



UNITED NATIONS  
BELIZE



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OF >>>  
ACTION

UNITED NATIONS BELIZE  
**COMMON COUNTRY  
ANALYSIS 2021**



**United Nations Belize Common Country Analysis 2021**

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**Office of the UN Resident Coordinator**

Lawrence Nicholas Building, 3rd Floor South Ring Road  
Belmopan, Belize, Central America

Email: [rca-unbelize@un.org](mailto:rca-unbelize@un.org)

Website: <https://belize.un.org>

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**UNITED NATIONS BELIZE**  
**COMMON COUNTRY**  
**ANALYSIS 2021**

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# Acronyms

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<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 & 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>CRDP-OP</b>	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<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>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>LPG</b>	Liquefied 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>MSME</b>	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
<b>NAC</b>	National AIDS Commission
<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>OPHI</b>	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
<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>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>UNIBAM</b>	United Belize Advocacy Movement
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>WTTC</b>	World Travel & Tourism Council

# United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Belize

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## RESIDENT UNCT ENTITIES

<b>IOM</b>	<b>International Organization for Migration</b>
<b>PAHO/WHO</b>	<b>Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	<b>United Nations Population Fund</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations Children's Fund</b>

## NON-RESIDENT UNCT ENTITIES

<b>FAO</b>	<b>Food and Agriculture Organization</b>
<b>IAEA</b>	<b>International Atomic Energy Agency</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organization</b>
<b>OHCHR</b>	<b>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</b>
<b>UNAIDS</b>	<b>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS</b>
<b>UNEP</b>	<b>United Nations Environment Programme</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>United Nations Educational, Scientific &amp; Cultural Organization</b>
<b>UNODC</b>	<b>United Nations Office on Drugs &amp; Crime</b>
<b>UNOPS</b>	<b>United Nations Office for Project Services</b>
<b>UN Women</b>	<b>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</b>
<b>WFP</b>	<b>World Food Programme</b>





**UNITED NATIONS  
BELIZE**



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**



**IAEA**



**International  
Labour  
Organization**



**UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER**



**UNAIDS**



**United Nations  
Environment Programme**



**UNHCR  
The UN Refugee Agency**



**for every child**



**UNODC  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**



**UNOPS**



**World Food  
Programme**



**Pan American  
Health  
Organization**



**World Health  
Organization**

# Executive Summary

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**The United Nations Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Belize is the UN System's independent, impartial, and collective assessment and analysis of the country's socio-economic and developmental situation.**

It underpins the development priorities of the UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNMSDCF) 2022–2026. The UNMSDCF is the most important instrument for planning and implementing UN development activities at the country level in support of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

The multi-dimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Belize's economy, people, and financial landscape constrain Belize's short-to-medium-term progress in achieving the SDGs. Prior to COVID-19, Belize's undiversified economy was highly vulnerable to external shocks due to its heavy reliance on tourism, agriculture and fisheries. Over the past two decades, this vulnerability has been compounded by increasing national debt and stagnation in GDP growth.

COVID-19 related impacts has now plunged Belize into an economic crisis. The long hiatus of tourism operations and substantial reduction of commercial activity during lock-downs has dramatically increased the unemployment rate from 10.4% in September 2019 to 29.6% in September 2020; while the under-employment rate rose from 22.7% to 36%. Belize's economic contraction for 2020 is estimated to be 14% of GDP. Additionally, Belize borrowed heavily in 2020, to support its COVID-19 response, increasing its debt to GDP ratio sharply from 99% to an estimated 123.6% (January 2021). This economic crisis comes on top of pre-existing deprivations including a high poverty rate

now projected to increase alarmingly from 41.3% to 55%, as well as inequalities in access to social goods and services, such as employment, social protection, education, health care, and technology. The compounded effect of COVID-19 is devastating, especially to vulnerable groups who are disproportionately impacted. These include the poor and indigent, women, children, youth, rural populations, indigenous groups, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Furthermore, population groups with limited or no access to the internet has not been able to access online schooling, electronic applications for COVID-19 economic relief, and critical information on emergency measures.

Belize's extreme vulnerability to climate change and climate-related hazards presents an ongoing and future risk that threatens most sectors of the economy and poses a direct threat to coastal population centres, where over 50% of the population reside. Belize already faces hurricanes, flooding, sea-level rise, ocean warming, coastal erosion, coral bleaching, drought, and changes in weather patterns with impacts expected to intensify given climate change projections.

Belize's ability to address these economic, social and environmental challenges is constrained by weak governance and sustained threats to law and order including systemic corruption, an inefficient criminal justice system, an extremely high murder rate, and transnational drug trafficking. Furthermore, inefficiencies in the fiscal structure, both in the taxation strategy and in the distribution of government expenditures, mean that there is little fiscal space for investment in development initiatives to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The situational analysis, challenges, risks, and

opportunities outlined in this CCA provide the analytical foundation for the transformative priorities elaborated in the UNMSDCF. Urgent and strategic investments, supported by strong partnerships for development, are needed for Belize to recover from the pandemic's economic and social devastation and to limit any reversal in sustainable development progress.

Economic transformation, that strengthens resiliency and reduces inequalities, must be grounded in the diversification of exports and markets, protection of the natural resource base, and the development of an appropriately skilled labour force. Given Belize's extreme vulnerability to climate change, a proactive climate action agenda is needed to mitigate impacts on the population and ecosystems, as well as to capitalize on its natural resource assets through sustainable development of the blue and green economy. Climate-resilient planning, climate smart practices, disaster risk preparedness, and climate risk mitigation must be implemented countrywide and at the community level, with special attention to the most vulnerable populations and sectors.

To support Belize's recovery from COVID-19, the UN in Belize has elaborated a Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan which articulates the UN contributions to the national effort. This provides an opportunity to ensure that recovery investments create a more resilient and rights-based development model, which will accelerate Belize's achievement of the SDGs.



*Birgit Gerstenberg*

**Birgit Gerstenberg**  
Resident Coordinator  
United Nations Belize



# Introduction

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# Introduction

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) is designed to reflect the United Nations integrated, forward looking, and evidence-based joint analysis within the context for sustainable development in Belize to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The analysis will contribute to the multi-country analysis for the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean and will be the foundation for the design of the UN programmatic response through a second generation Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF). This analysis is premised on the overall commitment to Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), UN Charter values; as well as international norms and standards.

This CCA allows the UN to identify the underlying drivers of inequality, vulnerabilities, exclusion, and other development challenges the country faces. The CCA substantively builds upon and integrates the health and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and other global, regional, and trans-boundary risks that would impede Belize's achievement of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

Led by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Belize, this new generation CCA was prepared in a dynamic period of transition and reform within the UN, but also in the national context, amidst responding to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The UN in Belize is well-established and enjoys a strong partnership with the Government of Belize, civil society entities, international development partners, and other national stakeholders.

The preparation of this CCA benefited from qualitative and quantitative analyses by the UNCT,

based on desk research from various data sources in addition to detailed assessments and thematic analyses on SDG progress and SDG risk frameworks.

To effect broad-based participation whilst tapping into multi-sectoral expertise, four thematic working groups were established, focusing respectively on the Planet, People, Prosperity and Peace SDG clusters. Each comprising resident and non-resident agencies, funds, and programmes within the UNCT.



FIGURE 1: THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

These working groups worked jointly through iterative cycles of data collection, thematic analyses, and writing to create and refine the CCA. Specific tools used by the working groups for joint assessments were the SDG Progress Assessment Matrix, the Multi-Dimensional Risk Assessment Matrix, and the Priority Assessment e-Survey. The draft also benefited from a Quality Assurance Review by the Peer Support Group and the Development Coordination Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The draft CCA was then presented to multi-sectoral national stakeholder groups including government agencies, civil society, private sector, academia,

statutory bodies, international development partners and international funding institutions. The civil society agencies consulted included agencies representing women and girls, children, youth, indigenous populations, grassroots populations, LGBTQI persons, migrants, persons with disabilities, trade unions, employers organizations as well as agencies dedicated to environmental conservation, provision of health services, and the protection of human rights.

The contributions arising from the stakeholder consultations were incorporated to finalize the CCA. Table 1 below provides a list of the stakeholder groups consulted.

This CCA is a living document which will be updated annually to provide up-to-date data and analyses that track SDG progress and will inform adaptive support to Belize in the dynamic and challenging post-COVID-19 era.



CCA Consultation held at the Radisson Fort George Hotel, Belize City (UN Photos/Zana Kristen Wade/Office of the UN Resident Coordinator)

Date (2021)	Audience
26 March	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
26 March	Private Sector
29 March	Environment Sector CSOs
30 March	Social Sector CSOs, LNOB Groups, Academia, Trade Unions, Statutory Bodies
13 April	IFIs, Development Partners, Diplomatic Corps
11 May	Government Stakeholders

TABLE 1: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS HELD



# Progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

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# Progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Horizon 2030 National Development Framework for Belize (2010 – 2030)<sup>1</sup> establishes a set of long-term development goals. This framework was developed in 2010 through an inclusive national consensus-building process with public and private sector entities and civil society organizations. Belize’s vision as stated in the Horizon 2030 Framework is:

“Belize is a country of peace and tranquillity, where its citizens live in harmony with the natural environment, enjoy a high quality of life, and are energetic, resourceful, and independent, looking after their affairs.”

This national framework offers a proposed hierarchy of priorities that align with the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Horizon 2030 assigns priority to two main development pillars: Education for Development and Democratic Governance.

Economic Resilience is presented as a key binding constraint while a Healthy Environment and Healthy People are the bricks and mortar that support Belize’s sustainable development. Social inclusion, human rights, and gender equity and equality are main-streamed within a core set of principles intended to guide national and community-level actions.<sup>2</sup>



FIGURE 2: NATIONAL HORIZON 2030 VISION: SYNERGIES WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

<sup>1</sup> Carla Barnett, Adele Catzim and Dorla Humes, Horizon 2030 Belize: Planning our Future Together 2010-2030 (Belmopan, Inter-American Development Bank and the Government of Belize, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Adele Catzim, GSDS Gap Analysis Final Report. (Belmopan, Inter-American Development Bank and the Government of Belize, 2020). p. 110.



The Horizon 2030 Vision is implemented through a series of medium-term Growth and Sustainable Development Strategies (GSDS). Drawn from the National Vision, the goal of the first such GSDS (2016-2020) is "To improve the quality of life for all Belizeans, living now and in the future".<sup>3</sup> Subsequent medium-term strategies are to build on this first planning cycle to achieve the Vision of Horizon 2030 as well as the SDGs of Agenda 2030.<sup>4</sup>

The intervention logic of the GSDS comprises five Critical Success Factors (CSFs), or goals, each of which are supported by subsidiary necessary conditions, or objectives. Although the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) elaborated in the GSDS are

presented in distinct social, economic, environmental, and governance dimensions, the success of the GSDS is premised on an understanding of the interrelatedness between and among the various CSFs.

The GSDS applies the SDG framework gleaned from Agenda 2030, which states, "there are deep interconnections and many cross-cutting elements across the new goals and targets".<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the CSFs are integrated, interconnected, and indivisible so that they fit together as parts of a whole and not as separate or distinct components. The GSDS incorporates systems thinking and analysis to ensure greater cohesion and efficiency in a resource-scarce context like Belize.

<p>Critical Success Factor</p> <p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>Optimal National Income and Investment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Penetrate Export Markets</li> <li>Attract Foreign Investments</li> <li>Effective Industrial Policy Based on Belize's Strengths</li> <li>Efficient Markets Including Labor and Financial Markets</li> <li>Adequate Infrastructure</li> <li>Adequate Skills and Capacity to Support Economic Growth, Development and Resilience</li> </ul>
<p>Critical Success Factor</p> <p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Social Cohesion and Resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate Access to Healthcare</li> <li>Adequate Access to Education and Lifelong Learning for All</li> <li>Optimal Social Security/Insurance</li> <li>Better Social Assistance</li> <li>Effective Livelihood Programs</li> <li>Decent Wages and Work Conditions</li> <li>Strong National Identity and Future Vision</li> <li>Social Inclusion and Equitable Growth</li> </ul>
<p>Critical Success Factor</p> <p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Natural, Environmental, Historical and Cultural Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wise Stewardship of Natural Resource Assets</li> <li>Ecosystem Management</li> <li>Water Resource Management</li> <li>Disaster Risk Management</li> <li>Marine Resources, Agriculture and Food Security</li> <li>Rural and Urban Planning</li> <li>Waste Management and Pollution Control</li> </ul>
<p>Critical Success Factor</p> <p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Citizen Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amelioration of Social Issues That Fuel Crime</li> <li>Effective Policing</li> <li>Better Administration of Justice</li> <li>Maintaining the Integrity of National Borders</li> </ul>
<p>Critical Success Factor</p> <p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good Technical Governance</li> <li>Good Political Governance</li> <li>Effective Implementation of the GSDS and Horizon 2030</li> </ul>

FIGURE 3: CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND NECESSARY CONDITIONS IN GSDS

<sup>3</sup> Belize, Ministry of Economic Development, Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2020 (Belmopan, 2016)

<sup>4</sup> The implementation timeframe of the GSDS 2016-2020 is past. There is currently no medium-term National Development Plan in place.

<sup>5</sup> A/RES/ 70/1

The GSDS is coordinated by a secretariat within the Ministry of Economic Development. Five working tables, (one for each CSF), comprised of representatives of government and quasi-government organizations, meet quarterly to oversee the implementation of the GSDS. The monitoring and evaluation framework for the GSDS outlines specific SDG goals, targets, and indicators linked with each respective critical success factor. Data to monitor progress is collected at the sector level and collated into a National Statistic System (NSS) managed by the Statistics Institute of Belize. Synergies between the GSDS and the SDGs are presented below:



FIGURE 4: ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE GSDS AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The GSDS monitoring and evaluation matrix contains indicators from 16 of the 17 SDGs and includes 132 of the 232 SDG indicators.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, 30% of all the indicators in the GSDS are from the SDGs. For the following 9 SDGs, over 60% of their indicators are included, indicating that these are Belize’s SDG priorities in its first SDG-compatible national development plan.

- SDG 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth (82%),
- SDG 5:** Gender Equality (79%),
- SDG 4:** Quality Education (73%),
- SDG 6:** Clean Water and Sanitation (73%),
- SDG 15:** Life on Land (71%),
- SDG 16:** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (70%),
- SDG 7:** Affordable and Clean Energy (67%),
- SDG 3:** Health and Well-Being (67%),
- SDG 2:** Zero Hunger (63%).

The analyses provided in this CCA indicate that, in addition to the mentioned priorities, Belize will need to make progress in reducing poverty (SDG 1), improving infrastructure and introducing innovation (SDG 9) to support economic transformation, and protecting life below water (SDG 14), in order to realize its commitments to achieving the SDGs by 2030. Notably, there were no GSDS indicators for SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals; however, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated existing challenges and put at risk the progress already made, SDG 17 now becomes a great priority for Belize

to mobilize support for its sustainable development. A key source of monitoring and reporting SDG progress at the country, regional and global levels is the Sustainable Development Solution Network (SDSN) Sustainable Development Report. The overall scores and ranking in the report indicate countries' progress toward achieving the SDGs. Since 2018, Belize remains below the regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Belize's global rankings for 2019, 2018, and 2017<sup>7</sup> are as follows:

SDG Dashboard Results	2020	2019	2018	2017
Global Ranking	102 <sup>nd</sup> of 166	109 <sup>th</sup> of 162	103 <sup>rd</sup> of 156	76 <sup>th</sup> of 157
Index Score	65.1%	62.5%	62.0%	66.0%
Regional Average Score	70.4%	67.1%	66.0%	65.8%

TABLE 2: BELIZE'S GLOBAL RANK 2017-2019, SDSN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT



FIGURE 5: PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDGS



FIGURE 6: TRENDS IN BELIZE'S PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDGS<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Sachs and others, Sustainable Development Report 2019 (New York, Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2019).  
<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Sachs and others, The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020)

Figures 5 and 6 summarize the 2020 SDR's global assessment of Belize's progress. It is important to note that the SDR uses a limited number (85, plus an additional 30 only used in OECD countries) of indicators and combines data and analyses produced by international organizations, civil society organizations, and research centres. They do not map exactly to the SDG indicators but do give an overview of the progress made in each broad area, relative to global standards. The UN Country Team in Belize conducted a more granular assessment of Belize's

SDG status at a goal and target level. Figure 7 below gives a summary of the assessment at the goal level. A full description of Belize's progress by individual targets for each SDG is provided in **Annex A: Progress Towards the Achievement of the SDG Targets**. Lack of data is a significant obstacle in assessing the status and the trends of SDG progress. With **data unavailable for more than 50% of the SDG target/indicators**, it is difficult to obtain a complete assessment of progress.

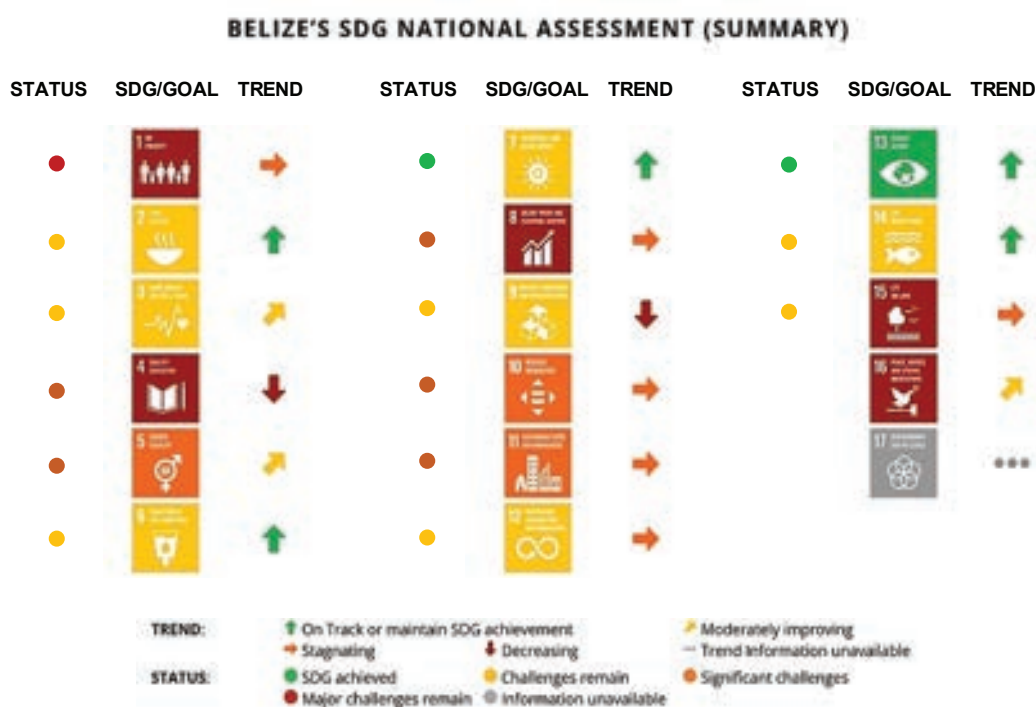


FIGURE 7: SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT FOR SDG PROGRESS

As Belize completes one planning cycle and prepares for its second SDG-compatible medium-term national plan, key lessons learnt<sup>9</sup> are:

- Prioritization and rationalization of goals, targets, and indicators will facilitate more strategic deployment of human and financial resources to achieve priority SDGs.
- Strategies and actions to meet SDG targets need

to be decentralized and tailored to the district, municipal and community levels to ensure appropriately differentiated and targeted action and to achieve the required impact.

- Reducing the list of GSDS indicators and organizing them hierarchically may result in the higher-level indicators being selected from the SDG indicator pool.

- Institutional arrangements that enable effective coordination and collaboration across sectors are critical elements of success. These must include meaningful spaces for social inclusion and active involvement of both state and non-state actors.
- Implementation must be data-driven and evidence-based. This requires dedicated investments in the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems at all levels of implementation.

This CCA will inform the preparation of the UNMSDF for the Caribbean sub-region as well as the government's medium-term development strategy and will therefore support the integration of the national vision with the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the annual process of updating the CCA will contribute to the monitoring of national development goals; therefore, useful synergies can be realized in collecting quality data for reporting and analysis for both planning frameworks.

### Partnerships for the Goals

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating global impacts, **SDG 17** has taken on increased importance as the world struggles to recover better together and use this opportunity to create fairer and more sustainable societies. The analyses comprising this CCA illustrate Belize's current social, environmental, and economic fragility and the alarming consequences of the pandemic. Looking forward, Belize's strategy to achieve the SDGs will depend on leveraging partnerships, both nationally and internationally, to support its sustainable development.

An analysis of Belize's potential and existing partners for development shows that the Government of Belize's limited fiscal space cannot accommodate the high level of investment needed to advance the 2030 Agenda. Belize has untapped opportunities for achiev-

ing the SDGs by engaging national partners, such as the private sector, trade unions, and non-government organizations, in providing technical, material, and human resources. These partners have a major role to play in combating corruption, adopting green technologies and climate-smart practices, and promoting legislation and cultural changes that reduce inequalities and protect human rights. Indigenous and grassroots organizations can be the gateway to engaging rural and marginalized communities in policy and decision making, advocating for their rights, and implementing development solutions appropriate to their culture and context.

The private sector in Belize is a critical partner to engage in driving economic transformation through innovation and public-private partnerships that address education for employment, labour force development, micro and small business development, economic diversification, and reducing inequalities in rural agrarian communities. Given the substantial inflows from remittances, the Belizean Diaspora is a key stakeholder in development financing through direct financial aid to vulnerable families. There is also the potential to strengthen formal linkages to leverage charitable donations and technical assistance in support of SDG achievement, especially for goals related to prosperity and people.

Official development assistance from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and foreign governments have been and will continue to be, principal sources of targeted development financing for Belize. Debt moratoriums, debt forgiveness, and debt for nature swaps should be explored as part of the development assistance solutions negotiated with these partners. Private charitable donations from international NGOs, foundations, and faith-based organizations have been a critical complement to Official Development Assistance, often offering greater flexibility to fund non-government agencies, including agencies with limited governance capacity.



Flooding in the Belize District along the George Price Highway (UN Photos/Office of the UN Resident Coordinator)

Given its high biodiversity and extreme vulnerability to climate change, Belize is well-positioned to receive greater grant funding from special funding initiatives for climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as forest, coastal and marine conservation. Similarly, international private funding is an important resource for social programmes addressing education and poverty at the local level through NGOs, community- and faith-based organizations.

Foreign direct investment presents valuable opportunities for Belize and is a necessary source of SDG financing, especially in achieving No Poverty (SDG 1), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9). Belize will need the coordinated efforts of the government, private sector, statutory bodies, and international development partners to create a more attractive investment environment and to ensure that new developments are aligned with the goals and principles of Agenda 2030.

The United Nations has a principal role in promoting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In addition to providing direct funding for specific initiatives, additional roles in which the UN is uniquely positioned to support Belize are in developing and coordinating strategic new partnerships including blended financing facilities; responding to the COVID-19 health emergency; creating capacity for improving governance especially in improving access to justice and combating corruption; creating capacity for the development of the blue and green economy; facilitating advocacy for human rights; supporting social research and monitoring to fill critical data gaps, assisting with the elaboration of an Integrated National Financing Framework for SDG financing.



# Political and Institutional Analysis

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# Political and Institutional Analysis

## Political Structure: The Government of Belize

Belize is a parliamentary multi-party democracy and a constitutional monarchy. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations with a Governor-General representing the Head of State, the Queen of England. The Constitution of Belize guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms to all Belizeans including freedom of expression, conscience, religion, movement, assembly, and association. The two dominant parties are the United Democratic Party (UDP) and the People's United Party (PUP). Most recently general elections were held in November 2020 and this resulted in a change of political leadership from the UDP to the PUP. Each elected government holds a mandate to serve a maximum period of five (5) years.

There are three branches of government – the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary – which are collectively the primary custodians of the rights of Belizean citizens. The bi-cameral legislature comprises the House of Representatives with 31 seats (elected) and the Senate with 13 seats (appointed), which jointly constitute the National Assembly with the Prime Minister as the Head of Government. A Cabinet is appointed by the Prime Minister from members of the National Assembly and forms the executive arm of government.

Since gaining independence in 1981, Belize has held 9 general elections and undergone 6 peaceful transitions of power between the two primary political parties, a testament to the population's belief in the democratic political system. The Cabinet formulates the government's national policies and programs through which the State's duties and obligations to its citizens are implemented. The Cabinet presents the national budget to the Legislature for debate and

approval. Ultimately, the annual budget reflects the national policy priorities which the State pursues to fulfil both its national and international commitments and obligations to protect human rights and to advance sustainable development.

The third branch of government is the Judiciary where members are appointed. The Judiciary, upholds the laws of the State. Belize has an independent Judiciary comprising two superior courts – the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal – with jurisdiction to hear and determine civil or criminal proceedings, as well as appeals arising from any decision of an inferior court, with the Chief Justice presiding over the Supreme Court. Belize also has two inferior courts – the Magistrates' Court and the Family Court. In 2010, Belize acceded to the Caribbean Court of Justice as the final court of appeal. The basic structure of the Judiciary is governed by the Constitution (Articles 63-77). The Code of Civil Procedures, the Code of Criminal Procedures, and the Justice Protection Act (Cap 119:02)<sup>10</sup> which governs the operation of the courts. The courts are responsible for protecting and guaranteeing the rights established in the Constitution and the Laws of Belize. As an independent arm of government, the Judiciary has administrative and budgetary autonomy, but the Parliament assigns its specific budget allocation on an annual basis, pursuant to the Public Expenditures Act.<sup>11</sup>

In recent years, a marginal budget has been allocated to the Judiciary (approximately 1% of the overall budget) which is incongruent with the high crime rates, perception of high levels of insecurity, and the longstanding backlog of cases<sup>12</sup>. This equates to reduced access to justice, both for victims of crime

<sup>10</sup> As Amended in 2001.

<sup>11</sup> The fiscal year is 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>12</sup> 7News, "Supreme Court opens, staid ceremony doesn't betray tensions between bench and bar", 8 January 2018.



and those who come into conflict with the law. Low budgetary allocation also limits the Judiciary's capacity to implement new measures to strengthen the rule of law. The low budgetary allocation also limits the Judiciary's capacity to implement new measures to strengthen the rule of law.

Nevertheless, over the past decade, the Judiciary proactively leveraged partnerships to mobilize in-kind and donor contributions to introduce new procedures that increased access to justice for children, youth in conflict with the law, and other vulnerable populations who have limited access to legal services.

Specifically, the Judiciary introduced child-friendly courts, diversion for youth offenders, and court-connected mediation for the Family Court and non-criminal cases in the Supreme Court and Magistrates' Court. A sizeable increase in the national budget allocation for the Judiciary and continued partnership support is needed to introduce further innovations, such as restorative justice, that protect and serve the most vulnerable.

Municipal and village councils constitute the second and third tiers of government, respectively. Municipalities are governed by city/town councils, headed by a Mayor, and comprising 10 and 6 councillors. These councils enjoy three (3) year terms and have a core mandate for city/town management, including inter alia, environmental protection, revenue collection, zoning, planning, urban infrastructure, and the management and coordination of relations and activities between the municipality, the Government of Belize, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organization.<sup>13</sup>

Village councils consist of 7 elected members headed by a chairperson. The general function of these councils is to ensure good governance and improvement in the village along with the enforcement of the provisions of the Village Council Act.<sup>14</sup> Similar to

municipal bodies, elections for village councils occur every three (3) years, typically during the summer months from June to August. Though elected, these two tiers of government have limited legal and administrative mandates. They are constrained to develop and implement localized policies if the central government does not first sanction these.

The indigenous Maya communities of Toledo have an additional, traditional form of governance, the Alcalde System, whose jurisdiction is legally established and recognized in the Inferior Courts Act.<sup>15</sup> Alcaldes are elected for two (2) year terms. In addition to their traditional leadership role in village administration, alcaldes can adjudicate both civil and criminal matters.

The government's capacity to protect the human rights of its citizens is operationalized through the public administration system. Public service employees execute the policies of the Cabinet ministers who head the various line ministries. Each ministry is supported by a bureaucratic structure through which its functions are executed. Notably, such duties often align with the commitments and obligations of the State as outlined in the international conventions. In this regard, Government may want to consider greater decentralization of Belize's governance system since this would allow for more targeted local services and policies and to expand the spaces for civic engagement on policy design and implementation. Other benefits of greater devolution of policy development and implementation along with the requisite resources would advance citizen participation and inclusiveness in local governance.

