health (S and RH) services and commodities. This decline is notable given that adolescent mothers comprised at least 74/100000 pregnancies, reflecting that out of 7500 births in Belize, approximately 1500 were by adolescents.<sup>44</sup> At the height of the pandemic in Belize, reproductive services (contraceptives, condoms) were curtailed to allow for the diversion of more resources and attention to the COVID-19 response. Although the laws on access to sexual and reproductive health by young people has been ambiguous even prior to COVID-19, in its wake there is now greater uncertainty on how readily accessible reproductive services and commodities are to this population, including adolescents. At the same time, the provision of sexual education was discontinued as lessons went online. In the virtual classroom space, young people's access to this pertinent information was further reduced. The UNFPA *State of World Population Report, 2022* indicates that only 43% of Belize's laws and regulations guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education.

Summarily, some of the main challenges that vulnerable populations face in accessing SR and H indicate that:

- Young people – male and female - have limited access to S&RH services.
- Young people – male and female – do not have access to and use of civic spaces to claim their right to health care and services, including S and RH services.

Sexual and reproductive rights have been defined and agreed in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme for Action and various regional instruments, such as the Montevideo Consensus. The realization of these rights will support other forms of human progress. But rights cannot be used mainly to meet fertility targets or accelerate economic growth or curb climate change but rather calls for action on the conditions that surround reproduction. The Montevideo Consensus on Population & Development outlines priority actions that address the conditions through its Priority actions:

- A. Full integration of population dynamics into sustainable development with equality and respect for human rights,
- B. Rights, needs, responsibilities and requirements of girls, boys, adolescents and youth,
- C. Ageing, social protection and socio-economic challenges,
- D. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services
- E. Gender equality,
- F. International migration and protection of the human rights of all migrants,
- G. Territorial inequality, spatial mobility and vulnerability,
- H. Indigenous peoples: inter-culturalism and rights,
- I. Afro-descendants: rights and combating racial discrimination, and

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<sup>44</sup> as per the last Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

J. Frameworks for the implementation of the future regional agenda on population and development.

In 2023, countries of the LAC region will report 10-year progress of the implementation of the Consensus since adapted in 2013.

### Maternal Health

The trends in the maternal mortality rate 2000 - 2020 shows that except for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) declined in all regions. The MMR point estimate in Belize increased from 86 in 2019 to 130 in 2020. With increasing MMRs, even though, classified as moderate, Belize like countries with high MMR remain at great risk. The leading causes of maternal deaths which include bleeding, pregnancy-related infections, complications from unsafe abortion are all largely preventable and treatable with access to high-quality and respectful healthcare. Improved community-centred primary health care can meet the needs of women, children and adolescents and enable equitable access to critical services such as assisted births and pre- and postnatal care, nutrition, and family planning.

In the pandemic, at least 50% of maternal deaths could be attributed to COVID-19. Restrictions on social distancing and geographical places of residence have affected women's access to maternal services which, prior to the pandemic was already very limited.

Some of the main challenges to advancing maternal health include but are not limited to:

- Inadequate number and disproportionate distribution of midwives.
- Under-funding of primary health care systems.
- Social determinants, including income, ethnicity, norms and cultural belief and practices that put some populations at greater risk; and
- Limited access to perinatal mental health care services.

The UNFPA State of World Population Report indicates that 94% of births in Belize are attended by skilled health personnel compared to the world (82%) and Latin America (95%)

### Economic Exclusion

Women in Belize face significant challenges in accessing resources. Their access to productive resources has been influenced by factors such as the sexual division of labor, sociocultural expectations about women's roles in society, social mobility, and power dynamics between men and women. Gender inequality is not only a matter of social justice: it also has significant implications for economic growth and sustainable development, particularly for rural communities.<sup>45</sup> More females than males in Belize stay longer in the formal education system to receive higher levels of qualification, but this investment is yet to boost the overall employment levels of women. Higher qualification levels are still not sufficient to remove the barriers that most females face as they seek to participate in the Belizean economy. **The underutilization of the**

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<sup>45</sup> UNESCO. 2023. Water Management and Gender in the Rural Farming Ecosystem of Belize. Kingston, UNESCO

**skills and resources of women as part of the labor force, preclude them from exercising their right to individual as well as collective development in Belize.**

**Table 4: Labor Force by Gender – October 2022**

Employment Factor	Male	Female	Total
Labour Force Participation	73.44%	44.45	58.70%
Unemployment Rate	4.00%	6.80%	5.00%
Under-employment Rate	6%	7%	6.70%
Monthly Income	\$691.50	\$656.90	\$678.50

**Source:** Labor Force Survey October 2022

According to the SIB (2021), the labor market is more receptive to at least primary level education, and this population constitutes the bulk of the labor force at a share of 38.2 percent; those with tertiary level qualifications, make up 21.6 per cent of the workforce.<sup>46</sup> In 2022, the unemployed labor force was described as follows: 12% with less than primary school education, 53% had primary school qualifications, 21% had secondary and 10% had tertiary level qualifications. It may still be too early to conclude that the workforce is shifting toward higher qualifications, which would signal a move away from the reliance of industry on primary and non-technical secondary education qualifications, (which favors men) and toward higher educational qualifications and technical skills which should favor women.

It is worth noting that Belize ratified the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and that the government has also committed to undertake, declare, and pursue a national policy designed to promote, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in respect thereof (Art. 2). However, the consistently low female participation rates in the labor force (44.3% for females versus 73.37% for males), reduces women’s ability to escape poverty and have a decent standard of living. The loss of income for this population has far-reaching effects since women are expected to bear multiple social burdens including care provision even as they have low or no incomes.

Belize is also a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and in its last concluding observations to the State, the CEDAW Committee communicated its concern about the large number of women who are heads of household and who are particularly vulnerable to poverty (Para 15). The Committee urged the State to fully implement Article 11 of CEDAW and to implement measures to encourage and support women’s entrepreneurship, including by raising awareness and providing access to credit. The Committee also recommended that efforts be strengthened to eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical . . .” (Para. 26). The table below shows the economic cost of high female unemployment, conveying that females in Belize are not enjoying their full economic right comparable to males and that their economic exclusion will slow progress towards the SDGs. The already high level of economic exclusion and income inequality

<sup>46</sup> SIB, LFS Report, 2020-2021.

experienced by women in Belize will push many further behind, precluding them from exercising their right to work and to a decent standard of living.

**Table 5: Gender Income Gap**

Labour Statistics	Income Loss for Female Higher Unemployment Rate		
	With 6.8% (Female)	With 4.0% (Men)	Annual Loss
Female Working Age Population	165,019	165,019	
Female Labour Force Participation	73,102	73,102	
Female Unemployment	4,944	2924.08	
Female Monthly Wage (US \$)	657	657	
Female Annual Income Loss (\$US)	\$ 38,978,496	\$ 23,053,447	\$ 15,925,049

**Assumption:** Higher female Unemployment is on account of gender bias.

**Source:** Labor Force Survey 2021, Statistical Institute of Belize

In 2023, the Government of Belize is expected to submit its newest report to the CEDAW Committee at its 84<sup>th</sup> Session. By doing so, the State can communicate its progress on some of the Committee’s concluding remarks including progress on efforts for the formulation of multiple updates to the National Gender Policy. The Committee should also be informed of the instituted social protection standards supportive of girls’ education, comparable maternity leave, and strengthened sexual harassment and trafficking in persons legislation.

The UN Declaration on the Right to Development articulates that effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process. On this basis, the Declaration specifies that appropriate economic and social reforms should be carried out with a view to eradicating all social injustices (Article 8).

**Some of the main challenges faced by women to exercise their economic rights include that:**

- Many women and female youth face social, cultural, and economic discrimination to access employment and jobs in Belize.
- Women and female youth still lack access to care and social protection services that support their engagement in the formal workforce.
- Women lack access to finance and credit services to improve their livelihood and income generating opportunities.
- In industries such as farming, land is used as collateral for credit and financing of agricultural initiatives. Unequal distribution of land ownership between male and female farmers hinders access to credit and financing, which puts women at a disadvantage when it comes to acquiring agricultural inputs. There is need to address these inequalities in rural areas where traditional gender roles and stereotypes appear to be limiting women employment and economic development opportunities.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> UNESCO 2023. Water Management and Gender in the Rural Farming Ecosystem of Belize. Kingston, UNESCO Publishing

## Children

### Child Poverty

Prior to COVID-19, children already comprised about 50% of the poor in Belize. Between 2018 and 2021, this figure increased so that now 60% of children aged 0–14 years live in poor households; a further 12% of these children are considered as extremely poor (Statistical SIB 2021). The results of UNICEF multi-dimensional poverty assessment (CPA 2021) have also shown the extent of the deprivation that children experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a group, the burden of poverty falls heavily on children such that 51% are deprived in, at least, one of the six (6) key identified dimensions: health, nutrition, housing, education, wash, or sanitation (UNICEF MPA, 2021). UNICEF’s MPA demonstrated that multidimensional poverty has exacerbated since the prior assessment of 2015-2016 helps; deprivation increased from 49% to 60% in Toledo; and from 24% to 44% in the South Side of Belize City. This recent analysis also revealed that the *deprivation in education* was the main driver of multidimensional poverty in 2020, and sanitation was the second recurrent deprivation.