Belize has a long history and tradition of civil society organization and engagement. Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are also active on several thematic issues and they afford a space for the public to advocate for policies, regulations and mechanisms to advance civil, political, as well as economic, social

<sup>13</sup> Belize, Town Councils Act, Laws of Belize, chap. 87, (2000).

<sup>14</sup> Belize, Village Councils Act, Laws of Belize, chap. 88, (2011).

<sup>15</sup> Belize, Inferior Courts Act, Laws of Belize, chap. 94, part IV (2000).

and political rights. An NGO Act governs the legal presence, functions and practices of these organizations in Belize.<sup>16</sup> NGOs and civil society organizations often have close partnerships with government agencies acting as implementing entities for projects and programs including in areas of conservation and development, sexual and reproductive health, women's empowerment, youth development, support for persons living with disabilities, humanitarian assistance and community-based development. This partnership is important since resource mobilization, technical and organizational capacities within and among the NGO community needs strengthening and expanding to improve citizen engagement with and interest articulation to the government policy formulation and implementation.

Trade unions are important institutions in which labour is engaged and organized in Belize. The National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB) represents a body of 10 unions. This umbrella organization has a long history of advocating for the rights of labour, and it also offers support and services to its member unions.<sup>17</sup> The unions play a vital role in holding the government accountable to its mandate and ensuring that the voices and concerns of its membership are heard. On this basis, the unions in Belize carry significant influence with which they can shift public opinion through their negotiations and bargaining agreements. They are also highly scrutinized by the public and are regularly monitored for political bias. Ongoing institutional strengthening and communication support to the unions are important to maintain the democratic and civic spaces, which they provide to the formal working population in Belize.

Citizen insecurity is one of the greatest threats to peace in the Belizean society. From 2009 to 2020, Belize's average annual murder rate was 34.3 per 100,000, with a peak of 42.55 in 2012 and a low of 24.3 in 2020.<sup>18</sup> On average, 90% of the victims are male and

more than 80% of murders are gang-related and primarily take place in "hotspots" for gang activity in Belize City.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Belize consistently ranks among the top 10 most violent countries in the world.<sup>20</sup> An IDB Report on Citizen Security in Belize identified drug trafficking, gangs, the availability of firearms, low levels of human development, social fragmentation, low education attainment, limited youth employment opportunities, weak rule of law and institutional weaknesses of the justice sector as root causes of the high crime rate.<sup>21</sup> Although Belize's murder rate for the year 2020 was 24.33 per 100,000 inhabitants, the lowest it has been since 2013, there was no decline in Belize City, which is the centre of gang activity.<sup>22</sup> The overall crime reduction may be attributed to the multiple states of emergency implemented during 2020, but further analysis is needed to assess the efficacy and appropriateness of such measures for crime control, especially in light of the persistence of gang-related violence.

Porous borders and sparse populations in remote areas have contributed to the attraction of Belize as a major transshipment point for criminal organizations seeking to transport illicit substances from South America to Guatemala and Mexico for onward trafficking to main consumer markets. Belize's role in the international drug trade has become increasingly apparent in the past decade with powerful Mexican cartels and Salvadorian gangs<sup>23</sup> establishing links within the country as shown through the 2012 sanction of the U.S. Treasury department against operatives of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzman based in Belize.<sup>24</sup> Criminal organizations exploit both land and maritime borders and Belize will be increasingly attractive as a transshipment point as law-enforcement efforts in neighbouring countries improve. This will continue to put pressure on an already challenged law-enforcement and judiciary which are significantly hampered by limited capacities for investigation and prosecution, as a result of understaffing and/or limited training, as well as chronic needs for physical

<sup>16</sup> Belize, Non-Governmental Organizations Act, Laws of Belize, chap. 315 (2011).

<sup>17</sup> The NTUCB is comprised of Association of Public Service Senior Managers, Belize Communication Workers Union, Belize Energy Workers Union, Belize Workers Union, Belize National Teachers Union, Belize Water Services Workers Union, Christian Workers' Union, Public Service Union, Southern Workers' Union and Progressive Teachers' Union.

<sup>18</sup> Belize Crime Observatory, Belize Murder Rate by Sex 2009 – 2020 (Belmopan, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Michelle Young, Belize City Community Gang Assessment (Inter-American Development Bank, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Robert Muggah and Katherine Aguirre Tobin, Citizen Security in Latin America: Facts and Figures (Rio de Janeiro: Igarape Institute, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Pelice and Alexandra Veyrat-Pontet, Citizen Security in Belize (Inter-American Development Bank, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Belize Crime Observatory, BCO Crime Report 2021 (Belmopan, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> Marguerite Cawley, "Belize Arrests Fuel Reports of MS13 Gang Presence", Insight Crime, 1 August 2014.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Targets Belize-Based Operatives of Chapo Guzman", 7 August 2012.

resources, tools and equipment to aid law enforcement in its uphill battle to intercept and prosecute illegal activity.

Cybercrime is also affecting the population, these are investigated by the Cybercrime Unit. While law enforcement capacities to investigate these crimes were severely reduced between March-June 2020, the Cybercrime Unit was mainly focused on public safety in the framework of the State response to the COVID-19 emergency. The Government of Belize has been proactive in the development of the National Cyber Security Strategy toward a secure Cyber Space 2020 – 2023. The Strategy prioritizes the development of a national legal framework to address cyber security threats and emphasizes capacity building in incident response; critical infrastructure protection; and the implementation of measures to support education, awareness and workplace policy development in cybersecurity. Belize has also introduced a Cybercrime Bill in the House of Representatives which now awaits approval by the Cabinet and the Senate.



# Institutional Structures and Normative Context for the Protection of Human Rights

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# Institutional Structures and Normative Context for the Protection of Human Rights

## The Normative Context of Human Rights in Belize

The Constitution is the supreme law of Belize. If any other law is inconsistent with this Constitution that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void. However, as Belize has signed on to the core 9 International Conventions, the state must therefore make provisions in its laws to guarantee domestic implementation of these Covenants. Of note, the Concluding Remarks of the Human Rights Council (HRC) on Belize's initial report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)<sup>25</sup> put forth that Belize should guarantee the provisions of this particular Covenant to have full legal effect in its domestic legal system. However, the Constitution also sets out that any change must be put forth by a Bill that is supported by the votes of no less than two-thirds of all the members of the House of Representatives. Where such changes may be deemed necessary because of the provisions made in the International Conventions, section 65 (b) of the Interpretation Act establishing that once Belize signs on to the International Convention, this has the force of the law. This means that to guarantee full implementation of the UN Conventions, Belize should strengthen the capacities in the national government to ensure that it is fully integrated in the domestic legal system to secure the rights of its citizens.

Belize has ratified all 9 core UN Conventions. Belize has also ratified 50 ILO Conventions and 1 Protocol, including the 8 Fundamental Conventions which address 4 areas considered essential to rights at work: (i) Freedom of association and the effective

recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (ii) The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (iii) The effective abolition of child labour; and (iv) The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

## Core International Human Rights Treaties to which Belize is a party

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1996)
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2015)
3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (2001)
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1990)
5. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1986)
6. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
7. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (2001)
8. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2011)
9. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2015)
10. Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2015).

<sup>25</sup> CCPR/C/BLZ/CO/1/Add.1

## Additional International Treaties to which Belize is a party:

1. United Nations Charter
2. 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol
3. Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
4. Hague Conventions on the inter-country adoption of minors
5. UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime
6. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons
7. Cluster Munitions Treaty
8. UN Convention Against Corruption
9. UN Treaty Against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances
10. Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions
11. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
12. Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)
13. Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)

Belize remains challenged to submit the required progress reports to most of these treaty bodies on schedule, or at all.<sup>26</sup>

## Human Rights Treaties Not Yet Ratified by Belize

1. ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989<sup>27</sup>
2. CCPR-OP2-DP, Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty
3. CESCR-OP, Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
4. CRC-OP-IC, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

5. CRPD-OP, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Belize also maintains an active role in the Inter-American Human Rights System and is a party to key instruments, including the Convention of Belem do Para (or the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women); the Inter-American Convention on Support Obligation; and the Inter-American Convention against Corruption.

## Institutional Context of Human Rights Protection

Belize does not have a national human rights institution (NHRI); however, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has communicated its interest in receiving assistance from the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, Regional Office for Central America (OHCHR) to establish such an institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. In partnership with the Ministry, OHCHR supported initial consultations and studies to advance this process. There are no indications of budgetary or resource allocations by the Government for the establishment of the NHRI and given the economic crisis brought on by COVID-19, there is likely limited fiscal space for the government to invest in an NHRI in the near future. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations (77.5 - 77.12) and the Concluding Remarks of the HRC on December 11, 2018, both request that Belize considers establishing such an institution to function in an independent, pluralistic, and transparent manner in compliance with the Paris Principles Relating to Status of National Institutions.<sup>28</sup> It would also allow for the protection of human rights by receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints, mediating conflicts, and monitoring activities. Furthermore, it would promote human rights through a wide range of education and outreach actions, training, and capacity building, and advising and assisting the Government in such matters. In the absence of an NHRI, citizens' engagement with the state for the fulfilment of their

<sup>26</sup> State Party Reports currently due: CAT(25/06/1988); CED(13/09/2017); CEDAW(15/06/2011); ICESCR(09/06/2017); CMW (05/09/2016); CRC(01/09/2007); and CRPD(02/07/2013).

<sup>27</sup> The UPR recommendation to ratify will be examined by Belize.

<sup>28</sup> A/RES/48/134

rights is significantly constrained.

### Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Over the last two reporting cycles, Belize has given the UPR development process considerable attention. Most recently, in the third review cycle, government agencies, the United Nations, and civil society organizations engaged in separate but simultaneous analyses and documentation of the key human rights issues within Belize.

Following analysis and documentation that benefitted from multisectoral participation, Belize submitted reports in the second and third cycles (2013 and 2018, respectively) and cumulatively received 273 recommendations. For its most recent UPR, Belize received 124 recommendations, of which it supported 100 at the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council in March 2019, which represents a 59% increase in the number of recommendations supported by the State. Many of the recommendations related to the legal and general implementation frameworks; universal and cross-cutting issues; civil and political rights; economic, social, and cultural rights; women's rights; and the rights of other vulnerable groups and persons. Belize noted (but did not accept) recommendations related to the acceptance of certain international norms; cooperation with special procedures; the death penalty; rights related to marriage and family; the advancement of women; the participation of women in political and public life; the family environment and alternative care; and indigenous people. Although Belize supported many of the recommendations, there are no systems or national planning frameworks in place that integrate, track, and monitor the implementation of these recommendations.

Belize has taken strategic steps in addressing the rights of the child; however, there remain gaps and limitations in monitoring and accountability. Although progress has been made toward drafting Belize's CRC Periodic Report of States Parties, the final report has

been outstanding for several years. Belize has no coordination mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on its statutory obligations under ratified rights-based conventions.

### Cross-Boundary, Regional and Sub-Regional Perspectives

In 2013, Latin American and Caribbean countries agreed and ratified the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development in Uruguay – the regional adaptation of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA). Belize was among Caribbean countries who were signatories to this Consensus, through which they renewed their commitment towards the full implementation of the principles, plans, strategies, initiatives, and programmes of the ICPD PoA. The Consensus covers 10 priority areas, namely:

1. Full integration of population dynamics into sustainable development with equality and respect for human rights
2. Rights, needs, responsibilities, and requirements of girls, boys, adolescents, and youth
3. Aging, social protection, and socioeconomic challenges
4. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services
5. Gender equality
6. International migration and protection of the human rights of all migrants
7. Territorial inequality, spatial mobility, and vulnerability
8. Indigenous peoples: interculturalism and rights
9. Afro descendants: rights and combating racial discrimination
10. Frameworks for the implementation of the future regional agenda on population and development.

## Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman does not have a human rights mandate; instead, it is mandated to receive and investigate complaints from aggrieved individuals and bodies who feel their rights have been violated or wronged when they sought services from government agencies or public entities. The mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman does not extend to grievances against private entities or individuals, for which citizens have limited options for redress outside of the court system. The Ombudsman is also mandated to review decisions of authorities in accordance with Part V of the Freedom of Information Act where access to a document has been refused by a Government department or other prescribed authority. While this office has been reviewed for NHRI consideration, its current human resource composition, mandate, and budget are not adequate to meet the Paris Principles.

The Office is located in Belize City and does not have district offices. It appears that it does not conduct complaint intake clinics in other districts, which accounts for the low number of complaints from outside of the Belize District. During the 2018 reporting period, the Ombudsman received and recorded 106 complaints relating to its mandate (6 complaints from the Corozal District, 2 from the Orange Walk District, 64 from the Belize District, 22 from the Cayo District, 10 from the Stann Creek District, and 4 from the Toledo District). The Office also received 2 applications for review made pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. This office has pursued the resolution of complaints based on its current mandate and its recently expanded budgetary allocation.<sup>29</sup> However, the nature of some of the complaints, its limited human resources, and limited geographic reach indicate that the Ombudsman's Office requires additional support for it to fully carry out its mandate.

## National AIDS Commission (NAC)

The National AIDS Commission (NAC) is a statutory

body created by the Belize National AIDS Commission Act of 2000. The Commission consists of 21 representatives from government and civil society, of whom 17 are voting members. The members of the Commission represent a range of public agencies and civil society organizations. The Commission is mandated to coordinate, facilitate, and monitor the national response to HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis through the National Strategic Plan to reduce the incidence and spread of HIV/AIDS, and to provide comprehensive, quality support to persons living with HIV/AIDS. The commission's work in human rights protection has led to the development of the Anti-Discrimination Equal Opportunities Bill (EOB) 2020<sup>30</sup>; which proposes protections for individuals who possess certain protected characteristics (PC). The proposed law identifies 18 PCs, including age, breast-feeding, race, political opinion, sexual orientation, and family responsibilities. After submission just prior to parliamentary elections in November 2020, the Bill was put on hold pending further consultation and engagement with state and non-state stakeholders.

The EOB aligns with UPR 2018 recommendations that were supported by Belize, which call for Belize to enact legislation to eliminate discrimination and to guarantee the rights of everyone to equal protection under the law in conformity with the international commitments of Belize (Recs.77.15 and 77.16). Furthermore, the Human Rights Committee also advocated for Belize to enact legislation to fully implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) through its domestic legal system and courts. The National AIDS Commission led the drafting of the EOB since its key constituents are persons more vulnerable to or living with HIV/AIDS which includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer populations, pregnant women, and young people especially females. This draft EOB addresses 12 of the UPR recommendations under the theme of Discrimination which were accepted by Belize. However, it requires greater civic engagement and the

<sup>29</sup> CCPR/C/BLZ/CO/1/Add.1

<sup>30</sup> Belize, Draft Equal Opportunities Bill (2020).



subsequent acceptance by the National Cabinet for it to be presented to parliament for passage into law.

### **National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC)**

Since 1999, the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) has functioned as a statutory body. The NCFC was established to promote, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and to ensure that the government meets its national and international obligations as a Party to the CRC. It comprises a chairperson appointed by the Minister of Human Development and 15 multisectoral, government, and non-government committee members. Multiple recommendations from the UPR 2018 urge Belize to strengthen the implementation of legislation to protect children as agreed in the CRC (Rec. 77.91).

The NCFC has been instrumental in the passage of Amendments to the Criminal Code protecting boys and girls from rape, the introduction of legislation to better protect women and children from Human Trafficking violations. It has also championed amendments to the Juvenile Justice legislation that greatly impacts citizen security and protection of children who come in conflict with the law as well as to the Families and Children's Act. In 2019, the NCFC launched the National Children's Agenda 2030 which further articulates the vision for children in Belize to grow up safe, protected, and with access to information and services. The Committee is also leading the development of the first-ever State of Nations Children's Report in 2021.

### **National Women's Commission (NWC)**

The National Women's Commission (NWC) was established in 1982 as the Government's national advisory body on gender-related issues. The NWC monitors and reports on Belize's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Its members are appointed by the Minister of Human Development

and they include ex-officio members, technical experts, and private individuals. Since 2008, the NWC has been headed by an Executive Director.

The Commission's primary role is to advance the Revised National Gender Policy (2018), which entails the specific responsibilities (i) to advise Government ministers on implementation steps; (ii) to develop national campaigns to raise awareness about the Policy; (iii) to carry out advocacy to promote the principles enshrined in the Policy; (iv) to coordinate monitoring and evaluation of implementation progress; (v) to report to Cabinet and the public every two years on implementation progress; and (vi) to prepare Belize's report to CEDAW every four years for presentation to the Cabinet and the international CEDAW Committee. The recommendations of the UPR 2018 predominantly advocate for Belize to address discrimination and inequality faced by women, and their disproportionate experience with domestic violence, slavery, and trafficking. The recommendations also underline the need for greater and more equitable access to education and health services for women.

### **Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT)**

Since Belize's economy is heavily dependent on its natural resource base and its population is predominantly rural, living in close proximity to these resources, PACT's role in the protection of these crucial resources strengthens Belize's capacity to leverage its economic and natural resource assets. PACT is a lead national entity in sustainable natural resource management in Belize. PACT functions as the national implementing entity (NIE) for the Adaptation Fund of the Green Climate Fund and as the fiduciary channel for international and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the Global Environmental Facility, the Meso-American Reef Fund, and the Belize Nature Conservation Fund. PACT is guided by the Protected Areas Conservation Trust Act, 2015, which underpins the governance and institutional functions

of the Trust to promote the sustainable management of Belize's protected areas.<sup>31</sup>

Belize signed the Escazú Agreement in September 2020 thereby confirming its commitment to provide the public space through which civil society organizations, environmental non-government organizations, and human rights defenders can access information, engage in public participation, and access justice on matters related to the environment. Belize recently instituted the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs which provides leadership in the implementation of this Agreement, to advance a rights-based approach toward indigenous peoples and vulnerable populations who depend on the services and provisions of the natural environment for their survival and livelihoods.

#### Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

A small but relatively active group of NGOs devoted to providing services for various vulnerable groups plays an important role in promoting and protecting human rights in Belize. The work of these organizations, such

as the Human Rights Commission of Belize (HRCB), the Belize Council of Churches, Generation Zero, the United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM), and the Child Development Foundation (CDF), include advocacy, public education, and awareness, and programme implementation. The HRCB has established a partnership with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide legal aid to persons with international protection needs in Belize whose rights have been violated and who do not have access to legal resources. In its partnership with UNHCR, HRCB provides legal assistance and representations to refugees and asylum seekers, to assist with their asylum claim or other legal proceedings. HRCB has also established a referral mechanism with relevant agencies and engages with the Professional Standards Branch of the Belize Police Department and the Office of the Ombudsman to address the needs of all persons seeking assistance. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) established 3 Migrant Hubs in partnership with the Child Development Foundation (CDF) in Belmopan, with the Belize Red Cross in San-Ignacio and Humana



Village chairwoman Patty Witzil and her son at the daycare offered by mobile women's clinics. (UN Photos/Perla Hinojosa/Spotlight Initiative)

People to People Belize - HPPBZ in Bella Vista. Information services on migration procedures and requirements, translation services, human rights, human trafficking prevention are available free of cost for migrants, to reduce barriers and help to facilitate a safe and orderly migration.

CSOs that have been supporting the protection of women and children, in advocating for legislative change and speaking out against extreme rights violations, include Belize Family Life Association (BFLA), Productive Organization for Women in Action (POWA), and the Youth Enhancement Services (YES). Indigenous Peoples' organizations also undertake advocacy on behalf of vulnerable populations, such as the National Garifuna Council and Maya Leaders Alliance among others.



Civil society partners at the launch of Spotlight Initiative's Family Violence Toolkit (UNICEF Photos/NVISION LLP/Spotlight Initiative)

The media is a critical pillar of Belizean democracy, serving as a watchdog to hold government and other duty bearers accountable. It is also an active stakeholder in the promotion of human rights, providing both information and voice to a broad range of stakeholders including marginalized groups and aggrieved citizens. Development agencies frequently engage with media houses to access public platforms (news, features, documentaries, talk shows, public

service announcements) for advocacy, public dialogue and information sharing. The burgeoning use of social media, smart phones, and 4G technology creates new opportunities for social participation and information sharing to advance Agenda 2030. In Belize, both development agencies and the government have begun to use digital media to these ends.

Although national investments in expanding mobile and fibre optic networks provide the infrastructure for wide-ranging telephone and high-bandwidth internet access, marginalized and disadvantaged groups in lower income brackets and in remote areas, especially minorities, women and children, still do not enjoy the benefits of this infrastructure. Targeted efforts to overcome digital inequities and the obstacles to internet access affecting these groups will foster social inclusion and promote localized achievement of the SDGs.

CSOs have an important role to play in Belize's political system. They provide a space for the public's engagement with the state to articulate their interests and values. CSOs can create and strengthen these spaces so that citizens have the opportunities to influence policy and decision-making by the State. Belize has had a long history of active citizen engagement through its CSOs including on matters of women's rights, anti-discrimination and stigmatization of the LGBTQ community, youth empowerment, and matters related to the fulfilment of economic, environmental and cultural rights and the fair treatment of workers. However, a persistent challenge for most Belizean CSOs is the irregularity of their funding base, limited technical capacities and the perceived distrust by citizens that they can influence the state's effort to improve public accountability and transparency. In the drive to achieve Agenda 2030, the CSOs in Belize should be strengthened and supported to improve their capacities to advance transparency, participation and non-discrimination in governance spaces.

access, marginalized and disadvantaged groups in lower income brackets and in remote areas, especially minorities, women and children, still do not enjoy the benefits of this infrastructure. Targeted efforts to overcome digital inequities and the obstacles to internet access affecting these groups will foster social inclusion and promote localized achievement of the SDGs.

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### **Trust in Public Institutions and Related Human Rights Concerns**

Belize has committed to prioritizing openness of public institutions as evidenced by the development and launch in June 2020 of an open government action plan,<sup>32</sup> tailored to the Government's COVID-19 response. This action is a globally acclaimed best practice. Nevertheless, there are significant and long-standing factors which foster distrust in public institutions. Specifically, confidence in the criminal

justice system has been eroded by systemic and continuing issues related to abuse of authority, delayed access to justice, and violations of human rights, including children's rights.

### **Transparency and Efforts to Eliminate Corruption in Public Entities**

**Accession to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.** Belize acceded to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) on December 12, 2016 and submitted its Country Review Report to the Tenth Session of the UN CAC Implementation Review Group in May 2019. The report makes recommendations on amendments to: (i) improve enforcement of anti-corruption laws; (ii) criminalize certain corrupt activities not yet covered by law; (iii) establish witness protection mechanisms; (iv) increase the consequences and sanctions for corruption offenses; and (v) expand international cooperation in combating transnational crime. The State also indicated the need for technical assistance in legislative drafting and capacity building of law enforcement authorities to support its implementation of the Convention.

Belize lacks a strong anti-corruption legal framework and has no laws specifically addressing drug-related corruption.<sup>33</sup> The main anti-corruption institutions in Belize are (i) the Director of Public Prosecutions, (ii) the Attorney-General, (iii) the Financial Intelligence Unit, (iv) the Belize Police Department, (v) the Public Service Commission and (vi) the Central Bank of Belize. The legislative framework comprises the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Money Laundering and Terrorism (Prevention) Act and the Financial Intelligence Unit Act. The Prevention of Corruption Act 2000 outlines measures "to combat corruption related to illicit monetary gains and the misuse of public funds while holding public office".<sup>34</sup> There were no charges made under this law in 2017 and 2018, despite heightened public concerns about corruption in government

<sup>32</sup> Trust for the Americas, "Belize open Government Action Plan Development in Times of COVID-19".

<sup>33</sup> United States of America, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (Washington, D.C., 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

during this time.

**Supreme Audit Institution of Belize.** Where there is substantial public concern or any suspicion that corruption exists, the government has instituted that the Auditor General can undertake Special Audits. Section 109 of the Belize Constitution Act, Chapter 4 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011 enshrines this role on the Auditor General. In the Constitution, the Supreme Audit Institution of Belize is established as an independent and reliable source to hold the government accountable for its stewardship of public funds. Hence, on matters of perceived irregularity in the public sector, the Auditor General is empowered to bring these to the attention of the Minister of Finance, who is usually the prime minister.

Over a period of eight (8) years, beginning in 2008, the Office of the Auditor General has audited 9 public bodies and prepared 10 reports. In doing so, this Office investigated irregularities on matters related to **public project management, bilateral financial agreements, the issuance of public lands titles and leases, the procurement in public health, passport and citizenship services, aviation travel services, sports and education.** The table below provides a list of the audit reports, the agency investigated, the time in which the reports were developed and the matter of irregularity under investigation.

Name	Date	Period Investigated	Agency Investigated
Special Report on the Soybean Project of Belize	July 2008	December 2000 to March 2007	o Ministry of Budget Management, Development Finance Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Belize Marketing Board Corporation
Special Report on the 2007 Venezuelan Grant Programme	April 2009	December 2007	o Ministry Home Affairs, Public Utilities, and Housing
Special Report on the Issuance of National Land Leases and Titles	2010	September 2007 to February 2008	o Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment
Special Audit Report Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital	June 2012	April 2010 to December 2011	o Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital
Special Audit – Passport	May 2016	January 2012 to September 2013	o Immigration and Nationality Department
Special Audit – Nationality	May 2016	April 2011 to September 2013	o Immigration and Nationality Department
Special Audit - Visa	May 2016	January 2012 to September 2013	o Immigration and Nationality Department
Special Audit – Stamp Duty on Airline Tickets	May 2016	April 2007 to July 2012	o Treasury Department
National Sports Council Audit Review <sup>35</sup>	January 2020 (Tabled in the House of Representatives)	April 2015 to March 2016.	o National Sports Council
Auditor General's Report on Julian Cho Technical High School <sup>36</sup>	January 2020 (Tabled in the House of Representatives)	April 2014 to September 2016	o Julian Cho Technical High School o Ministry of Education

TABLE 3: SPECIAL AUDIT REPORTS, THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL, 2008-2020

<sup>35</sup> Tabled at the Belize House of Representatives but not available on the [www.audit.gov.bz](http://www.audit.gov.bz) website.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

### International Governance and Corruption Indices.

While there are a variety of international agencies which report on transparency and accountability across countries, Belize does not usually feature in these reports because the requisite data is unavailable. For instance, there was no data for Belize in Transparency International's 2019 Global Corruption Barometer – Latin America and the Caribbean. However, in the World Governance Indicators Report which reports on 6 broad dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability/no violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption, Belize received an overall percentile score of 40.48. This was the lowest score in the Caribbean sub-region, and even lower than the LAC regional average of 50.33.

This score additionally indicates that corruption is a major issue in Belize. In the same report, Belize also scored below the Caribbean average on all six (6) governance indicators including the control of corruption indicators which measures "perceptions on the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests." For this indicator, Belize scored 48.56, which is the second lowest in the Caribbean and 18 points below the average of 66.8.

The Government of Belize has expressed its readiness to proceed with the implementation of the UNCAC. There is an opportunity for the UN agencies to support Belize in the fight against corruption by providing technical assistance, supporting widespread training and awareness across the public sector, and increasing support to civil society organizations to broaden the civic space for advocacy and citizen participation in governance.



Women's Month Motivational Outreach by the US Embassy at the Belize Central Prison (Breaking Belize News Photos)

### Access to Justice and Fair Treatment while in Prison

Some populations in Belize can be at greater risk of detention and incarceration but there is a need for further analysis of the relationships between ethnicity, geography, age-group, incarceration, and the types of crimes committed to determine if any correlations exist between these factors and detention and/or incarceration. The result of this analysis can support the design of targeted, evidence-based policies to strengthen the rule of law and protect vulnerable populations. In terms of ethnicity, Afro-descendants are the largest group in the male prison population. At the end of 2019, youth between the ages of 18 and 30 accounted for 45% of Belize's prison population, although that age group represents only 28% of the population.<sup>37</sup> The prison population also includes persons detained on migration offenses.

The disproportionately high percentage of the prison population on remand awaiting trial remains an ongoing cause for concern.<sup>38</sup> Belize adopted the Criminal Procedure Rules in January 2016, which provide timelines for the conduct of new criminal cases with the aim of minimizing delays but detainees awaiting sentences comprise a large majority of the prison population.

<sup>37</sup> Statistical Institute of Belize, Postcensal estimates by age group and sex, 2010 to 2020 (Belmopan, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> Belize Crime Observatory, 2019 Situation Analysis on Crime and Violence in Belize (Belmopan, 2020).

<sup>39</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, A/RES/21/2200

At least 44% of the overall prison population in January 2020 and 50% in January 2019 were persons awaiting trial. Many of the inmates were on remand pending trial for murder, or attempted murder. In the worst cases, inmates have been waiting for more than 7 years for their trials to be heard. In addition to long waits, the conditions of detention also requires urgent attention by prison authorities. On this matter, overcrowding; malnutrition; inadequate access to water; poor sanitation; lack of medical care; inter-prisoner violence; and the use of isolation for up to 28 days in small punishment rooms lacking light and ventilation to discipline prisoners should be addressed to ensure that Belize meets the obligations of Articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR.<sup>39</sup>

A proposed Bill to introduce Time Limits on Judicial Decisions is currently under consideration by the newly elected Government of Belize. As of January 8, 2021, the **Time Limit for Judicial Decisions Bill**, was introduced to the House of Representatives for an Act to specify a time limit in accordance with sections 98 and 102 of the Belize Constitution within which a judge shall give a decision in a civil case and any appeal case. This Bill does not cover criminal cases and the government should also seek to address the need for a similarly urgent response to these types of cases.

### **Detention and Imprisonment of Vulnerable Populations**

Of grave concern is the number of children incarcerated and who face long delays waiting for their trials. Children who are on remand or have been convicted of more serious crimes are incarcerated at the Wagner Youth Facility, located within the Belize Central Prison compound, adjacent but external to facilities for adult prisoners. Young people who breach curfews during the COVID-19 pandemic have also been subject to detention by the police. They can be detained or incarcerated in the adult prison although this is in contravention of the CRC, which requires that juveniles be held in facilities outside of the regular prison

system unless separation is not in the child's best interest. On this issue, the capacities of state officials in the prison system need to be strengthened for compliance with ICCPR Article 10 2b; and Article 10(3) which are clear about how juvenile detainees are to be treated in prison.

Given the vulnerability of children, ensuring a prompt trial is particularly important as noted in Article 37(b) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasizes that children must be imprisoned 'only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time'. The imposition of life sentences without minimum terms on offenders who were minors when they committed their offenses is unlawful; however, in Belize, there have still been instances where offenders who were minors when they committed their offenses have been given life sentences without minimum terms. Women make up 3% of the prison population. However, the Belize Crime Observatory notes that there was an increase in the number of female inmates – from 28 to 38 inmates from September 2019 – September 2020.<sup>40</sup> The factors that are driving criminal activity by women need to be investigated and analysed. Juvenile female inmates are housed at the Belize Youth Hostel – a separate facility from the Belize Central Prison.

### **Access to Information and Transparency**

The Freedom of Information Act came into force in Belize in May 1994 to promote the disclosure of information in the public interest and to guarantee every person the right to access public information. An analysis is needed of the utilization and implementation of this Act to ascertain its efficacy in improving transparency and accountability. One factor which may reduce the positive impact of the Government's actions to improve openness is the population's limited ability to access any such information digitally. Internet penetration in Belize stood at 61% in January 2020,<sup>41</sup> which leaves a significant portion of the population, mainly among

<sup>39</sup> Belize Crime Observatory, Crime Analysis Report, September 2020.  
<sup>41</sup> Simon Kemp, "Digital 2020: Belize", Datareportal, 17 February 2020.  
<sup>42</sup> Belize, Freedom of Information Act, Laws of Belize, chap. 13 (2011).

already vulnerable populations, without real-time access to COVID-19 government information and services as well as other related socio-economic opportunities. It also means that access to public information is costly and those in underserved areas are likely to pay more for this service.

While the Office of the Ombudsman has the legal authority to review decisions regarding requests for access to public documents under the Freedom of Information Act, these reviews are limited to public bodies and do not cover non-state entities.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the Office of the Ombudsman is limited by its geographic reach and human resources to ensure that the right of access to information is widely and effectively exercised.

Without internet access, vulnerable persons, including workers in the informal sector, unemployed youth, and the recently unemployed, have limited means to engage in online social dialogue and community trust-building engagements implemented through online/virtual platforms. Limited access to online space further isolates already marginalized groups from formal education, health information, and economic assistance. In the context of the pandemic, these constraints leave many populations without the requisite information and technology resources or infrastructure to participate in the State's COVID-19 response mechanisms. When populations do not participate in processes that affect them or do not have the resources to go on virtual spaces to participate in the local state's response mechanisms, the Government's COVID-19 response may be seen as lacking transparency and inclusiveness.

### **Control Mechanisms to Protect Human Rights**

The Belize Police Department, the Belize Defence Force, and the Belize Coast Guard constitute the law enforcement agencies in Belize. The Constitution outlines that the Commissioner of Police, the Prisons Superintendent, and the Director of Security and

Intelligent Services are vested with the powers to appoint persons to hold or act in any office in the respective law enforcement and security organizations.

These agencies, currently and in the past, have been accused of human rights violations. Some of these complaints include excessive use of force; discrimination against the members of the LGBTQ community; sexual harassment; abuse and exploitation; and corrupt behaviour, to mention a few. When complaints are made by the public against members of law enforcement, these are directed to the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Professional Standards Bureau. The expectation of resolution of such cases are often low and public information about cases resolved by these bodies is not readily available. The investigation of alleged infractions by police officers is traditionally slow and fraught with bureaucratic delays thus exposing victims to further danger. The Human Rights Committee in its Concluding Remarks to Belize reiterated its concern about the continuing reports of excessive use of force and firearms by law enforcement personnel, particularly by police officers, including against minors. In addition, UPR (Recs. 77.28 – 77.30) recommendations urge Belize to strengthen its efforts to combat the excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel and to ensure swift and independent investigation and prosecution of such cases. The Independent Complaints Commission and the Office of the Professional Standards Branch need additional resources to strengthen their capacity to carry out their mandate in full.

An improved police-community relationship is one of the stated priorities of the Belize Police Department. This is implemented through numerous structures, notably, the Police Youth Cadet Corps, Citizens Crime Committees, Neighbourhood Watches, Zone Beat Liaison Initiatives, and public education programmes. Whilst the community policing programme enjoys



relative success in parts of the country, factors like the absence of a comprehensive crime prevention strategy with attendant lack of strategic direction for this initiative, inability to tailor the programme to the specific needs of hotspot communities, inadequate operational support for the police to invest in intelligence gathering, and perception of police profiling of youth in the hotspots, have combined to undermine trust between the police and communities.

Against the backdrop of distrust and growing crime in the hotspots, the State has increasingly implemented heavy-handed security approaches, regionally referred to as *Mano Dura*, which focuses on the use of physical force to arrest and detain suspects without following the due process of the law. To address the key risk factors across the criminal justice system in Belize, primary strategies should include strengthening community policing and other preventative and intelligence-led approaches to violence prevention in hotspot communities; swiftly addressing alleged human rights violations by the law enforcement officers; and increasing the capacity to stop transnational organized crime cartels from breaching the border.

The treatment of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is another area of law enforcement that requires urgent attention to ensure compliance with international standards. Immigration officers have the authority to act as police officers in the enforcement of the immigration laws and regulations of Belize. Some asylum seekers are refused the right to seek international protection by immigration enforcement officials who unlawfully deny access to the territory at border access points. Despite these practices being in direct contravention to the Refugees Act of Belize and UN Refugee Conventions to which Belize is a signatory, asylum seekers and those entering the country irregularly face arbitrary detention in prison for extended periods. This often results in deportations despite the direct threat to life that some asylum

seekers face in their country of origin.

### **Governance of States of Emergency (SOE) and Human Rights**

The Belize Constitution Part II Section 18 1(b) provides for the declaration of a period of public emergency, “meaning any period during which there is in force a proclamation by the Governor General declaring a state of public emergency exist.” Given the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Public Health (Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Disease) (COVID-19) Regulations confer to the Minister the exercise of powers to prevent, control, contain and suppress the spread of the infectious disease and to maintain peace and public order.<sup>43</sup> The employment of such measures is consistent with Belize’s commitment to the ICESCR, specifically for the prevention and treatment of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases.<sup>44</sup> Since 2020, the states of emergency regulations allowed for strict lock-downs which effectively slowed the COVID-19 infection rates in the second quarter of 2020, though they peaked in the fourth quarter. The infection rates slowed again in the first quarter of 2021. Gun violence did not decrease in this period and there were also several reports of abuse of authority, police brutality and accusations of sexual misconduct.

Undoubtedly, the SOEs have had a positive impact on the declining number of COVID-19 cases. However, the capacities of State officials to enforce the regulations, particularly in the Police Department, need to be strengthened so that the use of force is consistent with the infractions committed. Proper policing procedures and practices during SOEs will also enable Belize to remain compliant with Article 3 of the ICCPR.

<sup>43</sup> Belize, Public Health (Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Disease) (COVID-19), SI No. 95 of 2020.

<sup>44</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights A/RES/2200A(XXI), art. 12 .

# Economic Transformation Analysis

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# Economic Transformation Analysis

Pre-COVID-19 with a nominal GDP per capita of USD \$4,559 (2019), Belize was classified as a high middle-income country. The COVID-19 impact is expected to have decreased GDP/capita to roughly USD \$3,825 (16% decrease on account of GDP declining by 14% during 2020). This decline in GDP/capita would modify Belize's classification from a high-middle-income country to a low-middle-income country. Furthermore, this status belies a high poverty rate, high-income disparity, inequality, stagnation in GDP growth, and an increasing debt to GDP ratio. Lack of diversification of the export base makes Belize highly vulnerable to external shocks and compromises its resilience. The COVID-19 crisis has further increased the debt to GDP ratio and reduced employment and earnings, which significantly diminishes the fiscal space to invest in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, the debt to GDP increased from 99% in 2019 to 123.6% by January 2021.<sup>45</sup> These economic factors also jeopardize progress towards the following SDGs: (SDG 1) No Poverty, (SDG 2) Zero Hunger, (SDG 8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, and (SDG 10) Reduced Inequalities. The convergence of these factors in the economy may even reverse the progress already made.

Economic transformation is necessary for Belize to reverse these negative trends and develop an economic model that favours sustainable development and leaving no one behind. Key elements of such economic transformation could be the diversification of the export base; increasing government revenues with a more equitable taxation structure; creating a better skilled labour force; establishing an environment that is more supportive of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and integration of the informal sector.

## Economic Structure

### Productive Sectors

The economic landscape and endowment of Belize indicate abundant natural resources and land. This offers Belize a comparative advantage over other countries and offers a wealth of natural resources to support economic growth in the agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and tourism sectors. Nevertheless, this comparative advantage will need to be accompanied by policy measures to ensure that the benefits of economic growth translate to improved livelihoods and well-being for the majority of the populace, especially those living in poverty, and to protect the natural resource base.



FIGURE 8: EMPLOYMENT

<sup>45</sup> As of December 2020, total public debt stood at US\$2,109,450,000 consisting of US\$661,800,000 domestic debt and US\$1,447,650,000 external debt (Central Bank of Belize January 2021 Monthly Report).

## Agriculture

Successful transformation of the Belizean economy will require the transformation of the agriculture sector through investment in technology, building human capital, linkages with non-agriculture sectors, negotiating trade agreements to enter new markets, and improved marketing and production, which will support sustained growth and provide decent wages. Belize has evidence of good practices in selected agricultural communities – the larger vertically integrated Mennonite sub-sector producing livestock and grains for both export and local markets. A similar process needs to be extended to the wider agriculture base in Belize through productivity growth.

Improvements in husbandry practices and technology have not advanced apace for the main traditional commodities being exported nor for the sectors dominated by small farmers. This lag in modernization largely contributes to poverty, low income, and an aging farming population.<sup>46</sup> Average wage (USD \$325.5) in the agriculture sector is 42.6% below the average mean wage (USD \$567) in the economy. This translates to a weekly wage of USD \$75/week or an hourly wage of \$1.87 which is 25% below the Government's targeted minimum wage of USD \$2.50/hour. The agriculture sector contributes 14.1% of the labour force. Low wages contribute to the growing numbers of the working poor.

District	Area		Number of Farmers		Number of Farms
	Acres	Hectares	Male	Female	
Orange Walk	216,228	87,506.273	2,154	771	3,018
Cayo	105,271	42,602.590	1,789	137	2,132
Corozal	74,215	30,034.399	2,149	991	4,038
Stann Creek	61,403	24,849.454	454	068	580
Belize	49,028	19,841.360	486	097	560
Toledo	28,572	11,562.930	1,022	104	1,320
<b>Total</b>	<b>534,717</b>	<b>216,397.000</b>	<b>5,907</b>	<b>2,168</b>	<b>11,648</b>

TABLE 4: FARMER REGISTRY SEPTEMBER 2020, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

The year 2020 has demonstrated to Belize the advantages of the agriculture sector, which continued to be a critical source of income and foreign exchange while the tourism industry was paralyzed by the pandemic. The Ministry of Agriculture recorded approximately USD \$38.48 million in losses attributable to the 2019 droughts and the impact of Hurricane Nana (September 3rd, 2020) on southern Belize. Furthermore, flooding by Hurricane Eta and Iota in early and mid-November 2020 caused extensive damage and losses in Central and Western Belize.

These two hurricanes resulted in a cumulative loss of USD \$7.04 million to the agriculture sector. Thus, it is important that climate-smart agricultural practices and innovation be used to improve the sector's resilience and productivity and to maximize profitability and employment creation. To protect against climate change, investment is needed to improve practices in drainage and irrigation, sustainable agriculture, agro-processing, and the storage of goods.

<sup>46</sup> As of December 2020, total public debt stood at US\$2,109,450,000 consisting of US\$661,800,000 domestic debt and US\$1,447,650,000 external debt (Central Bank of Belize January 2021 Monthly Report).

Economic Value of Agriculture Output (US\$)		
Commodities	2018	2019
Sugarcane (M. Tons)	\$38,820,854	\$38,078,266
Bananas	\$42,876,228	\$42,181,206
Citrus Products	\$18,323,546	\$17,377,689
Marine Products	\$22,036,940	\$25,361,215
Fruits	\$11,050,068	\$8,903,384
Grains/Legumes	\$44,110,160	\$39,457,793
Other (Vegetables)	\$11,405,430	\$9,942,361
Livestock	\$76,070,894	\$77,847,360
<b>Total Producer Income</b>	<b>\$264,694,119</b>	<b>\$259,149,273</b>
All Non-Traditional Products	\$142,636,552	\$136,150,897
Sugar/Citrus/Banana/Fisheries	\$122,057,567	\$122,998,375

TABLE 5: ECONOMIC VALUE OF AGRICULTURE (SOURCE: MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE)

Presently, the contribution of agriculture (inclusive of fisheries and forestry) to GDP (10%) and employment of 14.1% is greatly under-estimated since these figures do not consider forward and backward linkages. Agricultural production supports the output of other economic sectors (like tourism and agro-industry) through forward linkages when it sells inputs to these industries. Likewise, it supports the growth of industries when it purchases inputs (agro-chemicals, transportation services, etc.) for the sector through backward linkages. In terms of foreign exchange savings and food security, the sector fully supplies the country with all its needs for livestock (beef, pork and poultry), grains (rice and corn) and legumes (beans) and a good proportion of fruits and vegetables saving the country more than USD \$136 million in foreign exchange annually.

Most of the indigenous people live within the Toledo district where they practice farming using the slash-and-burn shifting type of agriculture. Under this farming system, the farmer slashes the forest area with a machete, burns and plants crops, mainly rice, corn and beans. This system utilizes intensive inputs

of labour and extensive use of land. Little inputs are used apart from labour because the system is based on the natural fertility and periodic rotation of the land. This type of organic and small subsistence farming practice has resulted in low productivity and income for many of the indigenous farmers.

### Tourism

The tourism sector grew rapidly over the past decade, which indicates Belize's comparative advantage in this sector. In 2019, Belize received 464,086 overnight visitors and 1,170,558 cruise-ship visitors, creating tourism inflows of USD \$233 million. Tourism contribution to GDP is estimated at 21%, but with forward/backward linkages included, the contribution is elevated to 41%. A rate of annual growth of 9.9% on arrivals via the Phillip Goldson International Airport indicated a doubling of the sector every 7.5 years.

Growth in the cruise ship sector and for overnight (land borders) visitors was also remarkable at more than 7% annually, equating to a doubling of demand every 10 years. Fast recovery of the sector during the period October 2020 – February 2021 shows the robustness

of the sector; however, it also shows the dependency of the sector on the US economy and the ability of the United States of America to solve its COVID-19 crisis whilst Belize also being able to manage the COVID-19 pandemic locally.

A return to normal for the overnight sector increased from less than 1% in September 2020 to 13% when the

International Airport was re-opened. It then fluctuated to 20% in December when the USA imposed new COVID-19 travel restrictions; declining to 15% in January 2021 and then recovering once more to 16% in February 2021.



FIGURE 9: OVERNIGHT ARRIVALS 2020 - 2021 RELATIVE TO MONTHS IN 2019-2020

One factor that needs to be monitored on tourism growth is the environmental sustainability of such rapid growth since much of the sector is dependent on the natural resource base of the country (forests, caves, reefs, beaches, archaeological sites etc.). The expansion of the industry has occurred without proper land-use planning/zoning, adequate infrastructure, human capital development and a comprehensive strategy to preserve tourism attractions.<sup>47</sup> Sustainable tourism should therefore be the preferred approach in the development of this industry and a key feature in Belize's economic transformation strategy. This should then be supported by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula tailored to the tourism industry to develop a highly skilled and competitive tourism work force. Another important factor in this regard is the promotion and sustainability of cultural tourism, mainly associated with

archaeological sites and living heritage practices, impacting local communities whose livelihoods depend on this cultural capital. Culture and creative industries are also largely linked to the tourism sector and consist of the production and sale of artisanal products, music, dance, and other artistic performances, which require sufficient support and proper integration with the tourism industry. Tourism creates a higher demand for products and services in other sectors including agriculture, fisheries, and the cultural industries. In some cases, the demand may be for more specialised organic, sustainably harvested, or eco-friendly products. Another observation is that markets alone will not deliver development in terms of trickling down benefits and inclusive growth; thus, the need to promote entrepreneurship and innovation along the whole tourism value chain.

Sector	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average Growth
Overnight Tourists (PGIA)	181,997	211,813	223,509	239,354	255,923	298,157	322,166	369,500	384,384	-
Growth Rate		16.4%	5.5%	7.1%	6.9%	16.5%	8.1%	14.7%	4.0%	9.9%
Overnight Tourist (Land Borders)	70,278	67,335	72,680	83,877	87,252	89,442	106,929	121,779	118,783	-
Growth Rate		-4.2%	7.9%	15.4%	4.0%	2.5%	19.6%	13.9%	-2.5%	7.1%
Cruise-Ships Visitors	727,878	640,734	677,350	968,131	957,975	1,005,394	1,014,231	1,208,137	1,170,558	-
Growth Rate		-12.0%	6.0%	43.0%	-1.0%	5.0%	1.0%	19.0%	-3.0%	7.0%
<b>Total Tourists</b>	<b>980,153</b>	<b>919,882</b>	<b>973,539</b>	<b>1,291,362</b>	<b>1,301,150</b>	<b>1,392,993</b>	<b>1,443,326</b>	<b>1,699,416</b>	<b>1,673,725</b>	<b>-</b>

TABLE 6: TOURISM GROWTH FROM 2011 TO 2019 (SOURCE: BELIZE TOURIST BOARD)

The current COVID-19 pandemic is an exogenous shock for which the sector could not have prepared. From March to August 2020, 38,909 persons lost their jobs, of which 12,839 were from the tourism industry.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, this phenomenon has demonstrated, that Belize's over-reliance on the sector for much of its economic survival was too risky in the long term and needs to change. Additionally, greater forward and backward linkages need to be established with the other productive sectors inclusive of the cultural and creative industries and the agriculture sector. The tourism sector is significantly challenged in recovering from COVID-19 since the vast majority of hotel occupancy depends on external markets, which shrank due to the global pandemic and the resulting worldwide socio-economic crisis. In 2020, the sector

declined by more than 66%, inclusive of both overnight and cruise ship visitors, with a projected decline of USD \$153 million in foreign exchange earnings. Furthermore, tourism is excessively dependent on the "Sun and Beach" segment and a small number of coastal destinations. Therefore, there is a need for greater diversification of the product in terms of developing new destinations and segments with improved infrastructure support (for example, road access), greater product development and geographic diversification. Increase spending by Belizean on domestic tourism should also be pursued since only 13% of tourism expenditure (IDB) is attributed to local tourism; however, this would require having accessible, regular, and affordable transport to tourism attractions.

Tourist Arrivals	Performance			
	2019	2020	Absolute	Percentage
Overnight Visitors by Air and Land	464,086	157,962	306,124	-66%
Cruise Ship Visitors	1,170,558	390,419	780,139	-67%
Projected Tourism Inflows (US\$ Foreign Exchange)	\$233,000,00	\$79,220,000	\$153,780,000	-66%

TABLE 7: TOURIST ARRIVAL PERFORMANCE

<sup>48</sup> Statistical Institute of Belize, Labour Force Survey: September 2020 (Belmopan, 2020).

Another challenge facing the sector is solid waste disposal, given the double-digit growth and large investments taking place. It is critical that this be addressed given the sector's dependence on Belize's natural resource base for growth and sustainability. The National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Belize 2030 (NSTMP), identifies solid waste collection and disposal services as a key constraint on tourism growth. Tourism's demand is largely correlated with the state of economies in the developed countries (USA, Canada, and Europe) from which Belize attracts most of its visitors. All efforts need to be made to continue to support tourism given the country's comparative advantage, but at the same time, other commodities, and in particular, agriculture needs to be supported, developed and expanded in order to have greater degrees of freedom in the pool of alternatives for GDP growth and sustained growth in employment and wages.

### Economic Growth

The 2009 Belize Country Poverty Assessment reported that 31% of all households and 41.3% of the population fell below the national poverty line with an additional 12.9% of the population being "Very vulnerable to being poor". Children are affected disproportionately, with 50% of children 0-15 falling below the poverty line and 58% estimated to be in multidimensional poverty. Owing to the already high poverty rate identified in 2009 CPA (41.3% poor and 15.8% indigent), it is likely that these rates remained high up to 2019 since the great majority of the poor are "working poor". Widespread and persistent under-employment and poverty, in turn, confront the working poor as they are challenged to meet minimum household and livelihood needs in line with Article 7(a) of the ICESCR. An updated poverty assessment is needed which also assesses multi-dimensional poverty to provide a greater evidence-base to support targeted sustainable development investments. This evidence-based assessment will facilitate joint action through partnerships between the Government of Belize and its inter-

national development partners, including the UN. Insufficient growth in Belize's GDP per capita constrains improvements in labour market outcomes and increased real wages. Labour market outcomes, as of September 2019, indicated an unemployment rate of 10.4%, under-employment being 20%, with women experiencing 33% and men 16% under-employment (SIB). The unemployment rate for men was 6.6% and for women was more than twice at 15.7%. The unemployment rate among those 14 to 24 years of age was 21.4% with women representing 31.5% and men 13.9%.<sup>49</sup> As of September 2019, only 17% of the labour force had a tertiary level education and 25% had secondary level education. This indicates a largely unskilled labour force, despite consistently large government outlays for education at 25% of the recurrent budget. The education system needs to diversify and offer more training in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and less training in the social sciences consistent with what the private sector is demanding and in this way reduce the existent mismatch between the labour force and market demand, thereby reducing the unemployment rate and provide higher wages. Presently, only 17% of graduates are STEM and the remainder are classified as Non-Stem (IDB).

Trends in earnings are similarly discouraging. Average monthly earnings decreased from USD \$609 in (April 1) 2018 to USD \$584 in September 2020. This represents a reduction of USD \$300 per annum/employee relative to 2018, which translates to more than USD \$120 million/annum in foregone earnings for the working class. IDB reports that between 2003 and 2012, real median earnings essentially remained unchanged, having grown at an average of only 0.2 % per year. These figures partly explain the socio-economic crisis facing Belize prior to COVID-19 which has now worsened. The model of development focusing on tourism growth and depletion of natural resources as the buffers to absorb adverse shocks in the agriculture and non-agriculture sectors was not sustainable.

<sup>49</sup> In September 2020, compared to September 2019, unemployment increased to 29.6% and under-employment increased to 36.0% for an aggregate unemployment/under-employment being 65.6% (Labour Force Survey Fact Sheet 2020, Statistical Institute of Belize publication).



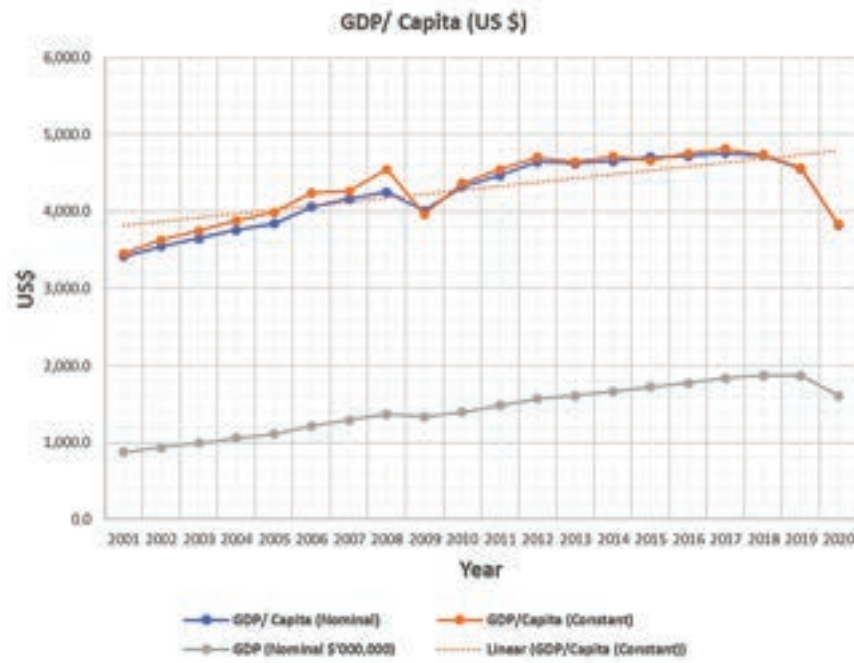


FIGURE 10: GDP PER CAPITA SINCE 2000 (SOURCE: CENTRAL BANK OF BELIZE)

The period 2011-2019 registered net zero growth in GDP/capita. Preliminary figures indicate a 14% decline in GDP for 2020, which would equate to a net zero growth in GDP/capita over nearly two decades, moving GDP per capita to that of 2003,<sup>50</sup> with consequential negative income impact for the working class and the most vulnerable.

Policies that foster greater inclusiveness and provide a pathway to greater levels of private sector job creation, together with enhanced skills for the labour force will be required to advance Belize's economic transformation. Constraints identified by the private sector such as finance, cost of electricity/telecommunications, institutional architecture for investment attraction, only 20% of road network being paved limits visitation to districts such as rural Toledo and other rural areas, will need to be addressed in order to jumpstart the development process. The creation of a credit bureau and a formal credit registry would go a long way in the

financial sector being able to easily evaluate risk on loans and be able to reduce the high liquidity in the banking system and boost economic growth.

### Economic Diversification

**Belize's successful economic transformation requires a diversified export base.** This process spreads future risks across a wider base and minimizes the negative impact of future shocks. Belize's low level of economic diversification is a major cause for the country's economic fragility and lack of resilience.<sup>51</sup> Relying on tourism and a narrow range of agriculture export commodities - sugar, citrus concentrate, bananas, fisheries (mainly lobster, shrimp and conch), and pepper sauce is risky to Belize's economy in terms of sustainable growth. It creates exposure which makes Belize increasingly susceptible to global crises and economic downturns in its major export markets, mainly the USA, Canada, and Europe and, to a lesser extent, the CARICOM market. At the same time, deeper

<sup>50</sup> Draft Covid-19 Socio-Economic Response & Recovery Plan, (United Nations publication, 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Composition of Foreign exchange earnings is as follows: tourism 48%, agriculture 35%, remittances 9% and other including petroleum 7% (Annual Report 2019, Central Bank of Belize)

penetration should also be sought with existing trading markets.