### Child health

Previously, Belize achieved herd immunity for childhood diseases with 96% of children being adequately vaccinated with routine vaccines. However, since the onset of the pandemic, coverage for most of these antigens declined. In addition to COVID-19, this decline in antigen poses a significant health risk to children. Furthermore, the institutional capacity to respond to any disease outbreak in this population is inadequate and Belize would be severely challenged to address such an occurrence effectively. Belize like other countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region has reported a decline in immunization to a low of 70% with some recovery taking place during 2022 (BCG- 92%; DPT3 and Polio3- 84%. MMR1 coverage remained low at 78%). The country had historically maintained high levels of vaccination coverage but experienced a considerable decrease over the last few years. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this trend, and more children have missed essential vaccines while migration also contributed to the reduction among children in the rural and border areas of Belize. The prevalence of zero-dose children in the rural area was 8.7 % and 4.7% in the urban area. The poorest households are almost three times more likely to have zero doses, unlike children in the wealthiest households <sup>4849</sup>

Some of the key issues driving deprivation among children include:

- Inadequate number and disproportionate distribution of health workers
- Poor data management
- Under-funding of primary health care systems

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<sup>48</sup> THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S CHILDREN 2023: FOR EVERY CHILD, VACCINATION

<sup>49</sup> Zero dose children are those who have received not a single dose of any vaccine at all since birth.

- Insufficient risk communication and community engagement
- Social determinants, including income, ethnicity, norms and cultural belief and practices that put some populations at greater risk

### Access to justice

Children, as a population, come in contact and in conflict with the law despite their various identity categories - asylum seekers, migrant, and marginalised populations. On average, the justice-actors interface with more than 500 children in conflict with the law and 1,000 children in contact with the law annually. In Belize, 51% of children aged 1-2 years and 76% of children 3-4 yrs. were subjected to, at least, one form of psychological or physical punishment by household members (MICS 2015). Notably, children zero to four years are most exposed to violence in the home. In 2022, children were notably visible as both victims and alleged perpetrators in the spike in gun violence (UNICEF Belize). **The 2022 Situation Analysis of Adolescent Health (MOHW, 2018) presented that 82.4% of all homicides as gang related and 55.6% of gang members reported being involved in a shooting while 46.7% reported having injured or killed someone.**

### Some major challenges impacting children include matters related to:

- Participation and Exclusion – Children face multiple challenges to access education across the life cycle. Relative wealth status, geographic location, and ethnicity remain key factors which influence school participation and exclusion.
- Repetition and Drop-Out - One of the challenges confronting primary-school aged boys and girls is the high rate of repetition and dropout which indicates that children are not completing primary school.
- The country faces challenge in accurately identifying children who are out of school, measuring the scope and complexity of exclusion, its causes, and integrating this data analysis in policy and planning.

## Youth

### Youth unemployment

Across the Caribbean, Belize has consistently reported high youth unemployment rates. In 2022, the unemployment rate for youth reached 11.8% overall, with male and female youth experiencing unemployment levels of 8% and 17.8% respectively (LFS, 2022). While there is no recent data available (since the last CCA, 2021) to establish the full extent of child labour there is expectation of an increased uptake of children in the period of the global pandemic.

### Some major challenges faced by the youth:

- **Skills development** – There are limited opportunities for quality skills, development training and spaces, apprenticeship placements, and other forms of work-based learning for young people.
- **Industrial relations** – Concern by workers on matters related to return to work, living wage and social protection will also bear on youth employment.



- **Job creation** – An enabling environment for job creation where the youth are involved, and which facilitates them to easily scale and expand their businesses is generally absent in Belize.

## People living with a disability

Young people who have a disability are challenged to find a pathway to work and gainful employment for a decent standard of living. Those who live in a rural area are more likely to be left furthest behind since services in remote areas are minimal or absent. Currently, there are no policies developed to specifically promote the rights of people with a disability to work and to earn a decent living. There is need for national policies or legislation that demonstrably protect and promote the rights of people living with a disability as a group to assure that they are not discriminated against as they seek to make a living to support their households.

Information and data to indicate the extent of disability in the overall population is also not available and this bears on how they are supported to navigate public spaces.<sup>50</sup> Generally, accessibility of public infrastructure and buildings, emergency preparedness and shelter management, and jobs and vacancy announcements do not communicate or explicitly practice the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination for people living with a disability. Workplaces and public facilities in general are not mandated to meet, even at the minimum, the physical or other needs of people living with disabilities.<sup>51</sup> The legislation on disability is also outdated and does not appropriately address the rights of persons who have a disability.

### **Some critical issues affecting people living with a disability include that:**

- A full assessment of the extent of people living with a disability in Belize has not been completed.
- Technical assistance that directly targets and include organizations for people living with a disability (OPDs) is minimal or absent.
- Legislative and institutional frameworks to advance the rights of people living with disabilities are not developed and implemented; more advocacy needs to take place for legislation that addresses the factors affecting the population with disabilities.

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<sup>51</sup> The Draft Disability Act would establish a national commission on persons with disability that would address all these claims.

## Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

COVID-19 restrictions on land movements halted the entry of people to Belize who wanted to seek protection and asylum. Those who managed to enter could not be registered as asylum seekers due to the provision of two weeks application period with Refugee Department in Belmopan and if not met faced asylum claim denial,<sup>52</sup> and considered as having entered the country irregularly. Concern remains over access to fair, efficient and timely completion of asylum procedures. In late 2022, there were over 4,130 persons registered as asylum seekers with the Refugee Department, but their cases remain pending (some for over five years) which means they are legally restricted to work or earn wages to maintain their households. Asylum seekers are not officially allowed to work or hold paying jobs. Their inability to work through official means can push them to do so informally or through other, unregulated means that can put them at risk.

The number of migrants in Belize has significantly increased over the past three decades. The total number of migrants in country by 2020 was 62,000 (49.7% migrant women) or 15.6% of the population. Most migrants who have settled in Belize are mostly from Central America, and in smaller numbers from Haiti, China and African countries, mostly Nigeria. Migrants in Belize tend to be fleeing gang-related violence, and political-related violence (asylum seekers) and unemployment (economic migrants). In 2022, the Government of Belize, through the Immigration Department, implemented an Amnesty Program which accepted applications from August 2022 to March 2023 to reduce the vulnerabilities of migrants with irregular status and allowing access to forcibly displaced population including asylum seekers to regularize status in Belize as a viable durable solution. **An estimated 12,765 persons applied for the Amnesty Program.** <sup>53</sup>

In relation to legal identity, generally, some populations, especially people living in rural areas, indigenous populations, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and children are challenged to claim their right to an identity. For Belize, proof of legal identity documents includes Belize Birth Certificate, Belizean Nationality Certificate, Belize Passport, and Social Security Card or Voter's ID. For foreign nationals, these proofs include a passport of the country of origin, national identity/identification card (sometimes referred to as cedula), birth certificates with a certified English translation accompanying documents not written in the English language and Belize Permanent Residence Card. It is estimated that approximately 4 per cent of the population is unregistered, and 14 percent of those who are registered do not have a birth certificate on hand. Moreover, the Vital Statistics Office has established that around 50 per cent of live births in the Toledo District have been registered, meaning that most people in the district are not officially

<sup>52</sup> The Supreme Court of Belize declared that failure by an applicant to submit an application for recognition of refugee status within the fourteen day time limit prescribed by section B(1) of the Act does not preclude the Refugee Eligibility Committee from accepting and considering applications for recognition of refugee status and the Refugee Office is obliged to receive all applications presented and to provide same to the Refugee Eligibility Committee - 31 January 2020.

<sup>53</sup> International Migration Data Portal, UN available [International Data | Migration data portal](#)

counted. Improving access to legal identity can strengthen essential services coverage and exercise of this basic human right.<sup>54</sup>

### Challenges:

- Belize does not have an Immigration Policy that can drive improvements in migration governance, address its challenges, and leverage opportunities that can contribute to national development. The Refugee Act also needs to be updated to allow for a more efficient processing of claims.
- Lack of capacity for data management and analysis as well as the unavailability of asylum services at points of entry

## Limited Social Protection

Economic exclusion and income inequality are also exacerbated by Belize's nascent social protection system. The absence of a comprehensive system may also be influencing the exit of females from the workforce who have cited responsibilities for children and elderly care as bearing on their unwillingness to seek employment.<sup>55</sup> Currently, the social protection system in Belize is fragmented and underfunded, and this constrains the State's capacity to cohesively address the rights and basic needs of the populations that are most vulnerable and left furthest behind. These populations – primarily, the urban poor, people living with disabilities, poor men, women, youth, and children who live in the rural areas - experience persistent poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion. Multi-dimensional poverty linked to COVID-19 has also shown the extent of the deprivation of rights that children experience in relation to access to education, quality health care, safe water, justice, and equal opportunities.