Petroleum extraction, which generated foreign exchange earnings of USD \$800 million over the past 14 years, is reaching its end. Tourism is in the process of recovery, and over the past 15 years, key industries in the productive sector have closed or downsized significantly. Key industries that employed mostly women have closed such as the Williamson Garment group (over 700 women) in 2008 and the papaya

industry (over 300 employees) in 2016. Two industries face major challenges: the shrimp industry has downsized to 1/10 of its output peak period and the citrus industry to 1/3 of its output peak. When the tourism sector was growing, some of these risks could have been ignored, since tourism employed 17% of the labour force,<sup>52</sup> and, along with the allied recreation sectors, was the largest employer of women. With the pandemic-induced downturn in the tourism industry, however, the vulnerability created by dependence on foreign tourism has been fully exposed.

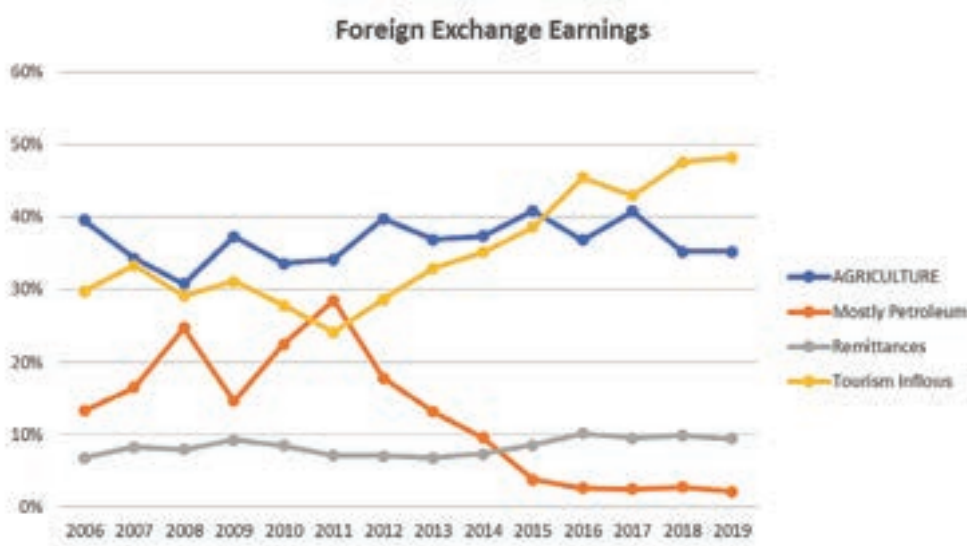


FIGURE 11: FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS (SOURCE: CENTRAL BANK OF BELIZE)

It is crucial that Belize creates and operationalizes a new sustainable development plan that supports economic recovery and addresses key challenges, such as poverty, inequality, climate change impacts, improved governance, infrastructure, and access to technology. Ensuring an enabling environment for productive sector investment and improved skills of its labour force, especially in the context of reduced earnings from the tourism sector. Contingency plans are needed to respond to the major challenges facing the agriculture sector, including diseases such as citrus greening, early mortality syndrome for shrimp, and the potential Tropical Race 4 disease for the banana industry. Climate change resiliency and risk

mitigation would need to be cross-cutting strategies to address the wide-ranging impacts – sea level rise, global warming, and extreme weather events – that affect multiple economic sectors as well as population centres.

Agriculture formal exports, except for shrimp exports, were largely spared from the impact of COVID-19, demonstrating the value of this sector in future crisis's in providing food security and generating foreign exchange earnings. To secure these benefits, however, Belize would need to invest in securing and formalizing more foreign markets for producers given the small size of the local market. One such

opportunity is for cattle and grain producers to formalize their exports to neighbouring countries like Guatemala and Mexico. It is also important to strengthen the fishing industry by exploring value-added production of seafood for the domestic and international market.<sup>53</sup>

## Policy Environment

### Government Budget Reform

A successful economic transformation will require adequate fiscal support, which would entail optimizing and prioritizing public investments to address constraints to prosperity and to facilitate growth opportunities. Public spending on education, health, security, and debt servicing comprises more than 70% of the total recurrent expenditure in any given year. This means that funds for investing in other SDG priorities are very meagre. Investment and coverage for social protection remain insufficient. The Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation (BOOST) cash transfer programme represented only 0.4% of the total recurrent expenditure in 2018, and it covers only 4% of children ages 0-14. The National Health Insurance accounted for 1.7% of total recurrent expenditure, covering 31% of the population, but only 8% of the 0-4 age group and 27% of 5-19 age group.

For the 2020/2021 fiscal year, only 2% of the national recurrent budget was allocated to the agriculture sector, most of which is for personal emoluments.<sup>54</sup> In comparison, developing countries typically invest 6%-8% of their budget on the agriculture sector while developed countries invest 3-5%. Similarly, in the 2020/2021 approved national budget, the agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors combined received less than 10% of capital investment for projects.

Since public investment in the agriculture sector has been reducing over the past 30 years, at least a doubling of the agriculture budget, together with a

redistribution of budget allocations to align with sustainable development priorities, would be needed to promote growth and competitiveness and, through this expansion, increase employment and decent wages.

### Debt Management

Belize's high debt (29.8% domestic debt and 69.9% external debt) to GDP ratio, which stood at 99% at the end of 2019, constrains the country's ability to transform its economy. This will be further exacerbated by the increase in debt to GDP, reaching 122.6% by the end of 2020, together with an economic contraction in the amount of 14%. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, Belize was already spending 12% of its annual budget on debt servicing (excluding principal payments for 2018/2019) which was projected to increase for 2020 and onwards.

Henceforth, debt moratorium and/or debt cancellation will have to be part of any equation on the pathway to sustainable growth and development to allow Belize to respond to the pandemic while having fiscal resources for investing and re-activating the economy. Although debt cancellation/debt moratorium is mostly being done for Least Developed Countries, it is considered for other countries on a case-by-case basis. Given the dire need precipitated by the COVID-19 crisis, Belize can enter negotiations for this relief. In the past, Belize has successfully negotiated debt moratoriums, debt interest reductions, extensions of loan repayment and debt for nature swaps.

During the period of May to October 2020, Belize borrowed to safeguard families' consumption capacity through social assistance programmes. Moving forward, social assistance programmes will experience major fiscal constraints. Support from external agencies will be critical given the lack of economic opportunities, the likelihood that COVID-19 will continue to prevail into 2021, and the prospect of a

<sup>53</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy: Belize Marine Fisheries and Seafood Processing (Geneva, 2020)

<sup>54</sup> Belize, Ministry of Finance, Approved Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for Fiscal Year 2020/2021 (Belmopan, 2020).

protracted recovery that stretches to 2025. Likewise, grant and soft loan support to the private sector will also need to continue to encourage economic activity and minimize permanent damage to the productive infrastructure.

### Trade and Regional Integration

Belize is geographically located in the Central American Region but is integrated socially, economically, and politically with the CARICOM region for several comparative advantages. It forms part of the CARICOM Single Market & Economy which facilitates the free movement of goods and services among member states. The common market promotes agriculture exports through very high tariffs (up to 45%) which are the highest in the Latin-America and Caribbean Region. Henceforth, CARICOM represents a premium market for exports of sugar, citrus, shrimp, red kidney beans and cowpeas among other agricultural products. In contrast, tariffs in the Central American Region are more than 50% less than those in CARICOM, particularly, with respect to agricultural products.

In the CARICOM region, countries such as Belize are given the category of “Least Developed Country” which gives Belize special consideration for developing its productive base. This ensures some level of protection and enables it to be competitive with the larger economies of the CARICOM Region. The Central America Integration System (SICA) provides no such mechanism since all the countries consider themselves of similar size with an agriculture and industrial base.

Belize and CARICOM countries share very similar laws, institutions, language, and integration at various levels in terms of regional institutions such as the University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Development Bank. Lobbying and policy direction at the international level (US, EU, Canada, multi-lateral, etc.) is coordinated

by the CARICOM countries in most cases with one voice. In the Central American region this would be impossible due to territorial disputes among some of the countries.

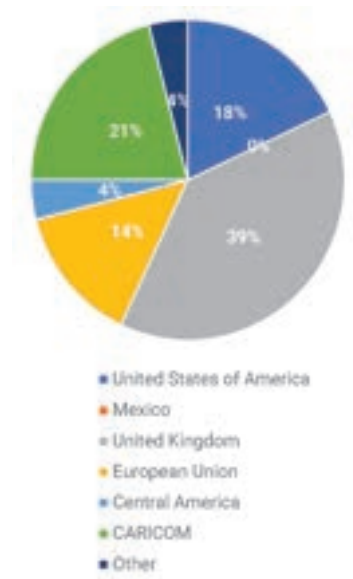


FIGURE 12: EXPORTS 2019

During 2019, Belize’s total exports amounted to USD \$208 million of which USD \$81 million went to the United Kingdom (39%), \$42.63 million (21%) went to CARICOM while only USD \$6.84 (4%) went to the Central American region with some of it being petroleum products. Belize does export, on an informal basis to Guatemala, products such as corn, beans, and live cattle. Exporting traditional products such as shrimp, bananas, sugar, and citrus would be very challenging since these products are also produced among Central American countries. Total imports amounted to USD \$985 million, of which only USD \$24 million came from CARICOM and USD \$114 million came from Central America, mostly in the form of processed products, hardware, pharmaceuticals, and other manufactured products. Processed and manufactured products carry a lower tariff, which, in addition to Central America’s geographic advantage relative to the Caribbean, explains why their products can be competitive.

## **Taxation and Inequality**

Sustained economic transformation needs to address structural constraints that contribute to inequality and the large percentage of working poor, both of which constitute the principal barriers that have kept Belize trapped in the category of being a middle-income country for the past four decades. Some of the contributing factors to high poverty and high inequality indices may relate to widespread tax concessions, tax avoidance and evasion as well as a low corporate tax rate together with a narrow and regressive tax structure. This inherent and structural challenge facing the country reduces resources for social protection, education, and healthcare. Tax reform, which ensures that all Belizeans pay their fair taxes, and which establishes a less regressive tax structure, will greatly expand local demand for domestically produced goods and services, increase employment and allow the working class to have a more equitable share of the GDP.

In 2018, Belize's tax revenue relative to GDP was 29.7%, which is reasonable given the level of development, in comparison to the tax revenue to GDP ratio for neighbouring Guatemala and Mexico, estimated at 12.1% and 21.1% respectively. The predominant tax structure in Belize focuses on indirect taxes (63%) on the consumption of goods and on import duties. This type of tax is regressive and contributes to the inequalities being experienced in the country since it impacts the greatest on the income of the poorest sector of the population. Notably, a significant portion of government revenue is being lost through tax concessions to commercial enterprises. To reduce inequality through a redistribution of wealth policy, it is necessary to decrease reliance on indirect taxation (consumption tax), increase the tax base, and address leakages and inefficiencies in revenue collection. In Latin America, revenue being lost to tax evasion is estimated at 6.1% of GDP. By comparison, in Belize, this figure is likely to be higher due to the higher tax

rate which can provide a greater incentive to evade. However, collecting even a conservative 6.1% of GDP would amount to more than US\$114 million in increased revenue that would then be available for government-funded programmes. Generous tax concessions and special tax regimes such as guaranteed annual rate of return of up to 25%, exceptions/benefits offered by the International Business Companies, allowance of Management fees by most of the major companies are giving rise to the operation of a parallel tax system with significant revenue loss for Government and is contributing to issues of inequity and inequality in wealth distribution.

## **Use of Natural Resource and Sustainable Economic Transformation**

The World Bank estimates that 40% of Belize's total wealth is dominated by the value of its protected areas. Produced capital (building, factories, equipment etc.) only makes up 12% of the country's wealth and the remainder is made up of human capital (education, skills, etc.). Sustainability of the productive sector, therefore, will require careful stewardship of the natural resource assets. The advantage to this challenge is that it is endogenous; therefore, with proper policies, Belize can preserve its natural resource base. This will allow the Belizean populace and the productive sector to continue to enjoy all the secondary benefits of the country's natural resources.

Climate change is the most significant risk to Belize's economy and its people. Adaptation and risk mitigation measures are essential to minimize the negative impacts arising from tropical cyclones, excessive rainfall, droughts, floods, loss of coastal areas, reef damage and loss of livelihoods. As part of Belize's climate change strategy, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change & Disaster Risk Management, with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is implementing a project to build capacities and to

address internal migration and displacement due to climate change. Additionally, PAHO/WHO is working with the Ministry of Health and Wellness in improving resilience of health sector infrastructure to climate change and disasters.

Successful economic transformation will require continued protection of the natural resource base with policy measures to mitigate the impact of climate change on productivity and disease to reduce instability in economic growth and development. Average output loss on account of climate change over the period 1990-2016 was estimated at around 3.16% of GDP/annum.<sup>55</sup> Over the past two decades, Belize's economic growth has been characterized by too much

instability which causes great challenges for SDG planning, trend improvement and sustainability.

### Land Utilization and Indigenous Peoples

Belize has a total area of 22,730 km<sup>2</sup> of which an estimated 36% is suitable for agriculture while the remainder is best suited for forestry/protection. A large proportion of cultivated land is under export crops (sugarcane, citrus, bananas, and a small amount of cacao) and domestic crops (corn, rice, and red kidney beans). The utilization of public lands provides revenue for the Government of Belize; however, it is estimated that at least 50% of land taxes is not being collected.<sup>56</sup> Revenue collection from land taxes could be increased significantly.

Land Category	Land Class	Area KM <sup>2</sup>	Percent	Land Use Recommended
High Income Potential	I	990	04%	Agriculture
Good Financial Success	II	2,790	12%	Agriculture
Success Subject to Skilled Management	III	4,480	20%	Forestry/Agriculture
Marginal	IV	4,470	20%	Forestry/Protection
Mostly Steep Land	V	10,000	44%	Protection

TABLE 8: AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS IN BELIZE. NATURAL RESOURCE INSTITUTE, ODA, 1993

The decades-long battle of the indigenous Maya people of Toledo for the right to land they have culturally used and occupied for several decades, is a key challenge of indigenous land rights. Despite the successful outcome of a judicial process, the complexities involved in implementing court judgments, in the context of decades of marginalization of indigenous people and misappropriation of land, introduced vast extraneous factors to the process of enforcement of judicial decisions.

In this context, similar tensions exist between and among groups in Belize, leading to occasional face-offs and violence over rights to farmlands, waterways, and homesteads. The sporadic clashes often occur in communities between Belizeans and migrant populations from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Fostering dialogue over disputes and regulating land and water rights at a local level, including community consultations, could become an opportunity to provide greater access to livelihoods and income. With the looming economic crisis and

<sup>55</sup> Source: page 6, Developing a Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Belize, BID-Economics Belize, IDB Group.

<sup>56</sup> In 2019, the Government passed the "Land Amendment Tax Bill" which provided 25% discount on the outstanding tax for each financial year and the waiver of interest on discounted arrears. In 2018, US\$22.5 million was collected from land taxes and arrears amounted to US\$47.5 million.

high unemployment levels, access to land would be sought vigorously by some citizens to enhance their livelihoods. This would be constrained by the inequitable access and inefficient land management policy implemented by the government. If the issues of access to land between migrants and Belizeans are not handled effectively, it could precipitate an economic crisis and disrupt social cohesion in particular communities, due to the dominance of migrant laborers in the agriculture sector. In the banana industry alone, Hondurans and Guatemalans, constitute about 86% of the migrant workers. These nationalities also dominate other sectors of the small sector agriculture value chain.

### Monetary Policy and Financing

Belize's savings rate has been on a declining trend since the early 1990s when it was at 20%. The last reported rate in 2019 was 10%. This rate of savings is approximately 50% of the investment Belize needs to finance its Gross Capital Formation (20%) in the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors of the economy. Under this scenario, 50% of Belize's need for investment must be financed through Foreign Direct Investment and/or through greater levels of foreign borrowing.

Successful economic transformation will require Belize to gradually increase the national savings rate and reach levels above 20% so as to reduce dependence on foreign capital and increase the trickle down of national investments in industries such as agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, banks, insurance, utilities, hotels, and MSME's. The present economic model of growth based on a low savings rate, dependence on foreign investment and external borrowing is not sustainable nor consistent with reducing poverty and inequality.

### Risk Areas

The medium-term outlook remains challenging with a

protracted COVID-19 recovery. Preliminary data reveals the following macro-economic picture:

- The dramatic fall in average income per person in 2019 and 2020 has reduced income levels to that in 2003, over 18 years ago.
- Unemployment has almost tripled in 2020, from 10.4% to almost 29.6%.
- Underemployment increased from 22.7% to 36%; 65.6% of the labour force is either unemployed or under-employed.
- Government revenues fell by almost 24% or over US \$139 million in fiscal year 2020/21.
- 33 cents out of every dollar being spent by government were loan funds during fiscal year 2020/21.

### Environment and Economy

With the country facing such dire economic challenges, it will be under pressure to explore all development options that could potentially restore growth and provide employment but in doing so, it may compromise the environment. Currently, one large investment (Port of Belize Limited) in the realm of USD \$200 million for a cruise-ship terminal is awaiting approval by the Government of Belize. Additionally, one large investment (Stake Bank Limited) for cruise-ship development of more than USD \$80 million is under development. In April 2021 the approval was given for a USD \$200 million investment Cruise-ship terminal for Port of Magical Belize. In 2016, a USD \$50 million investment (Norwegian Cruise line) for a Cruise-ship terminal and natural park started operations near the Placencia Peninsula in Southern Belize.

Environmental groups are concerned that these investments will do permanent damage to the reef and the coastal environment. Offshore oil drilling and drilling in protected areas are additional development options, which, although not currently allowed, if considered and approved could potentially damage Belize's natural resource base. On the other hand, if oil

exploration were successful, the petroleum industry could assist Belize in managing the very challenging macro-economic environment it faces.

### **Economic Stability**

Belize's economic stability remains challenged. The growing fiscal imbalance; a rising public debt; continued litigation cases costing millions of dollars; continued damage to the physical infrastructure and productive sectors due to natural disasters and climate change; agricultural pests and diseases; an undiversified export base; and a protracted impact of COVID-19 are some of the risk factors affecting Belize's economic growth and performance. In the face of the health, social and economic crises unleashed by COVID-19, Belize's capacity to be resilient and adaptive in 2021 and beyond will be critical.

### **Inequality**

The great inequality existing in Belize presents a barrier to growth and development and contributes to crime and violence, particularly, in urban areas. Inequality in Belize has led to inadequate skills in the labour force. It also makes disadvantaged and marginalized populations far more vulnerable to external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and market changes. Inequalities in income and access to public goods create an environment where excluded populations may develop survival strategies, at least in the short-to-medium term, outside of the formal economy and the law.

### **Food Security, Agriculture and Land**

Risk factors include low productivity for small farmers due to suboptimal technology and farming systems; an aging farming population; climate change and natural disaster impacts on the sector; insufficient drainage and irrigation is needed to reduce impact from climate change and to be competitive; disease and pests that are very costly to manage; lack of storage capacity for grains and legumes; limited

diversification of the export base; and the need to secure formal markets for non-traditional commodities such as livestock, corn and beans.

Agriculture land risks relate more to tenure than access. Squatting on land for farming is common. This type of tenure discourages investment in developing the land for increased productivity and reduces the farmer's access to financing for farm development. Other land tenure issues include squatters not paying land taxes; highly concentrated distribution of private lands; overlapping land ownership claims; and the Ministry of Natural Resources not having sufficient human resources to expeditiously resolve these issues.

Food security risk remains mostly an economic issue in the sense that food is available in the markets; however, Belize's high poverty rate and increasing inequality are making it difficult for low-income, vulnerable populations to procure food. Another food security issue is that unhealthy diets have caused an increase in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Roughly 40% of all deaths in the country is on account of Non-communicable disease directly correlated to diet. Crime and citizen insecurity present a major problem for business growth, investment, and prosperity in Belize. They create large overhead expenses to implement security measures, decrease viable hours of business operation to avoid peak hours for crime, and erode the commercial advantage of formerly prime urban centres, all of which reduce profit and decrease competitiveness of the firm/industry. This has a particular effect on high-crime urban areas but also has an overall effect on Belize's allure as a tourism destination.

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#### **Future/Emerging Risk**

A major emerging risk, which needs to be monitored very closely, is the soundness of the financial sector, since borrowers in the tourism sector have been unable to service their debt due to past, current, and future economic conditions. Most banks have allowed borrowers to capitalize loans payment (principal and interest) for the period April 2020 - March 2021. Other future risks include new diseases in the agriculture sector and future pandemics having a knock-on effect on the productive sectors.

# Environment and Climate Change Analysis

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# Environment and Climate Change Analysis

Over 50% of Belize's annual GDP can be attributed to the country's rich biodiversity and ecosystems, being generated from 5 natural resource-based sectors.<sup>57</sup> Belize is a part of the Meso-American Biodiversity Hotspot. It's 68 ecosystems are home to 118 globally threatened species (9 critically endangered, 32 endangered and 77 Vulnerable) with a further 62 Near Threatened or of Least Concern.

In addition, the key ecosystem services gained from Belize's forested mountains, mangroves, and coral reefs, among other ecosystems, include freshwater security, tropical storm and flood protection, provision of natural resources (timber and non-timber forest products, fisheries products), hydroelectric generation and the services for the tourism sector. Agriculture, aquaculture, and fishing are the major industries within the primary sector (10% of GDP), all of which are reliant on ecosystem services. Belize's tourism industry is founded on its natural and archaeological assets. As natural resource-based industries account for 2/3 of waged jobs and livelihoods.

## State of Terrestrial and Marine Ecosystems and Biodiversity

The state of Belize's natural resources has generally showed steady improvements as the country has enacted management measures enabling zero net losses to lands under protected area designation as well as adopted strategies guiding sustainable extraction. Based on the country's 2020 EP score card, Belize ranks 7th out of 180 countries in its protection of biodiversity and habitats, outperforming most countries in the region. The EPI scorecard also ranks the country 21 out of 180 countries as it relates to

fisheries management, again surpassing regional and global averages.

Forest conservation has, historically, been a major priority for Belize. This is evidenced by the country's extensive protected areas system. In 2019, 36% of Belize's territorial lands and 23% of its territorial seas benefited from some designation of protection. The country continues efforts to expand system coverage and connectivity through the formal designation of biological corridors. In 2020, Belize declared one of its largest wildlife corridors in a key protected area complex in recent times. The 27,000-hectare Belize Northern Biological Corridor protects and connects important ecosystems of Northern Belize. This declaration is critical as it completes the country's network of corridors as well as safeguarding ecosystems within a zone earmarked to support the expansion of the country's agriculture frontier. Additionally, efforts continue in the establishment of a formal management presence in the 10,117-hectare Maya Forest Corridor which comprises the Maya Mountains and the tri-national Maya Forest of Belize, Mexico, and Guatemala. Together, all these protected forests comprise the largest contiguous block of forest remaining in Central America and is the largest block of forest in the neotropics north of the Amazon.

The Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (BBRRS), inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996, is comprised of seven protected areas and has sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) comprising 23,592 hectares. Between 2016 and 2018, Belize's reef health index (RHI) improved, increasing from 2.8 to 3.0, the highest in the

<sup>57</sup> Kenrick Williams and Denaie Swasey, Biodiversity Finance Initiative – Belize: Biodiversity Policy and Institutional Review (Government of Belize and United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

the region, due to the increase of herbivorous parrotfish, which gained protection in 2009. This has resulted in a slight decrease in fleshy macroalgae.<sup>58</sup> Belize's Barrier Reef System is important in sustaining the country's fisheries sector which is a source of livelihood to more than 3,000 artisanal fisherfolks. Belize's economy is largely natural resource based. Agriculture, aquaculture, and fishing are the major industries within the primary sector (9.6% of GDP, 2019, CBB); all of which are reliant on ecosystem services. Belize's tourism industry is eco-based and organized around natural and archaeological assets; it contributes significantly to the tertiary sector which accounts for 64.2% of GDP. Ecosystems and ecosystem services contribute positively to the tourism and agricultural sectors. In 2018, 94.7% of overnight visitors were in Belize for regular/tourism purposes; of these 18.7% of visitors engaged in diving, 70.4% in snorkelling, 7% in birding, 17.3% fishing, and 27.4% in jungle trekking.

Threats to biodiversity in Belize, in both marine and terrestrial ecosystems, are largely driven by population growth, expansion of the human footprint (coastal development), cross-border incursions, land-based sources of pollution, and unsustainable harvesting practices.

The country is rich in both surface and ground water, with internal renewable water resources estimated at 15.26km<sup>2</sup>/year,<sup>59</sup> the highest water availability per capita in Central America.<sup>60</sup> The country is also known for having the best water quality in the region. Notwithstanding this comparative rating, ground water, surface water and the marine environment are being polluted by various sources including agrochemicals, the release of untreated sewage, urban and industrial effluents, sedimentation, and solid waste.

### Land Degradation

Belize measures land degradation in terms of the main

indicators of land degradation, as suggested by the United Nations. These include negative land cover change, decrease in soil organic carbon, and declining land productivity. Based on the 'one-out, all-out' rule of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) where negative trends in either of the three indicators indicates degraded land, the data suggests that a total of 4,788 km<sup>2</sup> of land in Belize are degraded. This represents 21.66% of the territorial lands, with the Corozal and Orange Walk districts most severely affected due to the expansion of the agricultural frontier in the north of the country. The 'one-out, all-out' principle is applied considering changes in the sub-indicators which are depicted as: (i) positive or improving, (ii) negative or declining, or (iii) stable or unchanging. It should be noted that this rule is applied as a precautionary measure and may result in inflated measures of degraded areas, whereby if one of the sub-indicators is negative (or stable when degraded in the baseline or previous monitoring year) for a particular land unit, then it would be considered as degraded.

INDICATOR <b>1</b>	<p><b>Land Cover</b> Land cover data shows the negative land cover changes since the national baseline year 2000. The most significant change is the loss of forest cover to cropland and grassland. Between years 2000 and 2016, 7.5% of forest cover was lost reflecting an average per annum forest cover change of 0.47%.</p>
INDICATOR <b>2</b>	<p><b>Land Productivity</b> Decline in land productivity in Belize is most apparent in the croplands of northern and central Belize. 31.4% of croplands are showing early signs of decline (moderate decline) or are exhibiting signs of land productivity being stable but stressed. This is directly associated with the expansion of mechanized farming. Where forests have been converted to grasslands and croplands there is also an assumed loss of land productivity. Forest conversion represents 12.8% of all productivity decline. It should be noted that between 2000 and 2016, farming (croplands) expanded by 44.96% of the 2000 value.</p>
INDICATOR <b>3</b>	<p><b>Organic Carbon</b> The Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) data show no change in values over the years, per land cover class; while Loss in SOC for areas that have converted from forest to grassland and cropland are subtle (0.6% decline). Between 2000 and 2016, farming (croplands) expanded by 44.96% of the 2000 value.</p>

<sup>58</sup> Melanie McField and others, 2020 Mesoamerican Reef Report Card (Healthy Reefs publication, 2020).

<sup>59</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, AQUASTAT Country Profile – Belize (Rome, 2015).

<sup>60</sup> Belize, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment and Sustainable Development, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016 – 2020), Belize (Belmopan, 2016).

In response to recorded trends in land degradation, Belize committed to achieving a land degradation neutral environment by 2030 and has affirmed its national and sub-national targets and associated measures to the UNCCD.

### Climate Change

In Belize, on-going anthropogenic climate change is already affecting ecosystems and human populations in many ways and this is recognized by policymakers. GHG emissions without Forestry and Other Land Use (FOLU) totalled 1,395.07 Gg CO<sub>2</sub>-eq. The GHG emissions of Belize are dominated by the contribution of the FOLU; with FOLU, the net emissions were -5,319.33 Gg CO<sub>2</sub>-eq due to the sink potential of Belize's forests.

The country's mean annual temperature has increased by 0.45°C since the 1960's. Modelling predictions under low-emission, medium-emission, and high-emission scenarios estimate that by the 2090s the mean monthly temperature may increase by 3.2-4.9°C and mean maximum temperatures can increase by 3.4-6.6°C. Rising temperatures could exacerbate both the activity of and the damage caused by tropical cyclones and disrupt marine ecosystems, including the country's globally significant barrier reef complex.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Within the energy sector, more than 80% of GHG emissions corresponded to the transport sector, 15% to energy industries and close to 2% for other combustion activities (e.g., fossil LPG use including residential, commercial and services, and industry). Thus, transport sector emissions represented close to 47% of total emissions without FOLU, energy industries 9% and fuel combustion in other sectors 1%. Belize's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and new Low Emission Development Strategy focuses on reducing emissions from the forestry, transport, energy, and waste sectors.

Emission Source	2012	2015	2017
1A1 Energy Industries	39.97	99.41	120.59
1A3 Transport	487.22	672.16	657.64
1A4 Fuel Combustion in Other Sectors	13.54	15.81	16.66
2A2 Lime Production	1.56	1.70	0.45
2D1 Lubricant Use	1.16	1.25	1.23
2F Product Uses as Substitutes for ODS	15.00	41.68	52.48
3A Livestock	131.00	139.00	173.00
3B1 Forest Land	-12,807.70	-9,916.80	-9,174.80
3B2 Cropland	1,634.00	2,453.80	1,165.60
3B3 Grassland	962.10	1,443.60	1,150.10
3B5 Settlements	26.10	108.10	20.70
3C Aggregated Sources on Land (Forest Fires)	168.35	131.32	193.37
3D Other	4.00	22.00	33.00
4A Solid Waste Disposal	83.58	87.13	90.45
4B Biological Treatment of Waste	2.41	2.41	2.14
4C Incineration and Open Burning of Waste	5.24	5.68	5.99
4D Wastewater Treatment and Discharge	35.36	38.21	40.24

TABLE 9: 2019 GREENHOUSE GAS MITIGATION ASSESSMENT CONSULTANCY.DOC.

### Climate Change Impact

Projected climate change impacts for Belize include a rise in temperature of between 2°C and 4°C by 2100, a 7-8% decrease in the length of the rainy season, a 6-8% increase in the length of the dry season and a 20% increase in the intensity of rainfall in very short periods. Other expected impacts include increased erosion and contamination of coastal areas; sea level rise; flooding; and an increase in the intensity and occurrence of natural hazards such as hurricanes. Many of the effects of climate change are already being felt on the low-lying coastal zone and are expected to have significant impacts on many

environmental, physical, social, and economic systems in Belize.

Based on global climate models, such as those used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is projected that Belize's seas may rise up to 34 cm under the low-emission scenario, 56 cm under the medium-emission scenario, and 120 cm under the high-emission scenario by the end of the century (2100), as compared to the 1980-1999 baseline. As the saltwater levels continue to rise, their potential to infiltrate into freshwater aquifers increases as well. Around 95% of Belize's freshwater available in rural areas comes from groundwater, located in calcareous rock aquifers (prone to additional decalcification by ocean acidification).<sup>61</sup>

Regarding rainfall, modelling predictions show that in the 2070s and 2090s the Belize landscape may be marked by reduced rainfall from December through to September. The largest reduction of up to -7 mm/day is projected in the Stann Creek District in June. Decreases in precipitation are expected to increase the salinity of coastal waters and trigger droughts which diminish freshwater discharge to rivers and reduce water availability for household and agriculture systems. In 2019, the country recorded a 2.5% decrease in GDP as a result of extended droughts affecting the performance of primary production systems.

Models also predict an increase in rainfall of 2-5 mm/day in the western Toledo, Stann Creek, Orange Walk and Corozal Districts at the end of the rainy season. According to World Bank reports, flooding has the highest damaging potential in Belize. As more than 60% of settlements are located within areas at risk of flooding, the destruction of crucial infrastructure like roads and bridges poses further threats to safety and may require evacuations of huge communities. Relative humidity varies by month, but by the 2090s it is projected that relative humidity will decrease by 5 to

15%, excluding May and September to November.<sup>62</sup> Changes in temperature and precipitation will disrupt agriculture, affecting the availability and cost of food.

Agriculture is critical to Belize's development for foreign exchange earnings and savings, employment, income generation, and food and nutrition security. Climate change and climate variability will impact agriculture systems and practices such as soil fertility and land preparation; pest and disease control; and water requirements.<sup>63</sup> Land used for agriculture, excluding pastures, have increased by 54% from 2001 to 2018, while pastures have increased by 35.9%. The climate regime along central coastal Belize is prone to mild to moderate droughts and moderated by the sea breeze. Vegetable farmers along the Old Northern Road are affected by annual floods, while rangeland livestock farmers in the Belize River Valley are usually impacted by 10-year top gallon floods, which have become more frequent in recent years. The above-mentioned effects of climate change will impact on vulnerable groups the most, especially the ones whose principal livelihoods depend on the natural resources: fishing, agriculture and, indirectly, tourism.

### Environmental Policy Mechanisms

Belize is party to most major Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). It has in place national legislation and a National Environmental Action Plan 2014,<sup>64</sup> which outlines priority actions to strengthen national capacities to improve data collection for monitoring of environmental indicators that measure the social and environmental impacts of development policies. Legal frameworks and a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) provide the country with a framework of goals and actions aimed at improving and protecting ecosystems and biodiversity. Despite being a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Belize is not party to the Nagoya Protocol on

<sup>61</sup> M Simpson and others, CARIBSAVE Climate Change Risk Profile for Belize (CARIBSAVE, 2012).

<sup>62</sup> Caribbean Community Climate Change Center, A National Climate Change Policy, Strategy, and Action Plan to Address Climate Change in Belize (Belmopan, 2014).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Belize, Department of the Environment, Belize's National Environmental Action Plan 2015 – 2020 (Belmopan, 2014).

Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.

Treaty	Ratification Date
Basel Convention	23 May 1997
Cartagena Convention	22 September 1999
Cartagena Protocol	12 February 2004
Convention on Biological Diversity	30 December 1993
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species	21 September 1981
Kyoto Protocol	26 September 2003
Montreal Protocol	09 January 1998
Paris Agreement	22 April 2016
Ramsar Convention	22 April 1998
Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean	24 September 2020 Signatory
Rotterdam Convention	20 April 2005
Stockholm Convention	25 January 2010
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	23 July 1998
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	31 October 1994
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea	13 August 1983
Vienna Convention	06 June 1997
Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage	06 November 1990

TABLE 10: MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS TO WHICH BELIZE IS A PARTY

## National Policies and Measures

### National Biodiversity Policy Strategy and Action Plan

Belize articulated and presented its national biodiversity targets in the 2016 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The country's 20 national targets are linked directly to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Target D2 in Belize's NBSAP states that "by 2025, access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge is regulated and benefits arising from utilization are shared in a fair and equitable manner". A suggested responsive strategy to achieve this target in Belize is to provide favourable conditions for women to become landowners which will increase equity in terms of land rights and ownership, therefore increasing women's participation in land-use management and improving their role in biodiversity management.

### Draft National Agroforestry Policy (2020)

This policy aims to improve the total productivity, resilience and sustainability of agriculture and forestry through the adoption of agro-forestry systems in Belize. The focus is on improving the livelihood and well-being of present and future generations, with particular attention to the participation of the youth, women, the poor, and indigenous peoples across the country.

### National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020)

This provides policy guidance for the development of an appropriate administrative and legislative framework, in harmony with other sectoral policies, for the pursuance of a low-carbon development path for Belize. The plan focuses on several priority sectors for climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, including coastal zone, human settlement, solid waste management, fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture, forestry, tourism, water, energy (including transport) and health.

### Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) and Monitoring and Evaluation System

Horizon 2030 is Belize's long-term development framework. Along with its 3-year Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy, it recognizes the importance of the environment for economic growth and in maintaining the health and quality of life for Belizeans. One of the GSDS's four critical success factors (CSF3) is Sustained or Improved Health of Natural, Environmental, Historical and Cultural Assets. CSF3 promotes the mainstreaming of environmental and ecosystem health objectives as well as disaster risk management and climate change resilience into national development activities and planning.

### Draft Land Use Policy Framework and Policy (2019)

The policy framework guides the use and implementation of the policy by suggesting arrangements for land management coordination and potential legal amendments, where necessary. The draft Land Use Policy presents the Government's position on various national development issues and topics, including land tenure, land administration, land tax and rent (land valuation), productive and sustainable use of land, rural land uses/agricultural development, urban land uses/urban planning, land use and land cover, land degradation, climate change, and land use planning.

### National Food and Agriculture Policy (2015 to 2030)

The policy gives strategic direction for the growth of the agriculture industry in the areas of traditional crops, competitively produced domestic food products, non-traditional crops, and livestock. It also promotes the implementation of sustainable agriculture programmes.

### National Energy Policy Framework

The 2011 National Energy Policy Framework presents three potential energy plans for the country. Among others, objectives of either plan include minimizing the amount of GHG emissions, maximizing the renewability index, maximizing production of energy from indigenous sources, and maximizing the diversity of



the energy supply mix.

### **National REDD+ Strategy and Action Plan**

This strategy for REDD+ implementation and for accessing results-based payments for carbon sequestration should describe how emissions will be reduced and/or how forest carbon stocks will be enhanced, conserved, and sustainably managed. This is proposed to be finalized in 2021.

### **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (2016)**

The plan guides development in the coastal zone from an Informed Management perspective. It supports sustainable development of coastal resources to ensure future economic benefit, implemented through 2025. It blends environmental conservation goals with current and future needs for coastal development and marine uses.

### **Integrated Water Resources Management Policy**

This policy recognizes the impacts of climate change in all areas of water resources management. It directs efforts to i.) obtain and conserve the nation's water resources at standards of quality appropriate to use, ii.) institute standards and mechanisms for enforcement to assure efficiency and minimize degradation in systems for water, and iii.) mainstream and increase public awareness about conserving the national water resources by efficient use and pollution prevention.

### **Nationally Determined Contributions, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation**

The 2015 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) are being updated to be more innovative, ambitious, and accurate with respect to the proposed actions, cost, accounting of GHG emissions and transparency. As a member of the High Ambition Coalition, Belize has committed to increasing emission reductions in an updated NDC and developing a long-term strategy aligned with achieving net zero global emissions by 2050.<sup>65</sup> Targets included in the updated NDC are

estimated to avoid an emissions total of 10.1 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030<sup>66</sup> (more than a 50% increase on the original NDC) or up to 1.8 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e in annual avoided emissions in 2030.<sup>67</sup> Key sector targets include: a 30% decrease in emissions related to land use and forestry and an increase to 75% of renewable energy in the electricity supply. Targets also include several sectoral actions to build resilience and develop capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change in key economic sectors and supporting systems.

### **Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS)**

The Government of Belize is committed to strategically transition to low carbon development while strengthening its resilience to the effects of climate change. Belize has main-streamed climate change into its national development planning framework, including the long-term development plan (Horizon 2030) and medium-term development plan (Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy). The National Climate Change Office, with support from the GEF/UNDP, is developing a Low Emissions Development Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2020-2050 for the country. The strategy should guide Belize in meeting its NDC commitments and achieving net zero emissions by 2050. It will be an economy-wide plan for decarbonization, focusing on the following sectors: agriculture; forestry and land use; electricity and other energy generation and use; domestic land, marine, and air transportation; waste; and tourism, commerce, and industry.

### **Climate Change Policy Environment**

Based on the IMF Climate Change Policy Assessment for the country, Belize's planned climate response is "well-articulated" and is consistent with the country's development strategy. Cognizant of the threats that climate change poses to the sustainable economic and social development and poverty reduction agenda, the Government of Belize has committed to strategically transition to low carbon development while strengthening its resilience to the effects of

<sup>65</sup> Republic of the Marshall Islands, Office of the President, "15 world leaders commit to delivering new Paris targets by early 2020 and to achieving net zero global emissions by 2050 on eve of UN Summit", press release, 22 September 2019.

<sup>66</sup> Maintaining deforestation outside of protected areas below 0.6% annually, in line with

Forestry Department strategy, could deliver an additional 24 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e in avoided emissions.

<sup>67</sup> These estimates are based on preliminary calculations developed by IRENA, FAO, UNFCCC and Vivid Economics.

climate change. The table below presents a listing of elements of Belize's climate policy framework. The 2020 updating of the country's NDC provides a clear strategy with relatively well-developed costings for priority mitigation and adaptation activities. National

priority adaptation sectors are defined in the updated NDC as well as the National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan (NCCPSAP) and include agriculture/food, forestry, fisheries, coastal management, and water.

Name of Policy or Legal Framework
MRV system being developed for monitoring implementation of the updated NDC
Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) and Monitoring and Evaluation System
National Environmental Policy and Strategy 2014 – 2024 and Action Plan (2015-2020)
Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment and National Mitigation Strategy 2019
Draft National Forest Policy 2015
Draft Land Use Policy Framework and Policy 2019
National Food and Agriculture Policy 2015 to 2030 (Belize, 2015)
National Energy Policy Framework (Tillett, 2011)
National Solid Waste Management Policy (Belize Solid Waste Management, 2015)
National Tourism Policy (Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, 2017)
National Appropriate Mitigation Action for Transport
National Transportation Master Plan
National Hazard Mitigation Policy, 2004
National Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2004
Revised Low Carbon Development & Roadmap for Belize
REDD+ Strategy being developed
Sustainable Energy Action Plan: Belize 2014-2030
Comprehensive National Transportation Master Plan for Belize (Government of Belize, 2018b).
National Adaptation Strategy to Address Climate Change in the Agriculture Sector in Belize (Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre and National Climate Change Office, Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development, 2015)
Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) in Belize – Country Profile (The World Bank Group, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c)
Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan, 2016
National Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan to Address Climate Change in the Water Sector (Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, 2009)
National Sustainable Tourism Masterplan for Belize 2030 (Belize Tourism Board and Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, 2011)

TABLE 11: GENERAL OVERVIEW OF POLICIES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS REGARDING BELIZE'S CLIMATE ACTION

## Environmental Pressures and Drivers

Belize is by nature a coastal country and marked by tropical climate and low-lying coasts. Despite meeting the population criterion for small states (below 2 million), Belize has a relatively large landmass compared to other Caribbean countries. Not being geographically small in relative terms implies that the country may be less vulnerable to disasters than most other Caribbean states, in the sense that it faces less risk that any single disaster will engulf the whole country. However, the oceanic influence on its climate and economy contributes to the country's vulnerability leading to the country's ranking of being 3<sup>rd</sup> at risk for natural disasters, and 5<sup>th</sup> at risk from climate change<sup>68</sup> among states, with an Annual Average Loss (AAL) from hurricanes estimated at US\$ 7.7M (0.45% of GDP) and from earthquakes at US\$883,000 (0.05% of GDP).<sup>69</sup>

Over 50% of Belize's population resides on its low-lying coast. According to the Climate Change Policy Assessment, Belize already faces hurricanes, flooding, sea level rise, coastal erosion, coral bleaching, and droughts, with impacts likely to intensify given expected increases in weather volatility and sea temperature. Based on existing vulnerability and exposure, the country can anticipate it suffering severe damages from inundation if the sea level rises and storm surges intensify. Coastal erosion and coral bleaching will undercut tourism (as more than 70% of tourism infrastructure is found on its coast) and the blue economy. Economic assets including residential and commercial buildings and infrastructure are most at risk.

The country's capacity to cope with and adapt to the health, human, economic, and environmental impacts of climate-related disasters is challenged. Persistent inequalities increase the risks from climate hazards and climate-related disasters on economically marginalized groups unable to effectively adapt to changes.

**Land use change** is identified as the biggest threat to Belize's terrestrial biodiversity. Between 1986 and 2018, Belize's forest stocks declined by 28.4%. The loss in forest cover between 2000 and 2018 is approximately 156,729 Ha, or 10.82%<sup>70</sup>, indicating an average annual loss of 0.6%. Deforestation is attributable to the expansion of the agriculture frontier as well as expanding population centres, with levels of deforestation greatest in the Cayo and Orange Walk districts. However, approximately 41% of the annual forest disturbance that leads to forest degradation is caused by natural disturbances. This includes hurricane, pest, natural fire, or other causes.

Agriculture is the second most important industry in Belize's economy and is particularly vulnerable to the environmental hazards presented by the country's climate. It remains one of the main pillars of the Belizean economy. A vast majority of the rural population and the livelihood of the rural communities are also dependent on the environment through farming and forestry activities. Belize's forests have been under increasing pressures from land conversion and degradation activities associated with agriculture and the expansion of the agricultural frontier.

Approximately 1,977,000 acres (about 38% of the land area) of Belize's landscape are suitable for agriculture, however, only 390,427 acres (7% of the total land area) are actively being used for agriculture. For the farming population of approximately 8,075 farmers (11,648 farms), small farmers account for more than 75% of the population. Data for the Forestry and Other Land Use sector derived from the Collect Earth image visualization tool show that cropland (food crops) and grassland (livestock pastures) are the major drivers of forest conversion, with grassland being the most significant contributor on average over the past decade.

Livestock emissions (especially from enteric fermentation) are the main source of GHG emission

<sup>68</sup> International Monetary Fund, Belize – Climate Change Policy Assessment, IMF Country Report No. 18/329 (Washington, D.C, 2018).

<sup>69</sup> World Bank, BELIZE Hurricanes and Earthquakes Risk Profile (Washington, D.C, 2017).

<sup>70</sup> Emil Cherrington and others, Forest Cover and Deforestation in Belize: 1980 – 2010 (Panama City, 2010).

emissions in the agriculture sector and almost all those emissions come from beef cattle. In addition, the beef cattle herd is growing rapidly and, due to the low stocking rate in Belize, this expansion occupies a significant extension of land and puts increasing pressure over the country's forest cover.

Several factors contribute to environmental degradation in the country. Agrochemical runoff is a significant contributor to pollution of national waterways. Domestic wastewater is only treated in municipalities with established treatment plants such as in Belmopan and Belize City. These treatment facilities only service 16% of the population. Most households are serviced by septic systems which provide rudimentary treatment at best, utilizing absorption fields. In Orange Walk, where surveys have been done, raw sewage flows from urban areas directly into the New River and is likely to be the cause of the 2019 eutrophication event.

In Belize City, wastewater is treated through the utilization of maturation ponds and surrounding

wetlands utilized for tertiary treatment. However, only approximately 50% of the city's population is connected to the treatment facility<sup>71</sup> and unplanned growth of the city has resulted in the encroachment on and removal of important mangrove wetlands. Improperly treated sewage entering the marine environment has had detrimental effects on coral and marine resources, influencing algal and seaweed growth.

Belize annual municipal solid waste generation was 101,278 tonnes per year. Model estimates suggest that in 2030 the projected municipal solid waste generation will be 144,792 tonnes per year and in 2050 the estimation is a generation of 223,778 tonnes per year.<sup>72</sup> Of the total amount of waste generated, only 41,596 tonnes (29%) were received at solid waste transfer stations in 2019 (Belize Solid Waste Management Authority). Collection covers approximately 66% of the population with the rest of generated waste making its way to open dumps. Waste recovery is only 2%, and involves primarily PET and metals, with recovered waste mainly exported.

Hazard	Socio-Economic System Impacts	Natural System Impacts
Ocean Acidification/Warming	Aquaculture, fisheries	Coral reefs, wetlands, seagrass
Sea Level Rise	Settlements and associated land uses, agriculture, residential, industrial, and commercial uses, utilities, fisheries	Wetlands and protected areas, marine and coastal species
Coastal Erosion	Settlements and associated land uses, utilities, aquaculture, tourism, commerce, finance	Wetlands and protected areas, marine and coastal species
Tropical Storms/Hurricanes	Agriculture (sugarcane, corn, beans), aquaculture, settlements, fisheries, tourism	Coral reefs, lowland savannas, seagrass
Inland Flooding	Agriculture, aquaculture, settlements, tourism, commerce, finance	Coral reefs, mangrove, and littoral forests
Water Availability	Reservoirs, agriculture (sugarcane, corn, beans, rice, banana, citrus)	River, inland water bodies, wetlands, mangroves and littoral forests, broadleaf forests
Temperature Rise	Agriculture (sugarcane, corn, beans, rice, banana, aquaculture), fisheries	Coral reefs, fauna
Precipitation Changes	Agriculture (sugarcane, corn, beans, rice, banana, citrus)	Wildfires
Saltwater Intrusion	Agriculture (sugarcane, aquaculture), urban water treatment plants	Coastal rivers, estuarine environments

TABLE 12: VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE VARIABILITY

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Emanuel, Situational Analysis – Regional Sectoral Overview of Wastewater Management in the Wider Caribbean Region, CEP Technical Report 66 (Caribbean Regional Fund for Wastewater Management, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Silpa Kaza and others, What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050, Urban Development Series (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).



Belize Spider Monkey at the Belize Zoo (UN Photos/Office of the UN Resident Coordinator)

Climate change-induced hazards also have a widespread impact on the culture sector, including the total or partial destruction of heritage sites and cultural assets, the inability of the affected populations to access and benefit from their cultural resources, the disruption of intangible cultural heritage, endangered traditional knowledge and practices, and foregone livelihoods and economic opportunities associated with culture and creative industries, including those in the tourism industry.

### **Interactions Between People and the Environment**

Trafficking in protected species and pillage of marine resources is a growing phenomenon in border communities and this could get worse as COVID-19-related social and economic impacts permeate the society. At least 640 illegal wildlife trade occurrences were registered in the country in the 2013-2018 period, one of the highest figures among Caribbean states. Although Belize has been party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1981, without national legislation to suspend the trade, its compliance status

is considered incomplete. This phenomenon is primarily a transboundary challenge, with allegations in 2019 that Guatemalans were trafficking in protected species and engaging in pollution of the marine environment thus raising tensions among affected communities. The government took measures to reduce these tensions, including restricting the eligibility of Guatemalan fisherfolk to hold permanent residency, and restricting their access to Southern Belize waters. These measures heightened disagreements and further polarized community stakeholders.

As unemployment rises, trafficking in protected species and pillage of sea resources could increasingly become a survival strategy for persons at risk of sliding into absolute poverty and the use of kinetic force will prove inadequate in tackling this largely human security-centred problem. It is therefore critical to implement a preventive approach towards strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities, particularly focused on the youth, as a means of protecting Belize's biodiversity.

<sup>73</sup> The Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity, "6th National Report for the Convention on Biological Diversity", 14 May 2019.

Failure to apply this approach could worsen the national security situation, as environmental crime could link up to other forms of transnational organized crime (such as human trafficking, and drug and weapons trafficking). In this context, one of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is the risk of an increase in environmental crimes, including an increase in the illegal wildlife trade, with consequent damage to ecosystems and biodiversity. The illegal trade in wildlife, which is also tied to other crimes like money laundering, corruption, and document fraud, is estimated to be up to US\$20 billion globally.

Belize's abundant natural resources possess high ecosystem, biodiversity, economic, and aesthetic values. Despite some environmental challenges, Belize has been proactive in correcting past environmental damages to its reefs. The Fisheries Department has used fish stock assessments and catch data to set quotas and manage fishing seasons, such as the early closure of the queen conch (a CITES listed species) harvesting season upon reaching annual quota. Furthermore, the department has improved data collection mechanisms and capacity through training, implemented modern enforcement tools (drones, Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool [SMART]), increased patrolling, implemented a licensing system for fishers, and introduced a Women in Fisheries Forum (WIFF) to highlight the pivotal role of women in the fishing industry. These activities have had tangible results including a 32% decrease in infractions from the 2014/2015 to the 2015/2016 fiscal year.<sup>73</sup> However, efforts to protect Belize's precious marine biodiversity are ongoing as overfishing, pollution and wildlife trafficking continue to drive negative change in the ecosystem.

Terrestrial wildlife trafficking, however, has threatened endangered parrots, monkeys, and turtles in its border region with Guatemala. Trees, too, in particular a precious hardwood species called Honduran rosewood, have been illegally harvested for timber and

shipped to China and other destinations, where they are in demand for making luxury furniture and musical instruments. Economic hardships being experienced by poor rural communities could increase environmental crimes, with devastating impact on the tourism sector. Increased contact between animals and humans will in turn increase the possibility of outbreaks of zoonotic diseases.

### **Pathway Towards Development of an Inclusive Green and Blue Economy - Policy, Tools and Measures**

Belize's growth is largely driven by the tourism and agriculture sectors which are highly dependent on biodiversity and the sustainable management of key ecosystems. Belize's ability to improve living standards and achieve fiscal sustainability is inextricably linked to its ability to accelerate economic growth. However, achieving sustainable economic development is not possible in the absence of responsible stewardship of the environment, natural resources, and biodiversity. The challenge of balancing the nexus between economic growth and environmental sustainability is very pronounced in Belize, as the country's economy is dependent on the exploitation of natural resources to drive growth. The mismanagement of key ecosystems and biodiversity associated therewith can result in negative externalities affecting economic growth and quality of life.

In November 2020, with the election of a new government, the Ministry of Blue Economy was established. This ministry is meant to demonstrate the government's commitment to exploring and investing in blue economy opportunities as a part of its development structure. In 2020, the government also launched its Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy which focused on Marine Fisheries and Seafood Processing. Belize's fisheries sector supports over 3,000 fishers directly and over 15,000 Belizeans indirectly.<sup>74</sup>

**Belize's small open economy is supported primarily by**

<sup>74</sup> Belize Fisheries Department, Marine Climate and Adaptation Project STATEMENT OF CAPABILITY: Consultant to Develop a National Fisheries Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for Belize (Belmopan, Government of Belize, 2019).

<sup>75</sup> Belize, Economic Recovery Strategy for Belize (Belmopan, Government of Belize, 2020).

**its natural resource base.** The country's long-term development strategy, the Belize Horizon 2030, captures the essence of the country's pursuit of a Green Development Pathway as the country's environmental capital demonstrates real potential in driving the country's development agenda. Belize's development plan the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) seeks to incorporate the importance of balancing the need for economic growth while ensuring environmental sustainability. Fears have arisen, however, that COVID-19-related economic shocks to the country will force an intensification and unsustainable use of the natural resource base, turning attention to discussions on a green recovery. Belize's tourism industry is eco-based and organized around natural and archaeological assets. The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially impacted Belize's economy as the country's tourism sector, which accounts for roughly 41% of the gross domestic product (GDP), experienced a near-total collapse, affecting many related industries, including agriculture, fisheries, and food processing. Based on this collapse, the country saw the need for the possible diversification of its economy and signalled the development of blue economy opportunities, investment in nature-based jobs and livelihoods, and supporting transformations systems for sustainable agricultural production.<sup>75</sup>

"Blue carbon", e.g., mangrove and seagrass ecosystems, play many important roles as a nature-based solution to climate change with mitigation, adaptation, and resilience co-benefits. These ecosystems represent a triple-win for Belize by providing a carbon sink; offsetting sea level rise and coastal erosion while expanding habitat for biodiverse resources; and supporting a more resilient tourism and aquaculture industry. Together with coral reefs, they sustain the foundation of the marine tourism economy in Belize. Protection of these vital ecosystems protects the climate, people, and nature.

Tourism is the largest of all ocean economic sectors, generating more than a USD 1.6 trillion globally in 2017. According to a recent study by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the overall economic benefits of tourism in Belize are worth up to \$700 USD million, corresponding to roughly 40% of GDP. Although official statistics do not allow quantifying the incidence of marine and coastal tourism, survey statistics point to a strong concentration of tourism activities at three of Belize's coastal destinations – San Pedro, Caye Caulker and Placencia. These destinations were visited by 42%, 35% and 14% of visitors respectively (UNCTAD, 2018).<sup>76</sup> In general, tourism absorbs a larger share of the employed population in coastal (14%) as opposed to continental (12%) districts. Belize's National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2030 proposes six umbrella products for sector development (Cultural, Nature Based, Sun and Beach, Cruise, Nautical, Leisure and Entertainment) most of which has its basis in the coastal or marine environment. Destination development continues to be concentrated along Belize's coast.

Based on the WHO guidelines, air quality in Belize is considered moderately unsafe. Main contributors to air pollution include the use of agrochemicals, slash-and-burn agriculture, waste burning, the petroleum industry and vehicle emissions. Belize views low emission development as an integral component of its green growth ambitions.<sup>77</sup> It has initiated processes to set in place a Low Emission Development Strategy for the country, which will accompany the country's medium-term economic development strategy. The Low Emission Development Strategy and Action Plan for Belize for 2020-2050 prioritizes mitigation options and the achievement of sustainable socioeconomic development. It presents the country with opportunities for the decarbonization of its productive sectors, focusing on the FOLU removals, transport, energy, agriculture, and waste sectors.