## Geographic marginalisation

### Where economic discrimination and marginalization remains persistent in Belize

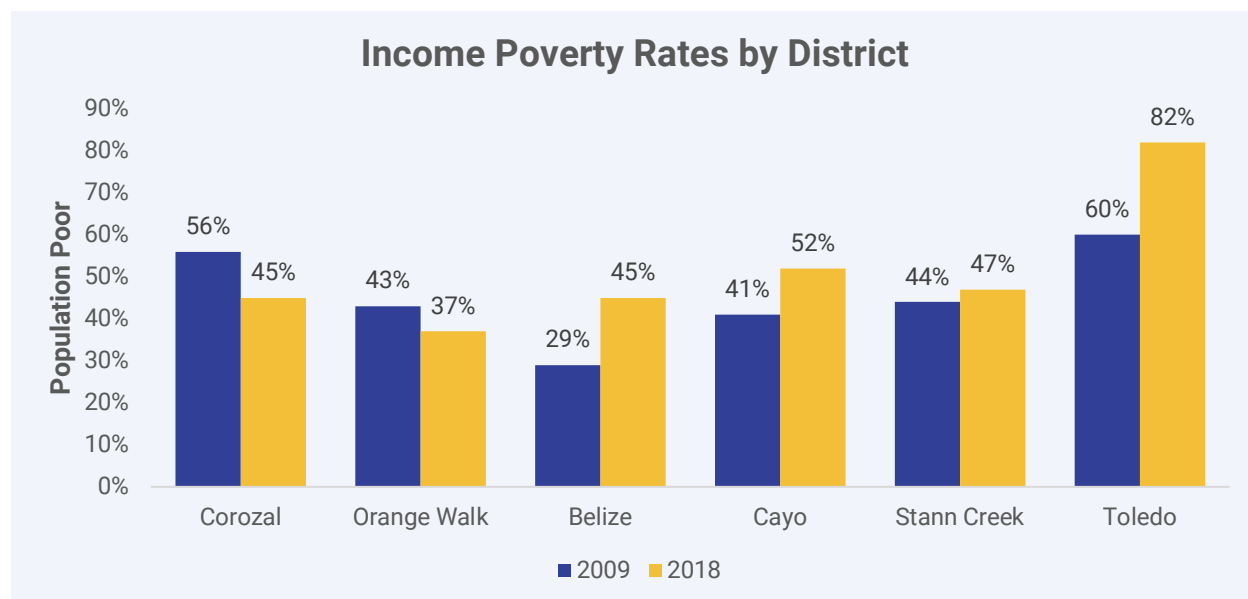
The poverty rates by district (SIB, 2018) indicated that prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, both poverty and inequality increased in Belize generally, and specifically among certain populations. When compared to the national poverty level established in the Country Poverty Assessment (CPA) 2009, the recent Poverty Study, (SIB, 2018) showed that poverty had increased in all districts, except for the Corozal District. Indeed, the Corozal District was the only district that halted and reversed poverty levels in the nine-year (2009 – 2018) period under review by the SIB.

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<sup>54</sup> During 2020 UNICEF Mobile campaign boosts increased registered births in Belize despite COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/stories/mobile-campaign-boosts-registered-births-belize-despite-covid-19>

<sup>55</sup> SIB (2022) Labour Force Survey.

Graph 7: Income Poverty Rates by District



Notably, in Toledo, the rate of poverty continued an upward trajectory, reaching 82% to indicate an increase of 22 percentage points.<sup>56</sup> Prior to the 2009 CPA and thereafter, the Toledo District persistently maintains the unenviable status of the poorest district in Belize. On closer analysis of the population characteristics, Toledo is also home to the largest number of migrants indicating that other vulnerable and poor populations are settling more frequently in Toledo.

Opportunities for work and income generation in Toledo are still the lowest nationally. While farming activities predominate in rural Belize, households in Toledo are least likely to generate incomes from this kind of agricultural production to lift them out of poverty. In the other districts, there are industrial and commercial opportunities which provide for off-farm work, but these are not available in Toledo. Employment and income generation is therefore less accessible to the people of Toledo. In accounting for the growth in GDP and the surplus generated by the Government of Belize in 2022, the contributing sectors - the Corozal Freezone, tourism, business process outsourcing (BPOs), and agricultural exports – are still nascent or absent in Toledo.

The right to development recognizes that measures of well-being should include economic growth, as well as social, cultural, and environmental development that are inclusive and participatory. The stark and consistent poverty levels in Toledo as compared to the rest of the country, demonstrate that some populations and regions were already further behind, prior to the onset of the global pandemic in 2020 and at the time of last CCA (2021). However, the economic rebounds such as that which was achieved in 2022, will have little or no impact on the populations in Toledo without shifts in the structure of the economy and the formulation of fiscal and

<sup>56</sup> Data for the Corozal District showed that by 2018, this district had halted and reversed its poverty level in the pre-pandemic period.

development policies that address geographic isolation, persistent economic exclusion and historical marginalization. In their absence, Belize will be challenged to achieve the targets of the SDGs and Agenda 2030. There is an urgent necessity to develop and implement policies of inclusive growth, including minimum essential levels of economic and social rights for all, without discrimination.

**Some of the main challenges to eliminating geographic marginalisation, especially for Toledo include:**

- The absence of comprehensive, district level data and analyses to determine the extent of poverty and deprivation in Toledo; and
- The lack of an integrated, targeted, costed and funded pro-poor program of response for the Toledo District.

**LNOB Results for 2021**

An empirical analysis was done of LNOB population using data generated from the Labour Force Survey 2021 and the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index generated for 2021. Results of the analysis are in appendices I, II, III and IV using variables of sex, rural/ urban population, districts, and ethnic groups for deprivation covering living standard, health, education and employment.

**Table 6: LNOB Survey 2021**

Factors (LNOB)	Variables	Indicators by Head of Households	Results
Discrimination	Sex (Male & Female);	<b>Living Standards</b> (Squatters and Dwelling Construction; <b>Health</b> (Toilet Facility, Access to Potable Water, Food Security); <b>Education</b> (Years of Schooling); <b>Employment</b> (Formal & Informal Employment);	LNOB population described as Mayan and East Indian, Rural for Both Sexes living in the Districts of Toledo, Cayo and Stann Creek
Geography	Rural & Urban;		
Socio-Economic Status	Districts; Ethnic Groups		
Vulnerability to Shocks			

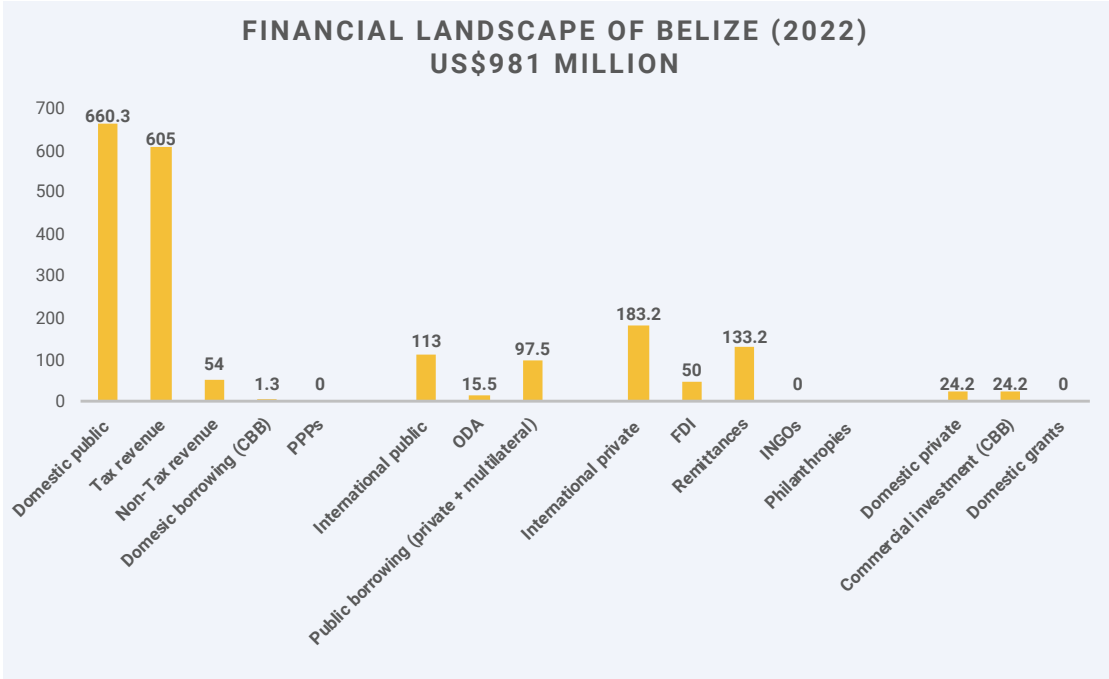
**Source:** *Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index & LFS sept. 2021 SIB*

# 5. Financial landscape

For 2022 the financial landscape was estimated to be US\$981 million, based on Gob budget and financial flows:

- Domestic Public financing flows making up US\$660.3 million (67.3% of the financing envelope) with tax revenues contributing 91.7% and the remaining 8.3% coming mostly from non-tax revenue. Government total expenditure (excluding debt amortization) was estimated at \$697.3 million leaving an overall deficit of US\$17.5 million and a financing gap of US\$61.6 million for fiscal year 2022/2023.
- International Public Financing flows contributing US\$113 million (11.5% of the financing envelope) through ODA and public sector borrowing from both private and public sources. ODA provided \$15.5 million while public sector borrowing contributed \$48.7 million.
- International private financing flows generated US\$183.2 million (18.7% of the financing envelope) with Foreign Direct Investment generating US\$50 million while remittances responsible for US\$133.2 million. This sector is under-estimated since it does not include the International NGOs and the philanthropic organizations due to lack of readily available data.
- Net Domestic private financing flows are estimated at US\$24.2 million (2.5% of the financing envelope) through the commercial financial sector. This sector is underestimated since it only includes credit flows from the traditional financial sector.