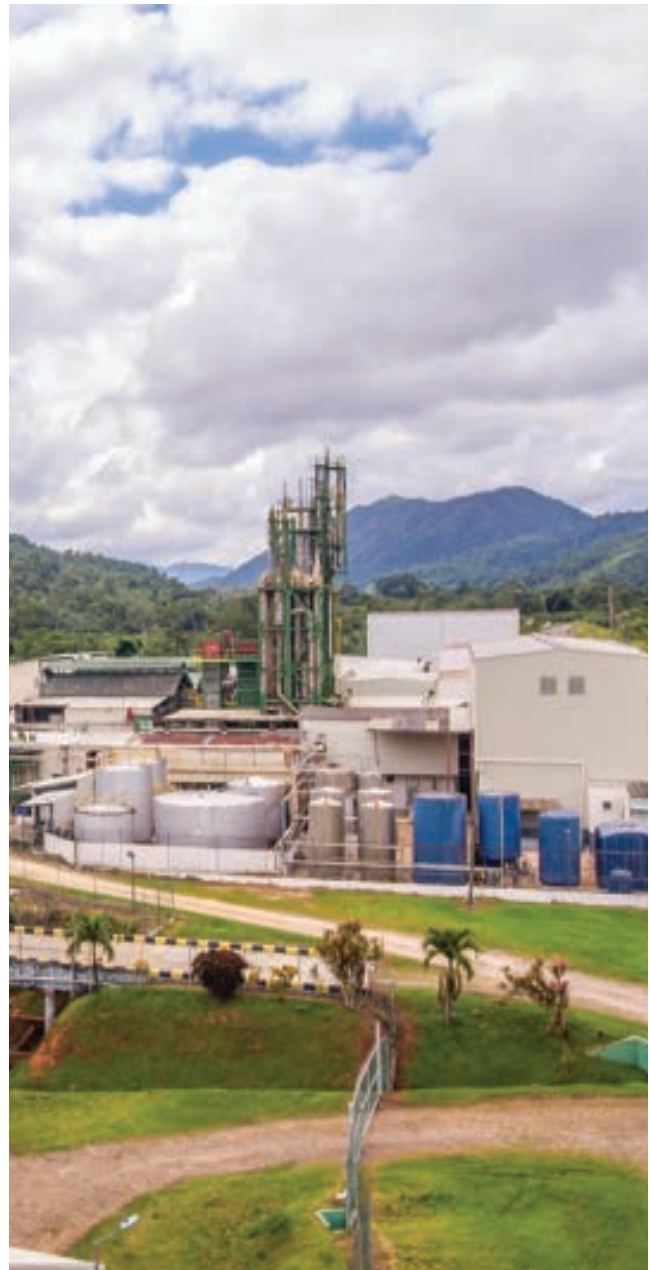
<sup>76</sup> David Eugui and Lorenzo Formenti, Maritime and Coastal Tourism in Belize (Belize, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2018)

<sup>77</sup> International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers, "Belize General Health Risks: Air Pollution", 16 April 2020.

In 2020, Belize updated its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) which include both mitigation and adaptation elements. Targets include the avoidance of emissions totalling 10.1 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030, representing a 50% increase of original emission reduction targets. Key sector targets include a 30% decrease in emissions related to land use and forestry and 75% of renewable energy in the electricity supply. Within the context of green development, Belize has been powered by primarily renewable sources of energy, namely hydroelectric energy, and biomass energy. The government has endorsed a National Energy Policy Framework which calls for the shifting of the energy matrix for electricity, heat, and mechanical power away from fossil fuels. Today, about 35% of the country's total energy supply is generated from indigenous renewable sources.

Agriculture and agribusiness continue to play an integral role in Belize's economy, contributing significantly to the income and livelihoods for large numbers of rural residents and contributing to overall food security. Approximately 24,117 people (14.1% of the labour force, LFS Sept. 2019, SIB) are employed in agriculture. Of that total, 26% are women, working primarily in the agro-processing sector. The National Agriculture and Food Policy of Belize 2015-2030 prioritizes sustainable and resilient production systems as a key consideration of sector development. The policy directs the expansion of the agricultural frontier and promotion of sector efficiency, predicting an increase in average annual sector growth rate from the current average of 2.8 % to 4.0 %. Sector expansion is directed to the Northern (Corozal and Orange Walk districts) and Central Coastal (Belize District) Agricultural Zones in the country. Climate smart agricultural practices are featured for the first time within a national agriculture plan demonstrating the sector's acknowledgement of its susceptibility to weather variability and its vulnerability to climate hazards, such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts. Belize's environmental policies, especially those

associated with its system of protected areas, play a critical role in the protection of biodiversity and the safeguarding of resources supporting green and blue economy options for the country. The country's recent recognition of biodiversity as a development asset that supports Belize's primary pillars for economic development is a crucial first step in the greening of the country's economy.



Citrus Products of Belize Ltd. (UN Photos/Office of the UN Resident Coordinator)





# Social Exclusion Analysis

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# Social Exclusion Analysis

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This social exclusion analysis examines the constraints and barriers faced by some populations as they seek to fulfil their basic social, economic, and cultural rights. It also takes into account the principal drivers of social exclusion which leave some groups unable to claim their rights. These factors tend to exacerbate geographic, ethnic, social, and economic disparities in Belize.

## Key Factors of Social Exclusion

Multiple factors contribute to and perpetuate the social exclusion of some populations. Our preceding analysis shows that some of the most excluded populations are people who live in rural and economically underserved communities, Maya and Garinagu indigenous peoples, and their children, the urban male youth, children and adults with disabilities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, households in poverty and women, in particular those who experience unemployment and gender-based violence. Health related challenges pose a keen risk for men, the elderly, and females in the reproductive stage of their lives.

**Geography** is a key factor of social exclusion in Belize. This CCA shows that where people live tend to determine their ability to access basic social services and economic opportunities or their ability to build and maintain resilience to climate change and weather-related events. The 2009 CPA, which is currently the official data on poverty, is clear on the geographic concentration of poverty in Belize. It points to the high poverty rates in the Toledo and Corozal Districts as well as to the high levels of poverty and citizen insecurity in Southside Belize City.<sup>78</sup> The patterns of exclusion in these districts and in distinct urban pockets further demonstrate that the poverty

experienced by residents is mostly linked to the underinvestment in basic services in mostly rural communities, that can enable this population to generate and sustain livelihoods and access services where they live.

Having a **disability** in Belize can amplify exclusion from many aspects of societal life. In 2013, UNICEF reported that at least 2,904 children in Belize had a disability.<sup>79</sup> This study by UNICEF showed that boys were more likely than girls to be living with a disability. The 2000 Population Census documents that the total number of disabled persons in Belize was 25,276 persons or approximately 10% of the total population of 232,111.<sup>80</sup> Disability in boys tended to be associated with speaking, learning and behavioural difficulties; girls were more likely to have sight disabilities, which impacted their hearing, mobility, and body movement. More children with disabilities lived in rural communities than in urban settings. Overall, children living with a disability accounted for a high disability prevalence rate of 2.5%. Disaggregated data to locate the adult population living with a disability does not yet exist although this information is crucial to aid Belize meeting its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD). In the absence of such a monitoring mechanism, there is no intercensal data to indicate the extent of each type of disability in the population. Data is also lacking on public funds allocated to service provision; the socio-economic needs of adults with diverse abilities; and the degree of stigma and discrimination they experience in accessing public goods and services, employment, and other areas of social life and personal development.

An **irregular migration** status is a cause for

<sup>78</sup> The CPA indicated an overall poverty rate of 41.3% with 50% of children and 68% of indigenous populations living in poverty.

<sup>79</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, The Situational Analysis of Children with Disabilities (Belize City, 2013).

<sup>80</sup> Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Budget Management, 2000 Population Census, Major Findings (Belmopan)

discrimination and social exclusion in Belize. Despite having a functioning asylum system, asylum seekers and refugees in Belize encounter many challenges to attain full access to their rights. Most asylum seekers in Belize who have been able to register their claim remain in prolonged limbo due to the protracted adjudication process. This includes over 600 persons who have been evaluated positively but have not yet received the required ministerial confirmation. Since 2015, only 28 persons have received refugee recognition. The lack of the right to work, combined with the lengthy processing time for asylum applications, make many asylum seekers vulnerable to exploitation and difficult living conditions.

In 1990, Belize became a party to the 1951 Convention, which relates to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol and further adopted a National Refugees Act in 1991. Belize should reinforce an integrated migration system of services. This integrated system should include assistance in obtaining official documentation, providing information on requirements, and assistance for the completion of applications forms necessary for legal residence in Belize. This means that the government should also expand civic spaces, including through partnerships with civil society organizations to include refugees and asylum seekers to improve adoption of the Refugees Act and related policies.

**Population age** is also a factor for exclusion in Belize. The 2010 Situational Analysis of Older Persons in Belize<sup>81</sup> showed that a quarter of the elderly population claimed to have some type of disability caused by a stroke or Alzheimer's disease. They experience confinement to wheelchairs due to limb amputations, memory loss, and deafness. Those with visual impairment suffer from glaucoma, cataracts, and progressive loss of sight due to ageing. The physical infrastructure in towns and communities do not accommodate the mobility needs of people with disabilities. This means that they are often precluded

from engaging in activities that can improve their mental and physical health. In the context of COVID-19, the elderly is a high-risk group for infection and fatality. They are also likely to experience digital exclusion as more services become digitized and interaction with service providers become mainstreamed on online platforms. At the same time, there are no coordinated resources to enable older people to navigate online interactions for the conduct of their livelihood, social and health needs. Age discrimination also occurs as young women seek access to family planning and reproductive services and products. For example, the unmet need for family planning within the adolescent group is significant at 40.8% as compared to only 9.1% among women aged 45-49. The provision of basic health and social services should be provided equitably despite age.

**Gender-based** discrimination perpetuates many areas of social exclusion. For instance, in 2018, the Supreme Court of Belize ruled that section 53 of the Criminal Code which criminalizes same-sex sexual conduct between consenting adults is unconstitutional and discriminatory. This ruling was upheld by the Court of Appeal on December 30th, 2019; however, no legislative changes have yet been made. The LGBTI population have also been vulnerable to harassment, violence, and police abuses. The UPR (2018) recommends that Belize carry out legal reforms that guarantee the protection and promotion of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons thereby avoiding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Capacities within the Police Department should be further strengthened to improve investigation of crimes motivated by the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity.

In terms of child marriage and early unions (CMEU) which is a harmful practice and as such a form of GBV, Belize has the second highest rate of CMEU in the Caribbean. CMEU results in negative outcomes,

<sup>81</sup> National Council on Ageing, Situational Analysis of Older Persons Belize 2010 (Belmopan, 2010).

primarily for girls, in areas such as reproductive health and access to antenatal care, unmet need for contraceptives, and intimate partner violence. Data from the Ministry of Health on violence against adolescents 15-19 years, who are married or in union, showed that during the five-year period 2013 to 2017, 14.5% of all domestic violence cases reported were among adolescents. Of these, 89.6% were among females and 75.8% were among adolescents 15-19 years of age, with sexual violence being the leading type of abuse reported among adolescents 10-14 and 15-19 years of age.<sup>82</sup>

**Ethnic** Mayas and the Garinagu who are also recognized as Belize's indigenous peoples, live predominantly in the Toledo district which is the district with the highest level of poverty. The preceding analysis describes some of the economic and social conditions in Toledo which also influence the quality of life of indigenous peoples and their ability to claim their rights. Some key factors are worth underlining regarding the Toledo District and the conditions of indigenous peoples: stunting among Mayan children in Toledo is highest even when compared to their age cohort from other ethnicities in the rest of the country; food insecurity and malnutrition are also highest among rural Mayan children, while childhood obesity is highest among Garinagu children. Nationally, the Toledo district has the lowest labour force participation rate (39%) when compared to all the districts in Belize. The femicide rate in Toledo was among the third highest in the country in 2020.

Access to land in Toledo is governed by customary land rights. The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruled in the case of the Maya Leaders Alliance v. the Attorney General (2015) CCJ 15 that "Maya customary land tenure exists in the entire Toledo District and gives rise to collective and individual land rights within sections 3 (d) and 17 of the Belize Constitution." Based on this ruling, Mayan lands in the Toledo district are considered as private property with due protection

under Belize's property law. This ruling assures that the government should consult with the Mayan leadership about any development on these lands. A new Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs has been established and this should also enable the provision of an expanded civic space for indigenous peoples to participate alongside government as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIP).

## Drivers of Exclusion

### Poverty

The last poverty assessment shows that poverty levels have remained highest in the Toledo District where most of Belize's indigenous Maya and Garinagu populations live. It also documents a sharp increase in poverty in the Corozal District during this time. Rural poverty is stark in these two districts with Toledo also having an indigent rate of 36% while Corozal has a rural poverty rate of 21%. In addition to the data from the CPA, the recently concluded UN COVID-19 SERP posits that the poverty rate in Belize could increase to more than 55%, based on the projection that an additional 13.8% of the population would have likely transitioned to the classification of poor. Child poverty is also expected to increase, even as this group already experiences high levels of poverty, food insecurity, wasting and stunting.<sup>83</sup>

The projection from the SERP would likely indicate that the poverty rates would also increase beyond the Toledo and Corozal Districts. For instance, the CPA documented that urban poverty was already 29% in the Cayo District. However, there is a lack of data and analysis to reflect the extent of multidimensional poverty beyond the lack of income in households and among individuals. Such data is necessary to advance greater analysis and response options to address the existing structures, policies and mechanisms that preclude vulnerable populations from exercising their economic rights.

<sup>82</sup> National Committee for Families and Children, United National Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, Belize Country Profile: Child Marriages and Early Unions (Belize City, 2018).

<sup>83</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, "COVID-19: Number of children living in household poverty to soar by up to 86 million by end of year", 28 May 2020.

## Unemployment

The structure of the Belizean employed work force does not allow for equal participation by women or equitable access to jobs. Women make up 58% of the labour force, but men's participation rate is 78%.<sup>84</sup> The labour market is challenged to absorb the unemployed who, in Belize, are mostly women.<sup>85</sup> Here it is important that the government's employment policies focus on gender inclusivity and participation so that the critical matters of women's unemployment and the underemployment of both men and women can be addressed. The gender disparity in the workforce also contributes to the growing population of the working poor although workers should be assured of decent living standards in accordance with (ICESCR Art. 7a. ii). Of note, the newly adapted definition of employment is also problematic for women since it does not account for their caretaking responsibilities which can hasten their exit from the workforce.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, Belize's economic stagnation, which existed before the onset of COVID-19, constrains the expansion of the workforce to include women, the working poor rural populations, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

## Gender-Based Violence

(GBV) afflicts more women than men. The principal perpetrators tend to be men who are also intimate partners. Femicide is highest in certain parts of the country, and geographically pronounced in the south-eastern and south-western regions with Belize, Stann Creek and Toledo reporting the highest cases of femicide. The link between gender-based violence and HIV as both a cause and consequence of HIV remains significantly correlated. The government has criminalised gender-based violence but access to justice and the cost of legal services are major impediments for the successful prosecution of cases. Greater coordination between service providers (including government as well as non-government organizations) is also important to address this societal ill.

## Violence and Public Insecurity

Gang violence in Belize City excludes many young people from conducting their lives in safe and productive living environments. Over two-thirds of gang-related homicide victims (67.4%) in 2017 were between the ages of 15 and 35. High levels of complex trauma are reported in children, youth and women who live in areas afflicted by this type of violence.<sup>87</sup> Complex trauma is now understood to have immediate as well as long-term detrimental effects on physical health, mental health, employment, and education outcomes as well as other aspects of quality of life such as social bonding.

Children, particularly boys, live with the compounded challenges of poverty, gang violence, and marginalization and victimization. The boy child experiences high levels of conflict and aggression at home, at school and on the streets; a higher rate of early school dropout; and high levels of stigmatization. This population is also vulnerable to chronic hunger, poverty, unstable home environments and difficulty accessing economic opportunities. The stigmatization of violent communities and the security challenges in service delivery reinforce the social exclusion of families so that violence operates as both a cause and an effect of deprivations of their basic rights and needs. A comprehensive and system-wide approach to peaceful education that embodies formal, non-formal and informal learning should be integrated as a cross-cutting theme in education policy and planning, curriculum reform, competency development and social support mechanisms for communities with high incidences of violence.

## Digital Marginalization

In the context of COVID-19 children have emerged as a constituent group who are experiencing digital exclusion since their physical classrooms have been transformed to a digital space that should be accessible from home. However, children in rural communities are challenged to participate in online

<sup>84</sup> Statistical Institute of Belize, Labour Force Survey: September 2020.

<sup>85</sup> Näslund-Hadley, Emma., Navarro-Palau, Patricia and Maria Fernanda Prada, Skills to shape the future: Employability in Belize (Inter-American Development Bank, 2020).

<sup>86</sup> In the 2020 LFS, the SIB note that women indicate that they are unable to work because of expected caring responsibilities. On this basis, women may be self-ejecting from the

workforce.

<sup>87</sup> Herbert Gayle, Virginia Hampton and Nelma Mortis, Like Bush Fire: Male Social Participation and Violence in Urban Belize (Benque Viejo Del Carmen, Cubola Productions, 2016).

education since access to internet service in rural communities is lower than in urban communities. Many rural communities and homes lack access to electricity, let alone digital and online services. Furthermore, many poor households in both urban and rural areas, lack computers or other electronic devices needed for online schooling. Even prior to the pandemic, a study conducted under the Belize Out of School Initiative (2018) indicated that in 2015, 9.5% of children of lower secondary school age were out of school.<sup>88</sup>

Children from rural communities are the most disadvantaged as their schools tend to have untrained teachers who are unable to access the teacher training programs. To reduce spatial inequalities, technological infrastructure will be needed in remote areas to accommodate online learning.

Even though approximately 25% of the national budget is allocated to education, there is a critical need for increased access to quality education, especially for marginalized groups. The UPR recommends that Belize increase its investment in education and health to effectively reduce school dropout rates and guarantee to right to health (UPR rec. 77.63).

### **Women's Under-Representation and Participation in Political Leadership**

Belizean women remain under-represented in electoral politics and at the highest levels of government. The results of the recent general elections held on November 11, 2020, are testament to this since women accounted for only 19% (13 out of 68) of the candidates who contested the election. This is an 8% increase from the 2015 general elections in which there were 10 female candidates out of a total of 88 persons contesting the elections. Currently, women make up only 9.7% of the House of Representatives (elected), 35% of the Senate (appointed), and 7.6% of the national cabinet. There is improving gender representation in municipal and village councils. Since

2018, 30% of all councillors on municipal councils are women.<sup>89</sup> To support a decisive move toward representative democracy, the government should consider instituting a quota for female representation in the national assembly. The absence of adequate representation in the national government, excludes the representation of the voices, priorities and needs of women in policy decisions and implementation.

### **Manifestations of Social Exclusion**

Social exclusion in Belize is manifested through the existence of structural, social, political, and economic policies and practices that exempt some populations from accessing services and engaging in opportunities that allow them to exercise their basic rights. At the same time, some populations have limited engagement in civic and political spaces through which they can interact with the government to have their voices and concerns heard and acted upon. The analyses in this CCA show also that there are prevailing risk areas - macro-economic outlook, economic stability, inequality, access to land, food security, low agricultural productivity and insecurity – that also bear on the capacities of distinct populations to overcome deprivation and marginalization. In the section below, we present the exclusion of populations from their right to development in the absence of equality and non-discrimination, participation, accountability.

### **Insufficient Social Protection**

Social protection coverage remains insufficient, especially for children and adolescents. In 2018, the BOOST cash transfer programme covered only 4% of children 0-14 years; the National Health Insurance covered only 8% of children 0-4 years and 27% of children 5-19 years old. The current social protection system does not include non-contributory social protection programs in social policy or legislation and there is no institutional capacity for their effective implementation.<sup>90</sup> Geographically, the social protection services are limited in coverage and almost non-

<sup>88</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, "Children cannot afford another year of school disruption", Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore, 12 January 2021.

<sup>89</sup> Belize, Elections and Boundaries Department, Municipal Elections 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Otter, Elsie Butterworth and Carlos Villalobos, Comprehensive Review of Belize's Social Protection System with Policy Recommendations for System Strengthening (UNICEF, UNDP and Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, 2017).

existent in the Corozal District, although Corozal had emerged as the district with the sharpest increase in poverty in the 2009 CPA. At the national level, social protection coverage reached 4% of the general population, and approximately 3.5% of the poor.<sup>91</sup> Belize's social protection system requires systemic and strategic reforms based on a social protection floor sufficient to meet basic needs which should be supported by robust institutional and legislative frameworks. This reform would facilitate social protection for populations who are not currently covered, including: children and adolescents, adults with no contributions to the national social security scheme but who are likely to be engaged in the informal sector, and poor and indigent populations in the Corozal district. Furthermore, the reform to the social protection system should align with minimum social protection obligations outlined in CESC Art. 11.

### Food Insecurity

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministries of Education, Health, and Agriculture aimed to enhance school feeding programs and encouraged school cafeterias and vendors to make nutritious food available to students in primary and secondary schools. However, with the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children are no longer accessing food from school feeding programs. Food security and good nutrition are both important for school attendance and healthy behaviours and practices.

Low-income families and households have limited capacity and public institutional support to remain food secure. As the purchasing power of many families has been further reduced by the health crisis, poor households are increasingly unable to meet their minimum daily food requirements. The World Food Programme (WFP) Caribbean COVID-19 survey found that half of respondents in Belize had shifted their eating behaviour, with one third of respondents reporting skipping meals or eating less than usual,

while another third resorted to eating less preferred foods.<sup>92</sup> Households below or well below average were almost three times more likely to skip meals or eat less than usual when compared to those with an average income. They were also more often affected by livelihood disruptions (71% compared to 54%) and loss of jobs or salaries (54% compared to 22%) than average income households.<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore, children in homes with upwards of more than four (4) siblings experience hardships owing to food and nutrition shortages. Those from low-income households and who live in Southside Belize City are likely to be underweight and those who live in Southside Belize City as well as in the Stann Creek District tend to experience wasting. Children who live in rural Toledo, predominantly of Mayan ethnicity, experience chronic food and nutrition insecurity.<sup>94</sup> Children who are Garifuna, also an indigenous population, tend to be overweight.<sup>95</sup>

Of note, the pattern of parental education and child nutritional status also shows some level of correlation. Children with mothers who have secondary or higher education are less likely to be underweight and stunted compared to children with mothers who have limited or no primary education. In contrast, the prevalence of overweight children is associated with higher maternal education. Access to food and nutrition information should be inclusive and provided to parents in formal and informal settings including through community education and ante-natal care and maternal health programs.



Local food vendor in Belize City (UN Photos/Office of the UN Resident Coordinator)

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> World Food Programme, Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey Belize Summary Report – May 2020 (Barbados, 2020).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> Indigenous children in rural Toledo tend to be disproportionately affected by both malnutrition and stunting when compared to their cohorts in other regions of Belize.

<sup>95</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, Child Rights Monitoring: Reporting on Children and the SDGs in Belize (Belize City, 2017).

<sup>96</sup> Although Belize has almost universal primary school participation for boys and girls, only 36 % of primary school graduating students perform at a satisfactory level in the Primary School Examination (PSE).

## Reduced Access to Education

Access to primary school in urban and rural communities reflects near universal coverage. However, early childhood education is still limited to urban settings and this sets in motion uneven results and experience for rural children in primary school.<sup>96</sup>

At the secondary level, approximately 50% of secondary school-aged children attend school.<sup>97</sup> In an attempt to increase secondary school participation rates, the Ministry of Education implemented a per capita financing formula and subsidy program. These programs have shown significant reductions in both repetition rate (from 9.1% to 5.8%) and dropout rate (from 10.1% to 4.4%) over the last 8 years.<sup>98</sup> Despite these successes, data from the MICS5<sup>99</sup> show that students from lower wealth quintiles continue to face barriers to participation in education. Of note, in rural communities, children and young people with disabilities have limited access to supportive education services that meet their learning needs. Learners with disabilities experience diminishing services because of the closure of classrooms and the inadequate provision of services by professionals both in the home and in the classroom. Access to disability services as part of early childhood and primary education in rural areas, is significantly limited or absent. This means that children with disabilities who live in rural communities, especially in the Cayo, Toledo and Orange Walk districts are challenged to attend a school that caters to their disability.



Belizean children taking online classes (UN Photos/Office of the UN Resident Coordinator)



Healthcare worker at the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital with a COVID-19 patient in intensive care (UN Photos/Office of the UN Resident Coordinator)

## Health Inequalities

Despite the improvements in health services and care, inequities are observed.

## Inadequate National Health Insurance Coverage

The National Health Insurance (NHI) covers only 31% of the population. The coverage for children is lower than the average: 8% of the 0 - 4-year-olds and 27% of the 5- to 19-year-olds. In 2019, the NHI provided health insurance to residents of the Corozal, Stann Creek and Toledo Districts as well as Belize City Southside. Although results were resoundingly positive, a lag in its extension to the rest of the country has generated inequalities between members and non-members and led to duplicities, which counters the trend towards better allocation of resources. The main reason for this delay is the lack of a clear, analysis-based strategy to fund the scale-up in a sustainable manner. As a result

<sup>97</sup> Emma Näslund-Hadley and others, Belize: Education Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) II (BL-L1030) Loan Proposal (Inter-American Development Bank, 2019).

<sup>98</sup> Belize, Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, Draft Strategic Framework for Education: Belize Education Sector Strategy 2020 and Beyond (Belmopan, 2019).

<sup>99</sup> Statistical Institute of Belize and UNICEF, Belize Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2015-2016 (Belmopan, 2017).



of the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government scaled back on the delivery of the NHI program, which has resulted in limiting access to universal health services for the most vulnerable populations, namely residents of urban Belize City Southside, indigenous communities in southern Belize and rural communities in both the north and southern districts. In an environment of constrained financial resources, identifying fiscal space for health becomes increasingly more challenging than ever before. Health access has also been constrained by a shortage of healthcare providers. Notably, the public health sector struggles to retain health workers deployed in rural areas further reducing health care and services to rural populations.

#### **Unequal Access to Maternal and Child Health Care and Services**

Prior to COVID-19, however, disparities in immunization coverage in Belize were already noted. Data on immunization coverage by wealth quintiles show that the relative gap in immunization between those in the wealthiest quintile and those in the poorest quintile increased from 2.6 to 6.4%. Community vaccination activities have reduced due to lack of transportation and human resources to operate outreach clinics. Furthermore, stocks of some treatments and supplements needed for both waterborne diseases and respiratory infections have depleted. Prior to the pandemic, Belize had almost universal health coverage for maternal and child health. However, pregnant women experience barriers and limitations when accessing basic health services. These populations include rural women with lower educational status, particularly migrant women and their children who live in agricultural regions or in indigenous communities. They experience limited or absent services and communication challenges which can lead to disproportionate and negative health outcomes for rural women when compared to women in urban areas.

#### **Insufficient Coverage for Adolescent Health**

Recognizing a major gap in health services for adolescents, Belize developed the National Adolescent Health Strategic Plan 2020-2030. This plan proposes a multisectoral approach to address positive health and development, violence and injury, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, substance abuse, and self-harm among this population.

#### **Inadequate Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services and Products**

The unmet need for family planning in Belize is 22.2%.<sup>100</sup> This low access to family planning products and services especially impacts the youth population. The number of adolescents with access to modern contraceptive methods has increased from 11.0% to 37.0% and 39% as per MICS rounds 3, 4 and 5 respectively. However, the unmet need for family planning within the adolescent group is significant (40.8%) when compared to other age groups such as for women between the ages of 45 -49 years whose unmet need for family planning is only 9.1%.

According to the UNFPA Rapid Assessment of the Provision of SRH Information and Services to Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups in Belize, gaps, and barriers to SRH information and services specific to vulnerable and marginalized populations are: Rural Women, particularly from the southern districts of Toledo and Stann Creek, and the northern most district of Corozal, Adolescents, LGBTI Community and Persons with disabilities.