**Graph 8: Financial Landscape 2021**



**Source:** <https://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/DRAFT-ESTIMATES-OF-REVENUE-AND-EXPENDITURE-FOR-FISCAL-YEAR-2023-24.pdf>; Belize Financial Landscape Analysis 2022

The 2022 Development Partner’s Forum provides the engagement strategies for Belize’s together with development priorities as well as the investment plan for the period 2022-2025. The following table presents existing IFIs’ engagement in Belize (ongoing and in the pipeline) by strategic objective from select development partners.

**Table 7: Government of Belize Development Priorities and IFI’s Engagement (US\$) 2022-2025**

GOB STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE (US Dollars)	CABEI	CDB	CDF	EU	IDB	IFAD	TOTALS
Citizen Security	\$ 32,000,000	\$ 5,941,000	-	-	\$ 21,052,395	-	\$ 58,993,395
Econ. Transformation & Growth	\$ 24,000,000	\$ 138,938,203	\$ 6,552,487	\$ 24,328,462	\$ 108,683,870	-	\$ 302,503,022
Environmental Protection	-	\$ 20,000,000	-	-	\$ 11,774,000	-	\$ 31,774,000
Poverty Reduction	\$ 724,750	\$ 51,000,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 10,920,640	\$ 12,900,000	\$ 8,000,000	\$ 84,345,390
Trade Deficit Reduction (Good Governance)	-	\$ 115,595	-	-	-	-	\$ 115,595
	-	-	\$ 100,000	-	\$ 850,000	-	\$ 950,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 56,724,750</b>	<b>\$ 215,994,798</b>	<b>\$ 7,452,487</b>	<b>\$ 35,249,102</b>	<b>\$ 155,260,265</b>	<b>\$ 8,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 478,681,402</b>

*Source: Inaugural Development Partners Forum, Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment, May 2022.*

## Major Development in the Financing Landscape

Belize completed its fourth external debt re-organization operation in November 2021 through a debt-for-nature conservation swap. Bondholders received a cash pay-out of 54.5 cents on each dollar of the outstanding bond, representing 45.5% haircut and a reduction in public sector debt/GDP of 10%.<sup>57</sup>

This translated to creditors receiving a sum of US\$301.25 million in exchange for bonds with a face value of US\$552.9 million, leading to US\$ 251.65 million in debt forgiveness. Belize financed the US dollar bond purchase with funds provided by the Nature Conservancy (TNC) “Blue Bond for Ocean Conservation” programme through financing arranged and underwritten by Credit Suisse.

The US Government Development Bank, the International Development Finance Corporation, provided insurance which allowed the bond to have a low interest rate (Blue Bond Moody’s rating of Aa2), a 10-year grace period during which no principal payment is required, and maturity comes due on 2041.<sup>58</sup>

Under conditions precedent to the Blue Loan Agreement, Belize committed to undertake the following initiatives: Complete a legally enforceable Marine Spatial Plan and designate up to 30.0% (up from 15.9%) of its sea under protection of which half will be Biodiversity Protection

<sup>57</sup> During 2021 public sector external debt decreased from US\$1,453.2 million to US\$1,338.5 million (7.8% decrease).

<sup>58</sup> The internal rate of return is 6.1% inclusive of all insurance, premiums, fees and reserves, etc.



Zones by 2026; Designate public lands within the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System as management reserves; Integrate a Coastal Zone Management Plan; and Apply to have at least 3 formally designated marine protected areas in Belize's sea, listed as International Union for Conservation of Nature green list areas.

Under this thematic bond issue Belize also agreed to an Endowment Fund for conservation where it deposited US\$23.4 million using the blue bond proceeds and committed to making US\$4.2 investment on Conservation until the bond matures in 2041; total payment during this period will amount to US\$84 million.

Other commitments that Belize agreed to undertake in good faith included, inter alia: Implement transparent science based socially responsible regulations for a high value, sustainable aquaculture and mariculture industry on the landward side of the baseline of the territorial sea; Implement a governance framework for domestic and high seas fisheries; Develop and implement a national regulatory framework for blue carbon projects within the national carbon strategy; Meet or exceed the minimum standards for development in World Heritage Sites.

In August 2021 the IMF distributed Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) in the amount of 456.5 billion (US\$650 billion), for which Belize received SDR \$25.6 million (US\$36.6 million) which increased Central Bank foreign assets and mitigated the impact of COVID-19 on Belize's foreign exchange reserves which stood at US\$415 million (4.6-month cover of imports) by ending 2021. For 2022 foreign reserves ended at 4.3 months of cover.

In December 2021, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an independent United States Government foreign aid agency, chose Belize, partly on account of improved governance, to give support to the private sector to reduce poverty through growth. The MCC provided US\$750,000 funding for initial planning operation during 2022/2023. On March 2023 the MCC and Gob signed a Compact Development Funding Grant Agreement worth US\$5 million. MCC investments will focus on improving quality of education and addressing shortage of skills in the labour force and the 2<sup>nd</sup> focus will be on addressing high cost of electricity to increase competitiveness of industries. Grant funding for projects is expected to surpass US\$50 million over the period 2022-2027.

As of June 2021, Government reported US\$322.5 million in uncollected taxes (17% of GDP) of which \$545 million (80% is unrecoverable) is no longer recoverable due to statute of limitation (12 years for land taxes and 6 years for other taxes). Noting substantial arrears of business tax, general sales tax and land tax, the Government established an integrated Tax Recovery Unit under the Belize Tax Services Department that is tasked with aggressive recovery of all lawfully due outstanding tax arrears. Furthermore, the Tax Administration and Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2021, authorised the Director General of the Tax Services Department to publish the names of tax defaulters (in the Gazette and any local newspaper) and amended the general provisions on the prosecution of tax offenders as both criminal and civil offence. This should contribute to increasing Government funds for investment in development projects and the SDGs given that also 25% of all taxpayers do not submit an income tax return.

"There are currently no estimates on the share of public revenues dedicated to SDG targeting. In this context, the total cost to SDG implementation needs to be established. Based on CIP 2022-

23 and available data on investment and Government expenditure in SDG associated ministries suggest that the preliminary indicative financing for MSDCF 2022-2026 may be estimated, at minimum, US\$ 150 million. The latter budget estimate is based on Agencies, Funds & Programmatic sub-outputs.

The funding framework 2022-2026 for the MSDCF certainly exceed the latter \$150 million since it will be based on United Nations System Outputs which will include the full cost of delivering results, inclusive of programme, operations, communication, and management/overheads.<sup>59</sup>

It should be noted that, in the absence of programme-based budgeting and SDG tagging of policies, this figure for SDG is approximate. Bridging the SDG financing gap requires leveraging of domestic resources, intergovernmental partners, IFIs, as well as the private sector (domestic and international) through de-risking actions and innovative financing mechanisms.”<sup>60</sup> For the 2022-2023 Belize UN Country Implementation Plan<sup>61</sup>, 37 contributing partners are participating in the process and for the MSDCF 2022-2026 a preliminary funding gap of 44% has been estimated.

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<sup>59</sup> This includes programme activities, staff and other personnel, contractual services, transfer and grants to counterparts, supplies, commodities, materials, equipment, vehicles, furniture, travel, general operating and other direct costs, as well as recurring and non-recurring management costs.

<sup>60</sup> Belize Financial Landscape Analysis 2022, Shakespeare Vaidya, Consultant, United Nations (September 2022).

<sup>61</sup> The CIP 2022 - 2023 reflects the planned programmatic activities (sub-outputs) for all UN agencies working in Belize and the resources that are required and available, as well as funding gaps for both years.

# 6. Opportunities/ Challenges



With the Millennium Challenge Cooperation now in Belize, this will provide significant opportunities for partnering and grant funding projects that will contribute to poverty reduction through economic growth. Once the MCC completes its planning operation through its compact this will provide Belize with some roadmap of areas for intervention together with preliminary estimate of the accompanying budget for 2024-2028 period.

An SDG Investor Map covering 15 Investment Opportunity Areas (IOAs), was produced jointly by UNDP/RCO that provides investors with information on investment opportunities and business models that respond to both advancing the SDG needs and Government policy priorities. The Maps provide insight and tools needed by the private sector to increase their investment towards the SDGs and make a significant contribution to filling the financing gap by mobilizing private capital for the SDGs. It also identifies opportunities and bottlenecks in the policy and regulatory environment that can guide the UN’s support to Government while catalysing investment with a focus on realizing significant impact aligned with national priorities and reaching the most marginalized areas.

The Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) dialogue with the Government presents an opportunity to fully integrate the SDGs into national planning and budgeting leveraging the various sources of financing for development in a targeted and efficient manner to fill SDG gaps. Government has indicated interest in exploring an INFF in Climate Financing

The Ministry of Economic Development announced that it would advance to create an International Cooperation Council, to better attract and coordinate investment, international cooperation and donor contributions.



Following on the heels of the first Investment Summit held in November 2021, Belize approved its first National Investment Policy which should assist Belize in positioning itself as a competitive, robust, and viable investment hub in the region by 2030. The policy document comes with an action plan in terms of time frame and budget for implementation.



Government has requested UNIDO’s collaboration in preparing an Industrial Strategy with Green and Blue Policies with Carbon Neutrality. The engagement process started in early 2022 and the engagement process continues with efforts to seek donors to fund the development and implementation of Belize’s first Industrial Policy. This process will go a long way in Belize being a leader in green and blue industrial development while contributing to greater value added in the primary sector



and a more diversified domestic/ export sectors while also enhancing technology and skill of the labour force.

It is crucial to strengthen the country’s disaster management and response mechanisms to water-related and hydro-metrological crises. To this end, water management should be integrated into disaster risk management policies, to enable better adaptation in times of need and in the face of eminent climate threats.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is causing a cost-of-living crisis for Belize. Belize is experiencing record prices for fuel and also Government has been obliged to subsidize some of the public transport sector with ramifications on the fiscal situation.



Belize imports 50% of all its electricity needs which come from fossil fuels in Mexico and thus tied to global fossil fuel prices. Fuel prices is being reflected in higher transport cost which could potentially cause social unrest. Belize imports 40% of all its food products which are seeing rising food prices. Most construction and industrial material together with agro-chemical are imported and all are exhibiting record high prices. To make ends meet the most vulnerable are turning to survival needs such as reducing food consumption, sending their children less to school and/or disposing assets. A social protection strategy/ action plan is needed to mitigate this national crisis.



Food and nutrition security remain a challenge for Belize. The GOB has committed verbally to expanding the reach of school feeding as a method to improve food security and nutrition in children and as part of the social safety net, and Taiwan (Republic of China) donated \$1 million US for school feeding in mid-2022.<sup>62</sup> However, as of May 2023 the numbers of primary school student meals funded by the GOB still remain small (under 1000 students/day).

Challenges for Belize include global uncertainties such as the inflation pressures being caused by the Russian-Ukraine war. For 2022 inflation ended the year with a rate of 6.2%, with the drivers of it being the transport and food sector with the lower income bracket population bracket being most affected and contributing to a growing population being left behind. Other challenge includes rising global interest rates with the Federal Reserve Rate for July 2023 being 5.5% with further likely increases during 2023 to reduce inflation to a targeted 2.0% in the US economy; this makes it difficult to access low-cost financing from International Financial Institutions. Another challenge for Belize is an expected global recession in 2023 with ramification on the tourism industry and the continuous threat from natural disasters particularly hurricanes and flash flooding.

<sup>62</sup> (<https://www.breakingbelizenews.com/2022/07/28/government-receives-over-us1-million-from-taiwan-for-the-national-healthy-start-feeding-program/>)

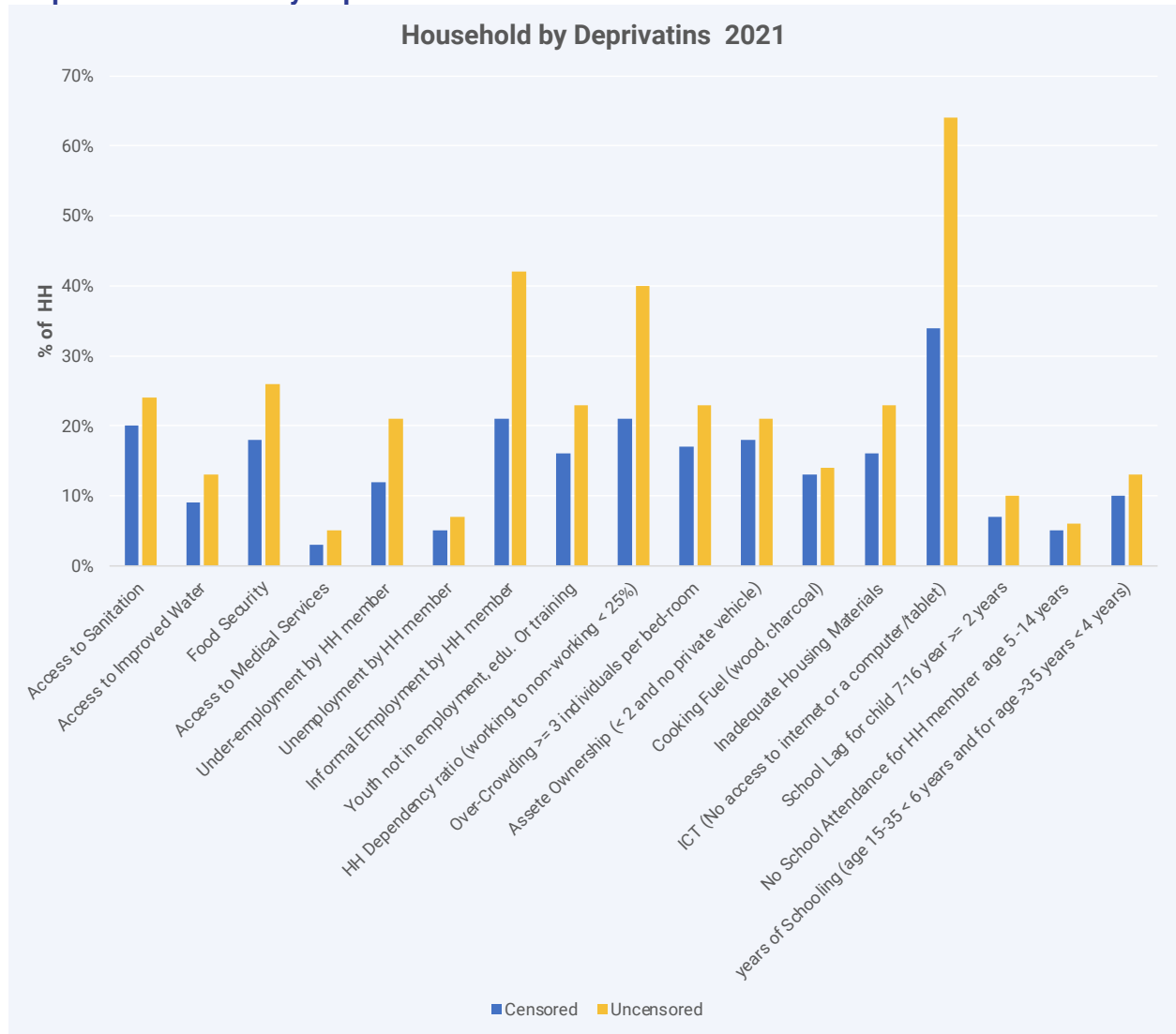
A systemic challenge facing Belize includes an Income Poverty rate of 52% with the population vulnerable to income poverty being 11%, a Gini income coefficient of 49%<sup>63</sup> reflecting high income inequality and a continuous high crime rate which is threatening peace and security and represents an inherent threat for the tourist sector. The latter social challenge affects all the ethnic groups but particularly the youths of the country that ought to represent the future. Belize remains highly vulnerable to hurricanes, storms, and flooding and ranks 8<sup>th</sup> out of 167 countries for climate risk that disrupt people’s livelihoods on a regular basis. The inference from this is that structural problems on productivity, skills, and resilience to perennial natural shocks need to be addressed. Most of the poor are “working poor” earning wages that are not decent and that condemns the population to a vicious circle of poverty.



The impacts of natural disasters often disproportionately affect women due to traditional roles at home and in their communities. It is therefore critical for water–and food security, that quantification and qualification of Belize’s water resources are addressed to minimize the impact of a changing climate and promote sustainable management of the country’s natural resources.

During 2021, SIB conducted a multi-dimensional household poverty index with the poverty count being 35.7% and the deprivation intensity being 39.1%. This will allow Belize to track and evaluate negative impact on the social SDGs (Health, education, living standard and employment dimensions) on account of COVID-19 and now the Russian-Ukraine war.