Sexual and reproductive health items at a women's mobile centre with the Spotlight Initiative (UN Photos/Perla Hinojosa/Spotlight Initiative)

<sup>100</sup> SIB and UNICEF, Belize Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2015-2016

People with disabilities often cannot obtain even the most basic information about SRH, according to the WHO/UNFPA Guidance Note on Promoting SRH of Persons with Disabilities. Fortunately, articles 23 and 25 of the UN Convention for Persons with Disabilities mandate specific attention to the issues of persons with disabilities in matters of SRH and reproductive rights and the elimination of discrimination in all matters.

### **Increase in Communicable Diseases**

Key communicable diseases in the context of Belize include HIV and other sexually transmitted infections; tuberculosis; and vector borne diseases, namely dengue and malaria.

Belize reported an HIV prevalence of 1.8% in 2018. New HIV infections among adults in Belize increased by about 7% between 2010 and 2018, while on average, new infections declined in the Caribbean region by 16 % for the same period. The HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men is 13.9%, prisoners 5.8% and sex workers 0.9%. In 2019, UNAIDS/WHO Spectrum estimated approximately 5,116 people living with HIV and 2,532 individuals had died from AIDS. Despite government efforts, reductions in AIDS mortality rates were stagnant with mortality ranging from 30.1 to 32.1 deaths per 100,000 population between 2008 and 2019. The reported number of people living with HIV receiving antiretrovirals (ART) was low at 31% in 2017. Analysis to identify inequities showed overall, that the poorest districts tend to experience the lowest mortality rates from the year 2009 to 2018, however, the largest percent decreases in mortality rates were mainly observed in the richest districts (Stann Creek and Belize) during the same period.

In 2019, more females were diagnosed with STIs (80.73% females vs. 19.27% males), partly because of the ongoing efforts by the MHW program to routinely test for STIs as part of antenatal care, while men are generally less likely to seek healthcare. Among the 81%

of men who participated in the modes of transmission study, 30% reported self-treating for STIs. Geographically, Belize, Cayo and Stann Creek have the highest incidence of STIs reported in 2019.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness of Belize reported 91 persons diagnosed with TB disease in 2019, an 8% reduction from the number reported in 2018 (99 persons). More men had TB (61/91, 67%) compared to women (30/91, 33%). Persons 55 years and older accounted for one third of the cases, while one-fifth were aged 25-34 years old. More than half of all TB cases came from the Belize and Cayo Districts. An integrated approach in responding to the HIV/STI/HIV and TB epidemics is critical in providing comprehensive and coordinated care, particularly for persons with multiple infections and comorbidities.

### **Increase in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**

NCDs are prominent in the disease profile over recent years and represent the leading causes of hospitalization. Diabetes, hypertension, strokes, heart attacks, renal failure, and other related cardiovascular complications have put a heavy burden on the health system. The International Diabetes Federation notes that Belize has a prevalence of diabetes in adults of 14.9% as per report of 2020.<sup>101</sup> NCDs are associated with poverty and create inequity within the community; both the poor and those with resources experience financial burden, as has clearly been seen in persons who suffer Chronic Kidney Failure in Belize.

Temporal trends between 2009 and 2018 showed absolute differences in mortality rates between the richest and poorest income districts showed that the gap in mortality fell from 26.7 to 20.5 deaths per 100,000 population, resulting in a narrowing of Belize's NCD-related mortality equity gaps. Nevertheless, this was due to increases in mortality rates among the poorest districts. Males had higher mortality rates for cardiovascular diseases, while females had higher mortality rate for diabetes mellitus and cancer.



# Development- Humanitarian- Peace Linkage Analysis

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# Development-Humanitarian-Peace Linkage Analysis

In Belize, the analysis of the humanitarian and development nexus becomes increasingly important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change related hazards. In 2020, these converged with pre-existing structural socioeconomic factors to have a compounded effect on people's well-being and livelihoods. COVID-19 response and recovery plans, disaster response and risk reduction, and building resilience, therefore, need to be linked with human and sustainable development, as expressed in the 2030 Agenda.



Flooding damage done by hurricane Eta in Roaring Creek Village, Cayo District (UN Photos/Rebecca Stim)

The effects of the pandemic and the recent impact of tropical storms Nana, Eta and Iota bring to the forefront existing inequalities and discrimination with

respect to resilience and social and economic exclusion of population groups, especially those with intersected vulnerabilities. The limited capacity of government to provide effective and sustainable responses, together with limited resilience at the community level, magnifies the impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups with a great risk of them being left further behind. Belize is a stable democracy although its institutions face challenges in the combating corruption, organized crime, and public security threats as well as managing migration from the broader Central American region as a country of transit and destination. The security threats are related to governance and to socioeconomic development factors.

In terms of conflict prevention and humanitarian and development linkages, the following problems are prioritized: humanitarian needs and development challenges in the context of COVID-19, natural disasters; and the levels of capacity to prevent, resist, absorb, adapt, respond, and recover from hazards and shocks.

Belize belongs to the group of Small Island Developing States, characterized by their fragile natural environments, which are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (extreme weather events, sea level rise, habitat degradation, etc.). Although the Government of Belize is highly aware of the climate and natural disaster vulnerability of the country and its population, greater capacity is still needed at multiple levels to deal with the rising incidence of natural disasters (storm surges, droughts, landslides, etc.).

This became increasingly visible over the last decades and is, therefore, one of the priority issues in advancing sustainable development and preserving achieved development gains.

Nonetheless, in the context of natural disasters and the current COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian needs are increasing in those population groups who live in poverty, work in the informal sector, and/or live from subsistence agriculture. These include residents of the Toledo District, indigenous peoples, the urban poor, and the migrant population. Within those groups, women, children, youth, and the elderly are at increased risk of social exclusion and deprivation.

Given the high level of natural disaster vulnerability, a regulatory and institutional framework, the Disaster Preparedness and Response Act, 2000, was established, which empowers Belize's institutions for disaster and risk management to address these vulnerabilities. Furthermore, it establishes the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) as a government entity directed by a National Emergency Coordinator. It also establishes the National Disaster Preparedness and Response Advisory Committee led by the Prime Minister, which prepares an annual National Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan. This emergency response structure is territorial and covers the coordination of all precautionary and response measures, however, a comprehensive national multi-hazard disaster risk management plan is still required.

The established structure has proven functional under the recent natural events. A modest budget is allocated to the Office of Emergency Management but when a disaster occurs, resources from several ministries, notably including Human Development, National Security, and Home Affairs, are combined to provide the necessary shelter, food, security, and transportation. Nevertheless, the recent impacts of tropical storms Nana, Eta, and Iota in 2020 clearly demonstrat-

ed the increasing importance of creating preparedness for greater disasters, which affect more people, given the increasing impacts of climate change. As a CARICOM member state, Belize benefits from disaster relief assistance from other Caribbean nations through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). It likewise provides such assistance to other CARICOM member states when needed. The Government of Belize through the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) and in collaboration with UNICEF and CDEMA, adopted the Regional Protocol for an Integrated Protection for Children and Adolescents during Disasters. This was then adapted to create a National Protocol for Belize. The Protocol guides national units on how to effectively take the needs of children and adolescents into consideration while developing emergency response strategies and programmes. The objectives of the Protocol are: (1) to protect the rights of children and adolescents in disaster situations, with the purpose of avoiding or minimizing the impacts of these events on children and (2) to use as a guide for government agencies, members of civil society, the private sector and international cooperation agencies in the stages of prevention, preparation, response and recovery in disaster situations.

The first positive cases of COVID-19 in Belize triggered the declaration of a national state of emergency from April to June 2020. It called for heavy restrictions on movement and the closure of international ports of entry, which reduced commerce, halted the tourism industry, closed offices, and precipitated the failure of small businesses. The consequent losses of income and livelihoods, combined with reduced access to social services, exacerbated the humanitarian needs of those sectors of the population who are most vulnerable to economic downturns and the negative impacts of natural disasters. These groups required humanitarian assistance in form of food assistance<sup>102</sup> and monetary support for survival during the pandemic. Additionally, the closure of schools and the

<sup>102</sup> World Food Programme, Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey Belize Summary Report – October 2020 (Barbados, 2020).  
<sup>103</sup> Draft Covid-19 Socio-Economic Response & Recovery Plan, (United Nations publication, 2021).

limited social protection services available during this time created the need to prevent undernutrition of children and pregnant women as well as to support access to health and hygiene.

After easing the restrictions on movement and on commercial and social activity in July 2020, Belize found itself with a rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, driven by community transmission in multiple cities, towns, and villages. The change of Government on November 2020 brought increased testing and tracing which has now allowed the positivity rate to be below 1% with only 60 active cases (April 15, 2021). In July 2020, the Government of Belize published its Economic Recovery Strategy for Belize, to address the impacts of COVID-19<sup>103</sup> taking into account the forecast for the development of the global, regional, and national economy. As the social and economic consequences of the pandemic reverses trend of per capita income improvement due to negative economic growth, the poverty index can be expected to conform to the trend of the last poverty assessment in 2009 when the poverty rate was 41.3% with 50% of children and 68% of the indigenous population living in poverty.

These structural characteristics of social and economic development have a hefty impact on the resilience levels of communities, when additional hardships due to natural disasters and the current pandemic arise. In tacit recognition of this vulnerability, Belize, together with Jamaica, was one of only two Caribbean countries, selected to receive resources under the UN COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) in its first round of aid. This fund directly supports the Government of Belize with enabling citizens right to health, in the context of a pandemic (CESCR Art. 12).

In terms of the triple nexus between development, humanitarian needs, and the peace and security sector, the recent social cohesion assessment<sup>104</sup> shows that

challenges with unsolved migration, the asylum system, and transborder problems,<sup>105</sup> in the larger Central American region, have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby heightening the vulnerability of migrants. This compound pre-existing challenges in Reducing Inequalities (SDG10) faced by migrants who now encounter additional discrimination due to fears of COVID-19 transmission from neighbouring countries.

These cross-border challenges also jeopardize progress towards achieving Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) since they contribute to land conflicts, migration pressures, border insecurity, and an increase in organized crime, including environmental crime. In Belize, transnational organized crime in the form of drug-trafficking is in turn linked to other crimes such as money laundering, corruption, document fraud, gun violence and criminal gang activity, which specifically inhibit achievement of SDG targets to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, to reduce illicit financial and arms flows and combat organized crimes and to reduce corruption and bribery in all forms.

The key challenges in the administration of justice<sup>106</sup> include lengthy trial backlogs for major crimes including murder, delays in completing police investigations, lack of evidence collection, court delays in preparing depositions, and adjournments in the courts. For instance, pre-trial detention for persons accused of murder averaged three to four years. As of September 2019, 458 persons, representing 40 % of the prison population, were being held in pre-trial detention.<sup>107</sup> Support to the government of Belize to expedite the provision of justice to foster a just society governed by the rule of law to protect human rights is a priority.

Good governance at multiple levels, the protection and promotion of human rights as per the minimum standards in the conventions signed by Belize, a

<sup>104</sup> Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 impact in Belize: Social cohesion and community resilience (UN internal document).

<sup>105</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review of Belize (3rd Cycle – 31st session): Thematic List of Recommendations (United Nations publication, 2018).

<sup>106</sup> United States of America, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Belize 2019 Human Rights Report (Washington, D.C, 2019).

<sup>107</sup> Belize Crime Observatory, Third Quarter 2019 Crime Analysis Report July – September 2019 (Belmopan, 2019).

reinvigorated justice system, transparent and accountable public institutions and effective public security are the political and institutional pillars for strengthening social cohesion and creating a more favourable environment for sustainable development.

Belize benefits from regional cooperation through its membership in the regional CARICOM and SICA communities, respectively comprising Caribbean and Central American countries. Through their various governance bodies and agencies, these regional integration communities provide institutional frameworks for inter-governmental cooperation that can support the achievement of SDG goals related to economic, security, environmental and social themes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, critical support for emergency responses has been mobilized through the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA). Likewise, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) offers opportunities for technical and material support in disaster relief, preparedness, and management, which are essential to address the increasing threats of extreme climate events such as hurricanes and flooding. To achieve the SDGs by 2030, Belize can leverage these regional cooperation mechanisms to advance progress particularly in economic growth through trade, protecting life below water and land through management of shared marine and terrestrial habitats, and peace through joint security measures.



# Financial Landscape Analysis

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# Financial Landscape Analysis

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda calls for member states to develop integrated national financing frameworks, incorporating a mix of public and private, national, and international funds, to support their sustainable development pathways to Agenda 2030. A

favourable national financial landscape, with adequate national budget allocations for SDG targets, is a pre-requisite for successful achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprising the 2030 Agenda.

GOB Budget Summary (US\$)	2019	2020 (Pre-COVID Estimate)
Tax Revenue (Recurrent)	\$592,003,814.50	\$602,993,643.50
Capital Revenue (Sale of Assets)	\$1,826,836.00	\$1,278,174.50
Grants (Donors)	\$15,109,692.50	\$15,411,886.00
Sub-Total Revenues	\$608,940,343.00	\$619,683,704.00
Overall Deficit	\$36,723,863.00	\$73,869,314.50
Total Expenditure	\$645,664,206.00	\$693,553,018.50
Amortization (Debt Principal Payment)	\$38,084,827.00	\$54,684,110.00
Financing	\$74,808,690.00	\$128,553,424.50
Grant % Revenue Base	02.6%	02.6%
Cap II & III/Revenue Base	17.7%	22.9%
Cap II & III/Budget	16.2%	19.9%

TABLE 13: APPROVED ESTIMATES OF REVENUE & EXPENDITURE FOR FY 2020/2021

## Public Sector

The main source of SDG financing for Belize is the public sector through recurrent revenues and borrowing. Other sources of funding are external donor funds (both public and private) and the local private sector. There are currently no estimates on the share of public revenues dedicated to SDG targeting since to a large extent SDGs have not been main-streamed into the national budget structure. Instead, public budgets are tied to the respective ministry objectives and their corresponding growth and development performance. However, the link to

SDG implementation must be made explicit to facilitate targeting and tracking progress towards achieving the SDGs. A national development cooperation policy must be developed by Belize to coordinate and guide donor concessional resources in line with national development priorities.

Although Belize has made good progress with the development of an SDG-compatible development plan, it lacks a financial framework or costing that supports the implementation of SDG-related policies, plans and priorities. A financial analysis of Belize's government

budget shows that it operates an overall budget of around USD \$600 million. Of this, around USD \$15 million is received annually in grants from external donors which represents around 2.6% of overall revenues being collected. The analysis also shows that for 2019, 74.8% of public investment in capital projects was financed through either domestic and/or external borrowing. For the fiscal year 2020/2021 (March 2020 Pre-COVID-19 budget) the Government of Belize was already projecting that 93.4% of all its capital needs would have been financed through loans. This financial analysis indicates that the government is greatly constrained in increasing public investment to achieve the SDGs, without cutting existing programs, increasing tax revenues, and/or mobilizing donor funds.

The Government of Belize SDG financial landscape for 2019 shows total investments amounted to USD \$326 million of which 68% was spent through the recurrent budget, 20% through externally funded capital projects, and 12% through nationally funded capital projects.

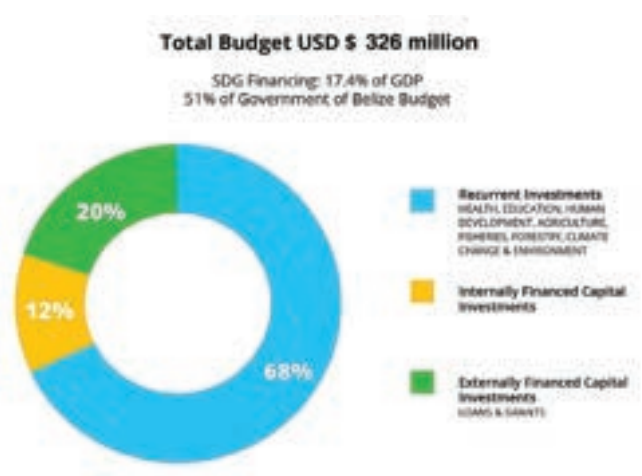


FIGURE 13: GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

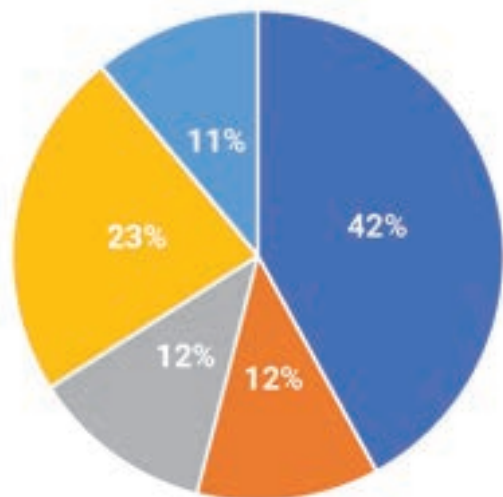
For 2020, the SDG financial landscape was projected to be USD \$559 million, broken down as follows: 42% through the recurrent investment, 12% through nationally funded capital projects, 12% through externally funded capital projects, 23% for COVID-19 response financing, and an 11% COVID-19 financing gap. The 2020/21 projected COVID-19 financing gap would have amounted to 3.3% of GDP or 9.5% of the projected budget expenditure for 2020.

GOB Expenditure (US\$)	2019/20	2020/21	Increase/Decrease	Percent Change
Goods & Services	\$116,030,638.00	\$88,716,607.00	\$27,314,032.00	-24%
Subsidies & Transfers	\$90,234,878.00	\$80,279,228.00	\$9,955,650.00	-11%
Capital II Investments	\$47,518,653.00	\$88,540,993.00	\$41,022,341.00	86%
Capital III Investments	\$72,868,973.00	\$54,732,109.00	\$18,136,864.00	-25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$326,653,142.00</b>	<b>\$312,268,937.00</b>	<b>\$14,384,205.00</b>	<b>-04%</b>

TABLE 14: BUDGET SPEECH, FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020/21, APRIL 9, 2021

However, budget presentation by the Hon. Prime Minister to Parliament (April 9, 2021), indicates that most of the recurrent and capital investments to finance the COVID-19 emergency plan during 2020 was financed by decreasing provision of goods & services (USD \$27.3), reducing subsidies/ transfers (USD \$9.9 million), reduction in capital III investment

(USD \$18.2 million) and increasing capital II expenditure for the emergency period by USD 41 million. All of this resulted in net investment in services and capital expenditure declining by USD \$14 million which indicates that in the aggregate 2020 SDG investments declined relative to 2019.



- GOB Recurrent Investments: Education, Health, Human Development, Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Climate Change & Environment
- GOB Internally Financed Capital Investments (Loans & Grants)
- GOB Externally Financed Capital Investments (Loans & Grants)
- COVID-19 Financing (Public, Private & Donor Agencies)
- COVID-19 Funding Gap (Based on 10% GDP)

FIGURE 14: 2020 PROJECTED FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

### Private Sector

It is important to note that investments by the private companies in which the State has majority shareholdings, such as the Port of Belize, the Belize Airport Concession Company, the large utility companies – Belize Telemedia Limited, Belize Electricity Limited, Belize Water Services Limited – and the Development Finance Corporation are not included in the Government of Belize’s capital investment budget. These investments are substantial, equating to more than 50% of all Government of Belize’s capital investment budget, and have direct development outcomes linked to the SDGs. There is a need, therefore, to analyse the contribution of private sector investments to achieving the SDGs.

Remittance is another important source of SDG financing for the poor and vulnerable population in coping with their socioeconomic challenges. In 2019, remittances amounted to roughly USD \$45.6 or an estimated 1.3% of GDP. For 2020, remittances increased to USD \$59.2 million (29.8% increase). Foreign direct investment in Belize for the period 2007-2012 averaged USD \$98 million (4.8% of GDP) with that for 2012 being USD \$195 million.

	Average		Level of Foreign Direct Investment					Average
	2000 - 2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2007 - 2012
<b>FDI</b>	\$78,000,000	\$150,000,000	\$150,000,000	\$113,000,000	\$100,000,000	\$99,000,000	\$195,000,000	\$98,000,000
<b>GDP</b>	-	\$1,290,550,000	\$1,368,650,000	\$1,336,950,000	\$1,397,000,000	\$1,486,700,000	\$1,573,650,000	-
<b>GDP Ratio</b>	-	11.6%	11.0%	8.5%	7.2%	6.7%	12.4%	9.5%

TABLE 15: ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC)

### Government of Belize Recurrent SDG Financing

In the absence of a Development Finance Assessment for Belize that explicitly assesses which government expenditures directly map to the achievement of SDG goals, this analysis attributes the financing of SDG objectives by ministry. Specifically, the following sectors are assumed to be supportive of SDG goals: Health, Human Development, Education, Youth, Sports and Culture; Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Environment, Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Solid Waste; Public goods and services provided by these ministries directly and indirectly address the following SDGs: Zero Hunger, No Poverty, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Climate Action, Life below Water, Life on Land, and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Belize's budget allocation for the abovementioned ministries were projected to increase from USD \$222 million (37.5% of the total recurrent budget) in 2019, to \$233 million (38.5% of the total) in 2020 (Pre-COVID-19 scenario).

The fact that limited impact of government investment on SDG progress is being realized may be attributed to the following factors:

Programme scope may be too broad/horizontally spread and not targeted to the most vulnerable population. There is urgent need to consolidate data of all beneficiaries, particularly, the 80,000 plus Unemployment Relief Program applicants into a social registry to better target social protection programs and reduce leakage of safety net benefits to non-poor individuals. Some estimates put this leakage at around 25% of the social protection programs (IDB).

Lack of efficiency and high overhead costs. (For example, the September 2019 Labour Force Survey, rates the average public sector salary, at USD \$840 /month, as the highest in the Belizean economy). The

ratio of public wage bill to the GDP is the highest among CARICOM countries, with the ratio being 48% in 2019 and reaching 63% in 2020; this ratio is expected to decrease to 52% during 2021/2022 on account of a 10% salary reduction and increment freeze for public officers. This results in priority spending for essential services and goods being crowded out.

Lack of ownership and nationalization of the SDGs into the national budget process and at municipal levels may also be partly responsible for not seeing synergies among the SDGs interaction.

### Government of Belize Capital Investments

Domestically financed investment projects are assumed to be supportive of SDG attainment since they contribute to the improvement of service delivery across multiple sectors as well as to the infrastructure development needed for economic growth. For 2019, this type of capital investment amounted to USD \$40 million, representing 6.2% of the overall budget expenditure. Before COVID-19, the 2020 domestically financed capital investment had been projected to be USD \$69.3 million. This significant increase (72.5%) over the previous year can be attributed to 2020 being an election year and therefore not representative. In 2019, public investments funded through internationally sourced loans and grants accounted for USD\$64.2 million (9.9% of the overall budget expenditure). In 2020, parliament approved USD\$68.9 million for externally funded capital projects (pre-COVID-19 crisis), which again constituted 9.9% of the overall budget expenditure.

Externally Funded Capital SDG Investments (Excludes COVID-19 Support)	2020/2021	2021/2022
Donor SDG Directly Related Investment (Loans/Grants)	PRE-COVID-19 ESTIMATES (US\$)	
(Infrastructure, Economic Services, Poverty/Social Protection, Public Administration)		
United Nations (Excludes COVID-19 Support for 2020/21)	\$3,554,500	\$2,377,000
Inter-American Development Bank	\$21,515,795	\$29,401,037
International Bank for Reconstruction & Development	\$3,350,000	\$1,596,450
Caribbean Development Bank	\$16,015,774	\$19,394,032
European Union	\$750,000	-
World Bank	-	-
Republic of China (Taiwan)	\$6,256,903	\$7,500,000
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries	\$4,000,000	\$2,600,000
United Kingdom/DIFD	\$3,500,000	\$10,500,000
Central American Bank for Economic Integration	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Other External Donors	\$3,850,000	\$2,500,000
Other Domestic Donors	\$3,010,000	\$1,800,000
<b>Sub-Total SDG Direct Related Donor Investments</b>	<b>\$67,302,972</b>	<b>\$79,168,519</b>
<b>Other Donor Investments</b>	<b>\$1,551,125</b>	<b>\$2,075,625</b>
<b>Total Donor Financing for Belize</b>	<b>\$68,854,097</b>	<b>\$81,244,144</b>

TABLE 16: MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: PRE-COVID-19 PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENT PROJECTS

The three main external financing sources as projected for fiscal year 2020/2021 were the Inter-American Development Bank with USD \$21.5 million, the Caribbean Development Bank with USD \$16.0 million and the Republic of China Taiwan with USD \$6.3 million.

According to government sources, the United Nations donor investment was projected to be USD \$3.544 million, of which USD \$2.2 million was attributed to an IFAD project to support resilient rural agriculture, which commenced implementation in 2019. This monetary estimation underrepresents the extent of the UN

investment towards SDG implementation in Belize. A good amount of the UN's support to SDGs is in terms of technical support and advisory services to Government and the sectors.

### COVID-19 Financing 2020-2021

Belize's response to the social, economic, and health crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic focused on providing social protection to vulnerable families and economic relief to those who lost their livelihood due to the collapse of the tourism industry, while simultaneously addressing the containment of the pandemic and provision of health services.

Timeframe	Socio-Economic Response & Recovery Plan (GOB & Donors)	Public/Private (US\$)
April 20 to December 20	GOB unemployment relief I to support unemployed on account of COVID-19/long-term employment (44,552 Applicants at \$150 bi-weekly for 12 weeks)	\$20,048,400
	Direct food assistance support to Belizeans that are facing hardships	\$7,250,000
	Small business grants/soft loans (3%) to encourage firm to remain operational	\$3,625,000
	GOB unemployment relief II to support jobless Belizeans on account of COVID-19 (42,575 Applicants at \$150/bi-weekly for 12 weeks)	\$19,158,750
	3 <sup>rd</sup> and future unemployment phases (November 2020 to December 2021) being developed	-
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>\$50,082,150</b>
Ongoing 2020 – 2021 April 20 to December 21	GOB retrofit clinics to prepare for COVID-19 patients, procure PPEs, ventilators, testing and protective equipment and build the nation's response capacity	\$3,000,000
	UN system COVID-19 support	\$4,000,000
	GOB loan support (6% through DFC) for tourism sector to assist with COVID-19	\$2,500,000
	World Bank direct relief to those farmers suffering multiple hardships from two years of prolonged drought conditions and COVID-19 imposed setbacks	\$8,000,000
	World Bank support to the BOOST Program to support vulnerable populations	\$6,500,000
	IDB unemployment COVID-19 unemployment relief (26,000 beneficiaries)	\$12,000,000
	World Bank BOOST Program support (13,000 household beneficiaries)	\$12,400,000
	Republic of China (Taiwan) for the Health Sector	\$1,000,000
	United Kingdom/Canadian Government	\$271,135
	United States Government	\$300,000
	European Union for the Health Sector through PAHO (Euros \$500,000)	\$595,000
	Belize Electricity Limited	\$500,000
	Lord Ashcroft Foundation for the Health Sector	\$5,000,000
	Barry Bowen Group	\$250,000
	GOB support to the Health Sector – Surge/Containment of COVID-19	\$7,500,000
	ROC (Taiwan) COVID-19 Safety Equipment for Fishing Cooperatives	\$375,000
GOB Road Rehabilitation on account of ETA/IOTA Hurricanes	\$4,500,000	
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>\$68,691,135</b>
<b>Total Investments</b>		<b>\$118,773,285</b>

TABLE 17: DRAFT UN COVID-19 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESPONSE PLAN & RECOVERY

It is projected that more than USD \$118.7 million will have been invested during the period April 2020 to December 2021 in addressing the COVID-19 crisis. To date, public expenditure on phases I and II (May-October 2020) of the unemployment program amounted to more than US\$39 million. Belize secured USD \$12.4 million in loan funding from the World Bank for the BOOST (Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation) programme which is expected to benefit 13,000 households. Additionally, the IDB has allocated USD \$12 million for unemployment relief that is expected to reach 26,000 beneficiaries. The remaining funds of the USD \$118.7 million were for the health sector except for USD \$8 million from the World Bank designed to assist farmers with the drought impact of 2019.