Graph 9: Households by Deprivations 2021



Source: Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2021, Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB)

\*Uncensored headcount ratio – Percent of people deprived each indicator

\*\*Censored headcount ratio – Percent of not deprived in the respective indicator and being poor in the total population

Data availability for regularly producing and monitoring SDG indicators and targets continue to be a challenge. Currently, the UN and Government are working with donor agencies to address this issue; for example, with the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Identification of the LNOB population continues to be a challenge similarly to data for monitoring SDG progress. Data on LNOB population is very much needed to be able to prioritize and target interventions addressing poverty deprivations and before the development of an LNOB strategy to address poverty, inequality, hunger and all those SDGs facing significant challenge in meeting the 2030 Agenda.

# 7. Conclusion

In November 2020, under the new leadership of Prime Minister Briceno, a political transition began in Belize that continued in 2021 and 2022. Under this new regime, the Government has shown its commitment to work in partnership with the United Nations System in enhancing social inclusion and resilience, regularization of the immigrant population through an amnesty programme, address high crime and strengthen independence of the Judiciary, ensure sustainable national resource management for future generations, strengthen human rights, reduce poverty, inequality and fight hunger from its root causes through economic transformation and overall commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its accompanying 17 SDGs.

Government’s Plan Belize Medium Term Development Strategy 2022-2026 (MTDS) underlying principle is LNOB as stated in its Vision and Mission which is that “Everyone Must Win.” Strategic objectives of MTDS include focus on Poverty Reduction by 50% through Economic Transformation, Citizen Security, Protection of the Environment and Reducing Corruption /Good Governance through political reform for all three branches of Government.

LNOB group analysis, with limited data availability, characterized the LNOB population as Mayan/ East Indian, Rural from the districts of Toledo, Cayo and Stann Creek. Within this profile the following specific LNOB population requires focused attention: women and mothers’ access to sexual and reproductive health, poor children, unemployed youths, the LGBTQ population, people living with disability, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, rural dwellers, and the informal sector without social protection. The CCA Update identified evidence on what is working, what needs attention, what are emerging risks and opportunities and interconnection of SDGs. Based on evidence and progress assessment, for the United Nations System to have the greatest impact towards the most pressing SDGs and on the underlying LNOB principle and population, it needs to focus on the following, policy choices, drivers, and development pathways:

## Pillar I: People (SDGs 1 -7)



Within this pillar greatest UN effort should focus on **SDG 1 No Poverty and SDG 2 Hunger** where the barometer is furthest behind. For example, Government has two conducted two different methods of estimating poverty: an income approach which estimated a poverty level of 52% in 2018 and a social exclusion method or more commonly known as the Multi-Dimensional Poverty count that estimated poverty at 35.7% in 2021. These two methods of poverty relate to each other but are not comparable. However, both of them indicate a high poverty prevalence in the Country that needs to be addressed. Both approaches also conclude that poverty is negatively correlated with higher levels of education and negatively correlated with household size with the Maya population experiencing poverty above the national average.



Support needed from the UN in partnership with Government, in addressing the most frequent deprivations identified (access to internet, sanitation, food security, asset ownership, overcrowding, dependency, informal employment and housing) in the MVI. These deprivations contribute to excluding the poor from full participation in society. The development of a national social protection strategy is very much needed to alleviate the impact of shocks and disaster on the poor through greater efficiency of coverage, design and targeting. The latter should be high priority for the UN.

WFP notes that based on their Food Security & Livelihoods survey in 2022, it is estimated that about 51% of the Belizean population is food insecure, with 15% of survey respondents experiencing severe food insecurity and another 36% experiencing moderate food insecurity. Nutrition (stunting, overweight, malnutrition) also faces major challenge. The UN should continue to support nutrition education and its expansion at both school and community level, healthy meals and the promotion of local and fresh products linked to improved nutrition. Both hunger and nutrition relate to most of the SDGs, for example, employment, poverty, inequality, education, health etc. and solution will require both long-term interventions with short-term support to address immediate needs through the development and financing of a **Social Protection Floor**. These two SDGs also face data challenge similar to the remaining SDGs under this pillar. The UN should continue to support these priority areas in partnership with Government.

**SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being** Belize continues to make progress with respect to this SDG. Government is also gradually expanding the National Health Insurance to the entire country and the process is expected to be completed fiscal year 2024/2025. Areas where improvements need to be made and where UN agencies in partnership with Government may have greatest impact, may include, improving infant mortality, maternal mortality rate, adolescent pregnancy, declining vaccination rate post COVID19, address diet related non-communicable disease crisis, and the need for a population policy given the changing demographics and the just completed population census.

**SDG 4 Quality Education** Despite education receiving 19% of Government overall budget, this SDG still faces challenge. Skills produced within the education system are not sufficiently aligned with the market needs. Post COVID19 resulted in **enrolment for students of pre-school and first year primary age going down**. This deprivation factor needs to be addressed since it has long-term consequences for key LNOB SDGs such as poverty and inequality. The Income poverty data for 2018 indicates high correlation between level of education attainment and income poverty. Households whose heads had completed a tertiary level education had the lowest poverty and indigent rates at 12% and 1% respectively. **Priority should focus on enhancing Skills and Lifelong Learning (LLL)**. It is critical to ensure that no one is left behind: women, youth, persons with disabilities, workers in rural areas, migrants or refugees, or workers in non-standard forms of employment. Skills and LLL are essential to enhance all workers' capabilities to participate fully in decent work, to contribute to inclusive development and active citizenship, as well as to strengthen democracy and promote social justice. Education and skills are a pre-requisite for high labour mobility, increasing productivity and higher wages and ensuring household income that exceeds the national poverty line.

**SDG 5 Gender Equality:** Good progress is being made with respect to SDG 5; however, **Challenge Remains**. Data from the Labour Force Survey 2018-2022 shows the gender gap in terms of unemployment has narrowed from 9.1% to 2.8% while the monthly wage gap women to male

exhibits a positive wage gap. For Belize, pattern of exclusion for girls and women are linked to factors such as age, place of residence, sex, gender (the LGBTQI+ community), health status (people living with HIV) and minority or marginalized status, including people with disabilities. For example, the October LFS 2022 by SIB, revealed that youths have the highest unemployment rate at 11.8% with males at 8% and females at 17.8% during a time of national unemployment being 5%. These patterns of exclusion together with limitations of data collection of female true contribution to the economy need to be addressed to enhance women empowerment and contribute to increased productivity and income growth for women. Revision of Country laws and regulations guaranteeing full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care and education needs to be reviewed and strengthened to ensure further progress in gender equality and reduce gender-based violence.

Gender inequality is hindering national development, especially in rural areas, by women’s restricting participation and contributions. There is an opportunity to empower women, particularly rural women farmers, to contribute to their own development. Therefore, existing programmes need to establish an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure full implementation and assessment of inputs and outputs. This framework should be supported by assessments of the underlying causes of gender inequality to ensure that women benefit from future programmes and initiatives.<sup>64</sup>

**SDG 6 Water and Sanitation and SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy:** SDG 6 and SDG 7 have made good process, led by the government in partnership with the private sector. Therefore, for greater return on investment and greater linkages among SDGs, the United Nations System could focus more on the remaining SDGs under pillar I and limit its involvement with SDG 6 and SDG 7. However, it is equally important to emphasize the promotion of awareness and education programmes to encourage responsible groundwater use among farmers and the general population, as groundwater systems can be negatively impacted by activities that impact surface water. It is thus crucial to intensify monitoring of all aspects of the water cycle, particularly the connection between surface and groundwater. Additionally, strengthening water-related disaster management mechanisms, integrating water into disaster risk management policies, and improving ecosystem-based adaptation processes are of utmost importance.

**Pillar II: Prosperity (SDGs 8 - 11)**



**SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Projected growth in 2023 is expected to remain high, with continued reductions in unemployment on account of active employment measures through the BPO sector spreading nation-wide and FDI driven job creation in the tourism sector. However, the pace of economic growth is not translating rapidly enough to benefit the working population since large numbers of workers are informal and/or continue to work in low productivity sectors and low paying jobs. Gaps persist, both in terms of per capita growth

<sup>64</sup> : UNESCO. 2023. Water Management and Gender in the Rural Farming Ecosystem of Belize. Kingston, UNESCO Publishing

and, more importantly, in the wages of employed individuals lagging behind macro growth thus contributing to increased inequality.

The government's decisions to extend free education and supplies to more areas categorized as Leave No One Behind (LNOB), along with raising the minimum wage to US\$2.50 per hour, investing further in Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ITVET), and introducing a Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) public high school, are expected to contribute to enhanced skills and better wages.

UN support could focus on strengthening the school curriculum, particularly the ITVET system, aligning it more closely with the demands of the private sector. Other support from the UNS could encompass continued assistance for blue/green technology and job initiatives, climate-smart agriculture, and the circular economy. These efforts aim to create a more sustainable and resilient agro-productive and manufacturing base integrated with the tourism sector. The latter reflects Government's commitment in shifting to low carbon development and sustainable management of Belize's natural resource base.

**SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:** Similar to the other SDGs under this pillar, data availability was a limiting factor that requires attention. However, there is a need for increased public investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, Research & Development, innovation, and the development of a Green and Blue Policy/Strategy for Carbon Neutrality to achieve a more sustained level of long-term industrialization with greater inclusiveness.

Support from the UNS, in partnership with donors, is crucial for making progress on the Green and Blue Policy/Strategy for Carbon Neutrality and for fostering greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technology, especially within the industrial and transport sectors.

**SDG 10: Reduced Inequality:** Income inequality, at 0.49 (2018), remain extremely high. ***This, along with the SDGs on Poverty and Hunger, requires significant support from the UN to address the LNOB population.*** It is, currently, uncertain how effective the rapid economic growth (November 2020 – June 2023) and the Government's Plan Belize policies have been in reducing income inequality, as data is only available on multidimensional poverty (MPI) for 2021.

The high level of income inequality, low wages, high levels of working poor, and the high deprivation levels reported by the MPI must be addressed since these factors contribute to a high level of LNOB population, further contributing to high crime rates and endangering sustained economic recovery.

In collaboration with the government, the UN could explore targeted policy instruments under the umbrella of a social protection strategy/floor. These instruments could support the government's objective of reducing poverty by 50% within 10 years. Poverty reduction should, in turn, contribute to reduced inequality and improvements in other SDGs such as hunger, health, education, and gender equality. Additionally, the UN could assess the effectiveness of the government's policy instruments (such as targeted free education, NHI expansion, first-time homeownership programmes, price controls, minimum wage regulations, and social support etc.) in reducing poverty and inequality. Addressing data availability constraints is crucial for monitoring the sustainability of macro growth figures.

**SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:** The country faces vulnerability to natural disasters and the escalating impact of climate change. Consequently, there is a pressing need for both national and local disaster risk reduction strategies to mitigate losses and enhance resilience. Urban development plans are essential for municipalities, alongside an urban waste management strategy, to tackle the challenges of slum conditions and housing deprivation in towns and cities. Continued support from the UN to the Government is imperative for the aforementioned priorities. Additionally, assistance is needed for the Government's low-carbon transportation initiative aimed at reducing fossil fuel consumption.

**Pillar III: Planet (SDGs 12 - 15)**



These SDGs were the most successful in terms of attaining SDG targets. Belize has led in ratifying numerous environmental multi-lateral agreements (MEA) and is continuing efforts to enhance environmental protection and natural resource management. However, there are still gaps that need to be addressed for the 2030 Agenda, particularly for data availability and the need for greater partnership and donor support for implementation and monitoring. Belize also faces implementation capacity and a substantial financial deficit in meeting its pledge under the National Determined Contribution and the Paris Agreement.

**SDG 12: Responsible Production and Consumption** Challenges remain in terms of *data availability*, which was also an issue shared with the SDGs under the other three pillars of the MSDCF 2022-2026. The United Nations System and Government together with the Donor Community could partner to address this systemic constraint facing the 2030 Agenda. For greater synergy and more effective coordination, Belize also needs to integrate all sector plan, policies, and strategies into a comprehensive National Action Plan for Sustainable Production and Consumption (SDG 12). The Belize Medium Term Strategy 2022-2026 was a good first step in this direction. Technical support would be required for the former, and the UN may want to consider providing assistance in that regard.

**SDG 13: Climate Action** Adaptation remains a high priority for the country, with over 50% of the population living near the coast, and annual losses of close to 4% of GDP due to climate change. Extreme weather events such as droughts, floods and unstable weather pattern is resulting in high economic losses on an annual basis. National commitments in terms of policies, strategies, and actions are on track. However, the environment is described as *Significantly Challenged since national commitments is being hampered* by insufficient financial resources on account of limited financing space and Developed Countries annual commitment being just around 52% for the Green Climate Fund. The UN continued lobbying and advocacy for developed countries honouring commitment required. The formulation of an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) by the Government of Belize with support from the United Nations System may also facilitate accessing greater levels of donor grant climate financing.

**SDG 14: Life Below Water** Government of Belize has demonstrated its commitment to this SDG through 70% of indicators for which good progress is being made. With respect to SDG 13, further

progress largely depends on **donor partnership providing funds for Belize advancing endogenous commitments** already legislated but which need to be monitored and implemented through either the public sector and/or the private sector through the Environmental NGOs. The UNS developing a Resource Mobilization Strategy for pillar IV and its four SDGs (12-15) would greatly assist making further leaps on these SDGs.

**SDG 15: Life on Land** Of the four SDGs under pillar III, this was the one facing the greatest challenge in terms of progress and where the greatest impact, perhaps, could be obtained. For example, the proportion of land area under forest continues its downward trend. It decreased from 74% in 1981 to 56% during 2020. This trend which is mostly on account of the agriculture frontier expanding needs to be addressed. Support from the UN in Government's effort to prepare a **"Green and Blue Industrial Policy/Strategy for Carbon Neutrality"** would greatly assist in making progress for this SDG and the other three planet SDGs together with the SDGs covered by the Prosperity Pillar.

#### Pillar IV: Peace



Progress has been made on **SDG 16 as it relates to human rights and freedom of information but significant Challenge Remains given the high crime rate** whose root causes need to be addressed to ensure positive spillover into the other 16 SDGs and ensure long-term sustainability of the tourism, backbone of the Belizean economy. UN support needed for the permanent establishment of a fully functioning "National Human Rights Institution," and further advocacy for achieving gender equality at the political level together with Government's commitment to fight Corruption and for UNCAC. Civil society continues to play an important role in influencing Government policy, particularly, those relating to sustainable natural resource management. Inclusion and participation in decision making together with transparency has gradually improved; for example, the process of people's constitution reform, legislation on Unjust Enrichment Act and efforts to collect multi-year tax arrears.

Addressing SDGs bottlenecks and gaps will greatly facilitate and accelerate Belize's attainment of the 2030 Agenda on SDG targets and result in a more FAIR, INCLUSIVE, RESILIENT AND GREEN/BLUE future for all Belizeans.

# Appendices

## Annex A: UNDP Assessment of SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

**Target 11.1 (Proportion of Urban Population Living in Slums)** limited data precludes assessors from conducting adequate comparative analysis, however, Slum size measurements, provided by the world bank does confirm stagnation in the number of slum dwellers within the country's urban centres. Belize's Urban population in 2021 represented 46.2% of the country's total population.

**Target 11.2 (Access to Public Transport)** Following the Government's launch of the country's first Comprehensive National Transport Master Plan in 2018, very little progress has been made in delivering on the plan's objective of providing a well-organized, sustainable, and climate-resilient transportation sector. The country has seen however a significant application of funds supporting the development of Climate Resilient Road Infrastructure. This investment is a significant component of providing access and contributing to resilience considering the vulnerability of the country to disaster risk, and climate-related hazards.

The Belize road network consists of approximately 13,000 km of roads, of which primary roads are around 601 km (5% of total) and secondary roads around 1,831 km (14% of total). Buses are the most common form of public transport for local Belizeans; however, the country's existing service fleet consist predominantly of old American school buses which are brought into the country with considerable mileage and age. These buses are characterized by high fuel consumption and limited comfort. Of the existing fleet, more than 75% are 15 years or older. This has led to the public transport sector being one of the greatest contributors to GHG emissions in the country.

Of note is Gob's release of new standards for public transport buses in January 2023. New standards stipulate the modernization of the sector with operators being expected to update 50% of existing fleet by the end of December 2023, moving to a full upgrade of fleet by the end of 2024. Accompanying this measure is the implementation of a national pilot project meant to introduce low carbon transportation alternatives, examining possible E-mobility penetration in particular.

**Target 11.3 (Ratio of Land Consumption Rate to Population Growth)** To date no studies and reports on the monitoring of SDG 11.3.1 have been conducted, resulting in insufficient evidence to determine extent of sustainable urbanization measures in Belize. However anecdotal evidence such as the existence of an Emerging and Sustainable Cities (ESC) Action Plan for Belize City, the country's largest population centre, suggests early considerations taken by authorities towards the realization of integrated and sustainable human settlements. The current population density of Belize in 2023 is 17.89 people per square kilometre, a 1.37% increase from 2022, with 46.2% of the country's population residing in urban centres. Trend data consistent with global predictions of increasing urbanization, represent major challenge for the future use of natural resources. Considering that 64% of Belize's urban population resides on the coast, of which 39% reside in Belize City, the country's largest urban area and economic hub, there are also implications on population vulnerability to the increasing threats of climate change.



**Target 11.5 (Direct Disaster Economic Loss)** Belize is highly exposed to natural disasters of varying intensity. According to the IMF, of the 182 countries in the Climate Risk Index, Belize was in the top 5 percent for losses to climate-related natural disasters. On average the Gob is predicted to cover losses of approximately USD 29.5 million (BZ\$ 59.0 million) annually, or approximately 1.69 percent of Belize's gross domestic product (GDP)—to address its contingent liabilities related to hurricanes and floods. In 2020, an estimated 75 million USD in damages and losses were recorded in the agriculture, housing, and infrastructure sectors due to events ETA and IOTA. In 2022 the country recorded losses and damage associated with both Hurricane Julia and Hurricane Lisa. Hurricane Lisa caused some 65.6 million USD in Damages and 31.39 million USD in direct losses, while hurricane Julia presented an estimated 4.45 million in losses to the agriculture sector alone. An observable trend associated with recent disasters impacting Belize is economic losses primarily to productive and infrastructure sectors. It is noted that Belize's disaster profile is not characterized with significant loss of life.

**Target 11.6 (Proportion of Urban Waste Collected and Properly Discharged)** A 2020 waste audit to determine per capita waste generation rates as per household suggested that Belize City had the highest rate of waste generation at 0.86 kg per person per day. Belmopan, Corozal, Dangriga and Orange Walk, all urban agglomerates outside Belize City, all generate an average of 0.5 Kg per person per day. Associated study projections indicate that as the population of Belize increases, it is anticipated that the country will continue to see increases in the overall waste generation, this increase is driven primarily by urban populations. Currently, more than 90% of the waste being collected in municipalities are brought to the transfer stations facilitating final disposal at the Mile 24 landfill. The study suggests, however, that an estimated 34.4% of waste produced per day is currently not being landfilled. There is some recycling of glass and PET bottles, metal containers and aluminium occurring at transfer stations.

City-specific data on atmospheric fine particulates is not yet available for Belize. However, in accordance with the World Health Organization's guidelines, the air quality in Belize is considered moderately unsafe. The most recent data (2021) indicates the country's annual mean concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> is 23 µg/m<sup>3</sup> which exceeds the recommended maximum of 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. It's noted that concentration of fine suspended particles is lower than averages recorded in the LAC region.



## Appendix I: LNOB by SEX (2021)

LNOB Factors/ Indicators	HH/ LF/Pop	Average	Male	Female	H.
Average Household Size (HH)		3.5	2.5	5.7	
<b>1). Living Standards:</b> Squatters (HH)	599	0.5%	0.54%	0.35%	
HH Vulnerable Dwelling Construction	14,157	11.4%	11.6%	11.0%	
<b>2). Health:</b> HH with No Toilet Facility	1147	0.9%	1.3%	0.2%	
HH Not Access to potable Water	11,187	9.0%	10.2%	7.1%	
HH water source: river, stream, creek, pond	2,348	1.9%	2.1%	1.5%	
No Food to Eat (HH)*	13,266	10.7%	10%	12%	
Sleep at night Hungry (HH)*	10,125	8.1%	8%	9%	
Go a day and night without eating (HH)*	6,240	5.0%	4%	7%	
Pop. with at least one Disability (S,H, W, C, M)**	42,726	9.9%	9.5%	10.4%	
<b>3). Education:</b> Head of HH Years of Schooling		9.275	9.16	9.58	
<b>4). Employment:</b> Informal Employment (LF)		42%	40%	43%	
Under-Employment (LF)		19%	18%	20%	
# of Subsistence Farmers	9265		6,852	2,413	
% Subsistence Farmers Outside the LF			74%	26%	

**Source:** Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), Labour Force Survey (LFS), SIB

\*Frequency of one or more times during the year

\*\*Disability: S – Seeing, H – Hearing, W – Walking, C – Communicating, M – Memory

## Appendix II: LNOB by Urban & Rural Population (2021)

LNOB Factors/ Indicators	HH/ LF/Pop	Average	Urban	Rural
Average Household Size (HH)		3.5	3.2	3.8
<b>1). Living Standard:</b> Squatters (HH)	599	0.5%	0.25%	0.71%
HH Vulnerable Dwelling Construction	0	11.4%	10.6%	12.2%
<b>2). Health:</b> HH with No Toilet Facility	1147	0.9%	0.3%	1.5%
HH Not Access to potable Water	11,187	9.0%	2.0%	15.5%
HH water source: river, stream, creek, pond	2,348	1.9%	0.1%	3.6%
HH No Food to Eat*	13,266	10.7%	10%	11.0%
HH Sleep at night Hungry*	10,125	8.1%	8%	8.5%
HH Go a day and night without eating*	6,239	5.0%	5%	5.5%
Pop. with at least one Disability (S,H, W, C, M)**	42,726.00	9.9%	10.0%	11.0%
<b>3). Education:</b> Head of HH Years of Schooling		9.275	10.33	8.80
<b>4). Employment:</b> Informal Employment (LF)		42%	35%	48%
Under-Employment (LF)		19%	18%	20%
# of Subsistence Farmers	9265			100%
% Subsistence Farmers Outside the LF		61.45		61%

**Source:** Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), Labour Force Survey (LFS), SIB

\*Frequency of one or more times during the year

\*\*Disability: S – Seeing, H – Hearing, W – Walking, C – Communicating, M – Memory

## Appendix III: LNOB by Ethnic Groups (2021)

LNOB Factors/ Indicators	Ethnic Groups								
	Pop	Aver.	Creole	Garif	Maya	Hispan	Menn	E. Indian	Other
Average Household Size (HH)		3.5	3.2	2.9	3.8	3.7	4.4	2.5	2.2
<b>1). Living Standards:</b> Squatters (HH)	599	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%	1.3%	0.5%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%
HH Vulnerable Dwelling Construction	14,157	11.4%	10.3%	13.1%	12.3%	12.1%	5.5%	14.4%	4.7%
<b>2). Health:</b> HH with No Toilet Facility	1,147	0.9%	0.6%	1.3%	4.0%	0.2%	0.0%	2.0%	0.8%
HH Not Access to potable Water	11,187	9.0%	4.6%	4.3%	17.2%	7.9%	42.7%	8.8%	9.2%
HH water source: river, stream, creek, pond	2,348	1.9%	0.8%	0.0%	8.5%	1.1%	3.7%	1.0%	0.0%
HH No Food to Eat*	13,266	10.7%	9%	10%	21%	10%	0%	12%	2%
HH Sleep at night Hungry*	10,125	8.1%	7%	6%	14%	8%	0%	13%	2%
HH Go a day and night without eating*	6,240	5.0%	5%	5%	9%	4%	0%	6%	2%
Pop. with at least one Disability (S,H, W, C, M)**	42,726	9.9%	10%	11%	15%	10%	12%	15%	9%
<b>3). Education:</b> HH Years of Schooling		9.28	11.00	11.29	8.09	8.95	8.30	9.62	13.21
<b>4). Employment:</b> Informal Employment (LF)		42%	30%	34%	38%	46%	90%	34%	41%
Under-Employment (LF)		19%	15.2%	21.7%	17.8%	22.6%	1.4%	12.9%	2.6%

**Source:** Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), Labour Force Survey (LFS), SIB

\*Frequency of one or more times during the year

Disability: S – Seeing, H – Hearing, W – Walking, C – Communicating, M – Memory

## Appendix IV: LNOB by Districts (2021)

LNOB Factors/ Indicators	Pop	Aver.	Districts					
			Corozal	O. W	Belize	Cayo	S. C	Toledo
Average Household Size (HH)		3.5	3.8	4.0	3.1	3.6	3.5	3.9
<b>1). Living Standards:</b> Squatters (HH)	599	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	1.9%
HH Vulnerable Dwelling Construction	14,157	11.4%	6.4%	7.7%	10.7%	17.1%	10.0%	7.6%
<b>2). Health:</b> HH with No Toilet Facility	1,147	0.9%	0.00%	0.44%	0.49%	0.21%	1.19%	6.26%
HH Not Access to potable Water	11,187	9.0%	10.10%	9.20%	4.58%	9.81%	7.62%	24.84%
HH water source: river, stream, creek, pond	2,348	1.9%	0.00%	0.00%	0.72%	2.13%	1.13%	12.06%
HH No Food to Eat*	13,266	10.7%	8%	8%	9%	12%	13%	18%
HH Sleep at night Hungry*	10,125	8.1%	7%	7%	7%	9%	8%	11%
HH Go a day and night without eating*	6,240	5.0%	3%	3%	5%	6%	6%	6%
Pop. with at least one Disability (S,H, W, C, M)**	42,726	11.0%	15%	12%	10%	9%	14%	17%
<b>3). Education:</b> HH Years of Schooling		9.28	9.11	8.84	10.90	9.00	9.69	8.10
<b>4). Employment:</b> Informal Employment (LF)		42%	56%	59%	32%	42%	32%	45%
Under-Employment (LF)		19%	24%	19%	15%	20%	17%	29%
# of Subsistence Farmers		9,265	505	581	853	1,682	1,182	4463
% Sub. Farmers Outside Labour Force			5.50%	6.30%	9.20%	18.2%	12.8%	48.2%

**Source:** Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), Labour Force Survey (LFS), SIB

\*Frequency of one or more times during the year

Disability: S – Seeing, H – Hearing, W – Walking, C – Communicating, M – Memory

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