### SDG Financing Gap

Government's data for the period January – June 2020,<sup>108</sup> show tax revenues reducing dramatically by 20% and the expenditure increasing by 3.3% relative to the period January – June 2019. For the period April – June 2020, government revenues fell by 28% during

the period of the two months lockdown.<sup>109</sup> The dramatic decrease in revenue coupled with the pandemic-related increased expenditure, made it necessary for the government to increase its domestic debt. The sharp rise in Central Government's gross financing needs led to a 12.1% growth in the outstanding public sector debt to USD \$2,092.6 million in 2020. In turn, the debt-to-GDP ratio increased by 28.4 percentage points to 122.6% at year end. Over the 12-month period, Central Government's domestic debt grew by 19.0% to USD \$656.6 million (38.5% of GDP), while the public sector's external debt increased by 9.2% to \$1,436.0 million (84.1% of GDP).<sup>110</sup> **The net result is that 35.6% of the national budget during the period January – June 2020 was debt financed and the primary deficit for the period January – December 2020 amounted to USD \$139 million (8.25% of GDP).** The main foreign creditors for the Government includes the Bank of New York (super bond) with 38%, the Government of Venezuela with 15%, CDB with 12%, and Republic of Tai Wan and IDB with 10% of the foreign debt respectively for an aggregate of 84% of total foreign debt.

<sup>108</sup> Central Bank of Belize, Quarterly Review, vol. 44, No. 2 (June), Belize City, pp 3-4.

<sup>109</sup> For the first half (April – September) of the 2020/2021 fiscal year Central Government operations yielded an overall deficit of 5.5% of GDP, as revenues plunged by 25.1% in tandem with output losses. (3rd Quarterly Report 2020, Central Bank of Belize)

<sup>110</sup> Central Bank January 2021 Monthly Report

Fiscal Year (US\$)	Revised 2019/20	Preliminary 2020/21	Submitted 2021/22
<b>Tax Revenue (Recurrent)</b>	\$571,136,861	\$387,576,585	\$442,210,730
<b>Non-Tax Revenue</b>	\$48,064,765	\$38,664,603	\$40,519,257
<b>Capital Revenue</b>	\$2,624,759	\$8,144,763	\$2,683,200
<b>Grants</b>	\$10,223,519	\$15,452,174	\$33,680,739
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$583,985,138</b>	<b>\$449,838,123</b>	<b>\$519,093,926</b>
<b>Recurrent Expenditure</b>	\$543,551,142	\$470,502,528	\$452,971,686
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>	\$127,034,695	\$147,422,414	\$149,281,236
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$670,585,837</b>	<b>\$617,924,942</b>	<b>\$602,252,922</b>
<b>Recurrent Surplus (Deficit)</b>	\$27,585,719	(\$82,925,943)	(\$10,760,956)
<b>Debt Service</b>	\$62,823,514	\$28,135,538	\$34,172,453
<b>Primary Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$23,777,185</b>	<b>\$139,951,282</b>	<b>\$48,986,544</b>
<b>As % of GDP</b>	-1.24%	-8.51%	-2.90%
<b>Overall Surplus (Deficit)</b>	(\$86,600,699)	(\$168,086,819)	(\$83,158,997)
<b>As % of GDP</b>	-4.53%	-10.21%	-4.93%
<b>Amortization</b>	\$48,627,176	\$38,084,827	\$54,684,100
<b>Financing (Borrowing)</b>	<b>(\$135,227,875)</b>	<b>(\$206,171,646)</b>	<b>(\$137,843,107)</b>
<b>Nominal GDP</b>	\$1,913,500,000	\$1,645,500,000	\$1,686,500,000

TABLE 18: PRIME MINISTER BRICENO BUDGET PRESENTATION TO PARLIAMENT, APRIL 9, 2021



The following table shows a summary of Government's proposed budget for 2021/2022. It shows a 2.4% contraction in expenditure relative to 2020 and a 14% revenue increase and more than doubling of grant funds. This will generate increase revenue and/or reduced expenditure to the tune of US\$84.93 million. However, even under these austerity measures, 23% of the budget will still be financed with borrowed funds, 55% of salaries & pension will be funded with borrowed funds while this category of expenditure will consume 52% of all tax revenue. Public sector financing will continue to face major challenges.

GOB Fiscal Year	Rev. 2019	Pre. 2020	Pro. 2021	Income/Savings 2021
<b>Tax Revenue ('000,000)</b>	\$573.80	\$434.40	\$485.40	\$51.03
<b>Grants</b>	\$10.22	\$15.45	\$33.68	\$18.23
<b>Total Expenditure ('000,000)</b>	\$670.59	\$617.90	\$602.30	\$15.67
<b>GDP ('000,000)</b>	\$1,913.50	\$1,645.50	\$1,686.50	-
<b>Financing Needs ('000,000)</b>	\$135.00	\$206.00	\$138.00	-
<b>As % of GOB Budget</b>	-20%	-33%	-23%	-
<b>Emoluments &amp; Pensions ('000,000)</b>	\$274.50	\$273.40	\$252.30	-
<b>Emoluments &amp; Pension as % of Financing</b>	49%	75%	55%	-
<b>Emoluments &amp; Pension as % of Tax Revenue</b>	48%	63%	52%	-
<b>Budget Adjustment 2021/2022 ('000,000)</b>				<b>\$84.93 USD\$</b>

TABLE 19: PRIME MINISTER BRICENO, BUDGET SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT, APRIL 9, 2021

Henceforth, maintaining current levels of investment in COVID-19 mitigating measures and meeting the financing gap in SDG investment will require looking beyond the public sector. It will require greater collaboration and partnership between the public and private sectors, at both the domestic and global levels, to attract the needed investments and grant funding. Only by getting the private sector to see opportunities in SDG financing will the investment gap be closed. The following financing alternatives are being proposed:

Minimize revenue loss through tax evasion, corruption, and other practices in the departments of tax collection, lands, immigration, and customs. It is estimated that more than 6% of GDP in increased

revenue could be generated through this process which would translate to more than US\$114 million in additional budget resources for SDG funding.

Attract greater Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to contribute to closing the SDG financing gap and employ strategies to align the benefits of these investments with the SDG goals. Supported by effective public-private partnerships and improvements to the national investment environment, an increase in foreign direct investment to 7-10% of GDP would be a major contribution to SDG financing. This would then allow the public sector and donor agencies to focus on those SDG areas that have difficulty in attracting private finance due to their risk/return combination, a primary consideration for investors.

Attract greater local investment, particularly, in the infrastructure sector. This would require having a more favourable investment climate for local investors. It would also require increasing the savings rate which is currently only 10% of GDP, just sufficient to cover 50% of the country's capital formation.

Facilitate and encourage the establishment of a capital market for availability of financing instruments. So far, this type of investment financing for Belize has been limited to a few enterprises such as central government, municipal bodies, and the utility companies, among others. Reserve pension funds from the Social Security Board exceeded US\$250 million.<sup>111</sup>

Improve prioritization and targeting of government and donor resources directed at the unparalleled ambition of the 17 SDGs particularly as it relates to vulnerable populations being left behind. This focus will be essential in this era of declining development donor funds for SDGs implementation.

Use development concessions (reward) regime to attract investments that are socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and in support of SDG priority accelerators. This same reward regime should be used to attract investments within poor communities.

Target UN and private donor funds to assist in mobilizing and leveraging greater financial flows for SDG investment from the private sector, multilateral and bilateral agencies.

Mobilize greater private sector participation in public infrastructure and services so that government resources funds be focused on social services (education, health), social protection and natural resource management.

Explore alternative sources of financing and development assistance for further SDG advancement such as blended concessional finance, climate finance and South-South/Triangular cooperation and capacity building. This is imperative given that Belize is being hindered from accessing development finance due to its categorization as a "Medium Income country." This categorization has also given rise to less flows in the form of Official Development Assistance. Furthermore, the high public debt/GDP profile of 123.6% (January 2021) provides little fiscal space for further borrowing.

Mainstream SDG objectives and targets into the government budget process to ensure that public sector investments are aligned with the SDGs and that progress towards Agenda 2030 is tracked.

Improve on public sector investment productivity (measured as the output per unit of dollar invested), which should strengthen the correlation between public sector investment and economic growth. In this regard, Belize lags its CARICOM peers by 17% .<sup>112</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Social Security Board, Annual Report 2018 (Belmopan, 2019).

<sup>112</sup> International Monetary Fund, Belize Technical Assessment Report – Public Investment Management Assessment. IMF Country Report No. 20/221 (Washington D.C., 2020).

# Conclusion

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# Conclusion

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## Key Challenges and Opportunities for Advancing the 2030 Agenda

As the preceding thematic analyses demonstrate, Belize faces many interconnected and intersecting challenges that threaten achievement of the 2030 Agenda. From among these multiple challenges, Belize must prioritize and rationalise those with the most wide-ranging impacts across all SDG's and which, when addressed, will accelerate Belize's progress toward sustainable development, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

To accelerate and advance SDG implementation in Belize, addressing the following challenges identified would have the highest impact.

**Belize's economic stagnation impedes the reduction of poverty and access to decent work, two of the most significant factors in achieving the 2030 Agenda.** This challenge is now greatly exacerbated by the economic losses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Belize's current economic model, characterized by high dependence on natural resource-based productivity, with limited external markets, has made it highly vulnerable to natural disasters and exogenous shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the closure of international ports of entry and many businesses, effectively halted the tourism industry, upon which the Belizean economy had become increasingly dependent. The regressive taxation structure, unhealthy debt to GDP ratio, and high operational overheads for government, leave little fiscal space for Belize to absorb economic shocks or invest in supporting economic diversification, the growth of MSMEs and innovation. Economic transformation strategies that address these limiting factors are urgently needed to create a robust and a thriving

economy, which supports SDG progress and provides increased opportunities for those population groups, especially women, youth, Southside Belize City communities, rural and indigenous populations who are left furthest behind.

Given Belize's economic reliance on the natural resource base, threats to ecosystem services and biodiversity must be a central consideration in the analysis of economic vulnerability and in response measures. Primary threats in Belize include deforestation for agricultural expansion, unsustainable development practices, unsustainable harvesting, poaching, population pressures, and pollution, among others. Notwithstanding Belize's commitment to international environmental treaties and progress in establishing a national legal framework for responsible stewardship of our natural resources, systemic weaknesses and gaps in enforcement of environmental legislation and inconsistencies in national policies constitute threats to Belize's natural resources and consequently to its economic prosperity.

**The high poverty level in Belize is a dominant driver of inequality and social exclusion, none of which are adequately addressed by the limited social protection system.** Unfortunately, the economic impacts of COVID-19 are projected to increase the poverty rate from the 2009 measure of 41.3% to 55%, which imperils the ability of more than half of the country's population to meet their basic needs. The current social protection system, which includes conditional cash transfers and the National Health Insurance system, is already insufficient and lacks a legislative framework to establish underlying principles and ensure consistent implementation. Therefore, even as

the need grows, Belize's diminished fiscal space constrains public investment in social protection and reduces the likelihood that the government will be able to strengthen the social protection system in the short- to medium-term.

In Belize, income disparity is highly correlated to other inequalities and vulnerabilities. Consequently, poverty has contributed to the high level of inequality that exists in access to health care (including sexual and reproductive health and mental health services), land, education, food and nutrition, decent work, and participation in governance. These inequalities intersect to create complex socioeconomic barriers which are increasingly difficult for families and individuals to overcome. It is imperative, therefore, that Investments to recover from COVID-19 do not focus strictly on economic indicators but include strategies to address the structural and systemic root causes of poverty and inequality. Despite the fiscal challenges, a social protection floor is necessary to ensure that vulnerable families can meet their basic needs.

**Belize's extreme vulnerability to climate change and climate-related disasters present an ongoing and future risk which threatens most sectors of the economy.** Furthermore, it also poses a direct threat to the infrastructure and residents of coastal population centres, where over 50% of the Belizean populace reside. Inadequate housing in coastal communities and urban areas increase the threat, devastation, and potential losses to the poorest families. Furthermore, climate-related disasters damage tourism and agricultural infrastructure, as well as the marine and terrestrial resources on which these sectors are based. This challenge affects the attainment of SDGs 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, and 15, and is directly impacted by international progress in attaining SDG 13. Although Belize has implemented institutional mechanisms to address resilience to climate change, it lacks local mitigation, recovery, and resiliency plans for the most vulnerable areas that would empower communities to

address these risks effectively. Climate resilient planning, climate smart practices, disaster risk preparedness and climate risk mitigation must be implemented countrywide and at the community level, with special attention to the most vulnerable populations and sectors.

The UN could support increased and improved climate resilience in the country through strengthened inter-agency cooperation with the Belize-based Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), which provides relevant policy advice and guidelines to CARICOM and undertakes several regional research initiatives related to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

**Inequalities which constrain access to quality academic, vocational, and continuing education** have a crippling effect on Belize's achievement of the SDG goals. Since education is a foundational factor in both individual and national development, lack of access to quality education deepens inequalities in other critical areas including access to decent work, food security, access to quality health care, gender equality and freedom from poverty. Although Belize allocates approximately 25% of its national recurrent budget to education, due to structural inequalities in service delivery, the poorest and most marginalized communities still confront multiple barriers in accessing the education opportunities that could improve their quality of life. Whereas participation in primary school in Belize is near universal, it drops to 50% of the school-aged population at the secondary school level. This low participation rate translates into a dearth of skills in the labour market. Labour force data indicates that only 17% of the labour force have a tertiary level education and only 25% have a secondary school education. Lack of access to education therefore hampers the development and diversification of Belize's economy, especially in sectors where specialized skills are needed, such as the digital economy. Reversing these inequalities and

inequities requires the implementation of education policies which particularly address equity, ensuring that children, youth and adults from the most marginalized populations have access to high quality education with wrap-around services to protect from adversities which threaten their participation in learning and employment. Multisectoral strategies, are needed which increase education and economic opportunities while strengthening and diversifying the skill sets available to support existing and novel economic sectors. Tailored strategies are needed to ensure access to relevant, quality education for children and adolescents living in poverty and in violent neighbourhoods, remote rural populations, indigenous people, women and girls, and children with special needs.

**Extremely high levels of crime and violence in Belize threaten the right to life, quality of life, access to services, economic growth, democratic governance, and peace.** Crime and violence are in turn driven by multiple deprivations, structural inequalities, and social exclusion including poverty, hunger, low education attainment, lack of employment opportunities, and a weak criminal justice system.<sup>113</sup> Whereas violent crime may be considered a symptom of other social and economic ills, due to its severity in Belize over multiple decades, it has become a causal factor that impedes economic prosperity and threatens human rights. It also deepens inequalities as whole communities are stigmatized and children from violent neighbourhoods are placed at extreme risk, from birth, of social exclusion and of being left furthest behind.<sup>114</sup> A comprehensive analysis of the cost of crime is needed to describe and quantify the full impact on Belize's development, but it is known that violent crime and the perception of violence have detrimental effects on urban commerce and the tourism sector, increase the cost of doing business, and exact a large toll on government spending in policing, health, prison costs and judicial processes. Mortality and morbidity are the human costs of

violence but also represent a loss of economic productivity. The complexity of violence and violent crime mean that these phenomena are significant impediments to the achievement of the SDGs; therefore, with the high levels of crime and violence in Belize, the realization of the 2030 Agenda will depend on improved citizen security and a reduction in all forms of violence.

**Corruption, as well as the high perception of corruption, is currently the greatest challenge to efficient, effective, and equitable governance** in Belize, and therefore a primary challenge in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Corruption compromises the advancement of equitable development, increases inequalities, diverts scarce public funds from much needed development programmes, impedes economic growth, and creates inefficiencies in governance, which reduce the possible positive impacts of bona fide public investments. Given the economic stagnation; unequal distribution of wealth; high levels of crime and international drug-trafficking; and limited fiscal space in Belize, failure to address corruption will significantly impede progress towards prosperity, peace, justice, and strong institutions. Furthermore, State corruption will undermine investments in all SDGs. Given the current economic crisis, great public investment is needed to build back better, so the leakage of public funds would be highly detrimental to advancing sustainable development. Furthermore, services to the most vulnerable may be compromised by clientelism which favours partisan supporters over those who need it most. Corruption also interferes with Belize's fight against crime and international drug trafficking. To protect public investments in Belize's sustainable development and to ensure the rule of law, Belize will need to implement the necessary legislative reforms and institutions to eliminate corruption.

**The global COVID-19 pandemic has severely exacerbated Belize's difficulties related to its economic health particularly immunization, narrow**

**fiscal space, and social well-being, with particularly severe impacts on socially excluded population groups.** In addition to the extreme stress on the health sector and the increasing levels of morbidity and mortality, the longer term social and economic impacts from COVID-19 are likely to decelerate, and may even reverse, progress towards sustainable development. Recent data from MoHW indicates that routine immunization coverage dropped dramatically from an average of 95-98% in 2019, to 63-73% in 2020, which could trigger life-threatening diseases in children. It will be essential therefore to leverage partnerships to mobilize additional resources, and to adopt new approaches to economic growth and governance.

**Food Security remain an economic and health issue.**

Food is available in the markets; however, Belize's high poverty rate and increasing inequality are making it difficult for low-income, vulnerable populations to procure food. Another food security issue is that unhealthy diets have caused an increase in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Roughly 40% of all deaths in the country is on account of Non-communicable disease directly correlated to diet. Stunting rate remains high with the most impacted population being the poor and indigenous population. Food security was highlighted by stakeholders during the consultation process.

**Access to justice for children and adolescents:**

Children and adolescents exposed to violence, exploitation, and crime in their communities, as well as delayed access to justice due to systemic inefficiencies and resource gaps. This challenge was mentioned by the People working group and also highlighted through the risk areas on Justice & Rule of Law. Vulnerable groups have limited access to legal representation resulting in a high proportion of incarcerated persons being unsentenced detainees awaiting trial, lack of alternatives to imprisonment or

court action with particular risks of violation of children rights, and incarceration of children and adolescents. Furthermore, low budget allocation for the Judiciary impedes necessary improvements needed to facilitate access to justice.

**To continue its path towards the 2030 Agenda, in the context of a global recession, Belize will need to be innovative and strategic in finding opportunities that are realistically available and that will catalyse movement across sectors and in multiple dimensions.**

**Building back better from COVID-19 impacts.**

Notwithstanding its devastating effect on the global economy, COVID-19 offers a unique opportunity to build back better. The unprecedented shock caused by the pandemic demands a strategic, efficient, and streamlined recovery, founded on the difficult lessons learned about the fragility of the economy and social systems. By employing the Building Back Better strategy, Belize can invest incoming national and international aid for COVID-19 recovery and response to rectify inefficiencies, transform the economy, strengthen social systems, and build resilient communities. Central to this strategic thrust to build back better, is the reframing and reprioritization of TVET as one element of youth-involved crime mitigation and strengthening human capital. This includes taking stock of the current TVET policy and mechanism, with a focus on reframing industry-related competencies, technical and practical skills and on improving distance learning design, methodologies, and assessment to respond to shocks and disruptions in education.

Furthermore, the country's unplanned reliance on digital technologies for work, schooling, commerce and socializing during COVID-19 lockdowns, has pushed Belize to innovate and find new efficiencies in patterns of production, consumption, transportation, and doing business, taking advantage of Belize's sizeable investment in digital infrastructure .<sup>115</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Belize Telemedia Limited, Go Beyond Your Imagination – Annual Report 2018/2019 (Belize City, 2019).

**Tapping the economic potential of ecological services and the blue and green economies.** Belize has built its economy on its abundant natural resources, primarily through traditional extraction and use. Given the global recognition of the value of Belize's ecological services, the protection and sustainable use of these natural resources become saleable commodities. Debt for nature swaps, sale of carbon credits, and protection of unique natural heritage sites can make significant contributions towards economic recovery.

Additionally, Belize's high biodiversity and the high percentage of land and seas under environmental protection, can be the foundation of eco-friendly economic growth of the green and blue economy. This can include not only protection of resources but the development of niche markets for value-added "green" and "blue" products, which give higher returns for lower ecological impacts. Belize has already been a pioneer in eco-tourism, the protection of carbon sinks, sustainable harvesting of forest products, and establishment of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Greater investment in product development, marketing, and innovation is needed to expand these blue and green industries. In this context, Belize's natural resource base is an economic boon in a time of severe economic challenges. Their protection and sustainable management therefore are a prerequisite for Belize to sustainably develop its blue and green economies.

In this regard, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) offers a unique opportunity for Belize to step up investments in ocean science and strengthen its efforts to achieve SDG 14, using the World Heritage Site as a place for the application of technological innovations to monitor and counter the impacts of climate change (such as coral bleaching) on coastal and marine environments.

**Partnerships between government, private sector, and**

**civil society agencies, both national and international.** COVID-19 is a global phenomenon that has reinforced our interdependencies and shared vulnerabilities. Partnerships will be essential for all nations to recover from this pandemic. For Belize, national and international partnerships can provide the leverage to mobilize a diverse array of resources both from domestic and foreign sources. Civil society organizations in Belize have demonstrated their value as drivers for change in anti-corruption efforts and as service providers in the social and environmental sectors, filling service and capacity gaps, often in partnership with the government. Public-private partnerships for sustainable development can engage the private sector in achieving SDGs by creating win-win scenarios that are beneficial to their business growth. Institutional arrangements that enable effective coordination and collaboration across sectors are critical elements of success. This must include meaningful spaces for social inclusion and active involvement of both state and non-state actors. Belize should prioritize the development of an integrated national financing framework to operationalize its next medium-term sustainable development plan. This framework will serve as a launchpad to guide resource mobilization efforts on a deliberate and steady path towards sustainable development. Resource mobilization and financing should aim to procure more targeted donor investments through parallel international efforts. This can be supported by international mechanisms such as the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), which is already active in Belize.

**Momentum of recent transition to new political administration.** Parliamentary elections in November 2020 ushered in a new political administration. The coincidence of the preparation of the new Cooperation Framework for Belize, the presentation of the new administration's first budget in April 2021, and current cooperation between the Government of Belize and international partners in COVID-19 response and



recovery create a unique opportunity to leverage the momentum of government transition and align national and international priorities.

A cross-cutting challenge encountered throughout this analysis is the lack of vital data to assess the status and trends of SDG progress. This data gap impedes the ability of the government and development partners to refine investment strategies to target intractable development challenges and confront emerging issues. Specifically, Belize lacks data on more than one-half of the SDG targets/indicators. Critical gaps identified in the development of the CCA include the following:

There is no recent National Poverty Assessment although poverty in Belize was measured at 41.3% at that time of the last CPA in 2009, indicating a widespread and crippling deprivation of basic needs and human rights. This assessment is urgently needed and should include a Multidimensional Poverty Assessment that would allow for deepened analysis of the structural impediments that inhibit the most vulnerable and marginalized populations from attaining a decent quality of life.

The most recent population census was conducted in 2010. Since the census is a fundamental dataset upon which many other analyses and datasets are based, this gap compromises the accuracy and currency of many national assessments and indices.

Although it is widely recognized that there is corruption in governance, no comprehensive and independent study exists that can fully describe and quantify this phenomenon.

There are insufficient studies on the status of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, to allow for development actions tailored to addressing the inequalities affecting them.

## Groups of Persons Left Furthest Behind

The guiding principle, Leave No One Behind (LNOB) considers the intersectionality of five factors – discrimination, geography, demographic status, vulnerability to shocks, and governance – requiring further analysis of the ways in which these interact to exclude certain population groups. The thematic analyses in this CCA have identified the following groups of persons as those left furthest behind:

**Migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees** – Belize is both a transit and destination country for migrants and asylum seekers. Owing to the law, asylum seekers cannot work while awaiting the results of their claims. Additionally, Belize does not have a dedicated immigration detention facility. Consequently, migrants and persons with international protection needs (including refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons) may be treated as criminal offenders and sent to prison if they enter the country irregularly. Migrants and asylum seekers are unlikely to seek and access basic social assistance and health services and have limited access to formal employment. These constraining factors might force them underground making it harder to reach them to assure them of their rights and basic living standards.

**Children and adolescents** – Within each vulnerable group in Belize, children are the most vulnerable. They are disproportionately affected by poverty, hunger, geographic and ethnic discrimination, and violence. Prior to COVID-19, children were already the least covered population by social protection programmes. The pandemic has compounded their vulnerability with school closures, reduced learning outcomes, loss of access to school meals, physical fitness activities, and mental health services. COVID-19 restrictions have also increased children's vulnerability to violence, abuse, exploitation, child marriage and child labour.<sup>116</sup> Whereas Belize has national legal and institutional frameworks to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, cultural norms, social practices,

and parental neglect still support rights violations such as corporal punishment.

**Women and girls** – All girls and women in Belize face pervasive structural and gender inequalities that marginalize them and increase their vulnerability. Women and girls are socially excluded and victimised in various ways depending on age, ethnicity, creed, migration status, level of education and geographical location. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual violence, as well as by human trafficking. The economy is highly gendered such that women's economic rights are persistently constrained by poor participation in the labour market (58.9% versus 81.4% for males and the average for both being 70.1%), although they make up 49.9% of the working age population, bringing with them educational qualifications and achievements. Child marriages and early unions, and early motherhood, often impede prosperity and well-being for women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups. Women are severely under-represented in political life hence they lack voice and presence to effect policy formulation and decisions. In the context of the COVID-19, it will be particularly important to ensure that women have access to employment opportunities and receive social assistance to care for their families.

#### **Boys and male youth in high-crime urban communities**

– Gang-related crimes makes Belize City one of the deadliest places in the region.<sup>117</sup> Males, including boys are disproportionately affected by gang crime and violence as both perpetrators and victims. Gayle et al. describes systemic social exclusion that make boys in poor, urban areas highly susceptible to early gang recruitment which limits their life outcomes while dramatically decreasing their life expectancy. Boys in this environment tend to develop Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), come into conflict with the law, and drop out of school. They also experience profiling and brutality by police officers.<sup>118</sup> Gender expectations,

also influence societal expectations of boys and males, these may exacerbate their vulnerabilities.

**Residents of remote, rural areas and in the Toledo District in particular.** – Remote populations have reduced access to education, health, transportation, digital and social services. Poverty and indigent poverty are highest amongst the Maya, most of whom live in rural Toledo. The highest poverty levels are in Toledo and Corozal Districts. Districts with the highest multidimensional poverty indices are Toledo (by far with highest percentage of severe poverty and vulnerable people), followed by Stann Creek. Rural populations are more likely to experience isolation when transportation networks are interrupted by hurricanes, flooding, and climate related disasters. In the context of COVID-19, rural populations suffer the negative impacts from lack of access to government social services, public utilities and infrastructure including digital services.

The aforementioned challenges and opportunities identified in this CCA presents a pathway if addressed, to put on track Belize's efforts to accelerate actions and its commitment to the people on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

<sup>116</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, "Children cannot afford another year of school disruption", Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore, 12 January 2021.

<sup>117</sup> Herbert Gayle, Virginia Hampton and Nelma Mortis, Like Bush Fire: Male Social Participation and Violence in Urban Belize.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

## Progress Towards the Achievement of the SDG Target

### Technical Notes on National SDG Assessment

For each SDG, the status, or level of challenge, was derived from the Sustainable Development Report 2020 with complementary data from the National SDG Progress Assessment Matrix. Weights and corresponding colour codes were assigned to each of four categories as follows:

#### Status/Challenge

- SDG achieved: 100
- Challenges remain: 75
- Significant challenges: 50
- Major challenges remain: 25
- Information unavailable

#### Progress Trend for Each SDG

↑ On Track or maintain SDG achievement (100):  
 $87.5 < X \leq 100$

↗ Moderately improving (75):  
 $62.5 < X \leq 87.5$

→ Stagnating (50):  
 $37.5 < X \leq 62.5$

↓ Decreasing (25):  
 $X \leq 37.5$


Trend Information unavailable

The trend determination for each target was derived from the trend ranking in the National SDG progress assessment matrix; numerical ranking at the target levels were 100, 75, 50 and 25. The aggregate trend for each SDG was then determined by summing up the target trends for which data is available and using the mean to determine aggregate ranking.

Performance at the SDG level was then determined by the arithmetic average of the challenge and trend.

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
 <p><b>SDG 1: No Poverty</b> Major Challenge Stagnating</p>	<p>Population Poverty in Belize increased substantially between 2002 and 2009 from 34.1% to 41.3% (21% increase) while the indigent rate increased by 46.2% from 10.8% to 15.8%. Household poverty increased by 24.5% from 24.5% to 31%. Household indigent rate increased by 25% from 7.5% to 10.4%. Poverty disproportionately affects children 0-15 years at 50%, the Mayas with 68%, those residing in the Corozal and Toledo districts and is negatively correlated to level of education. (CPA 2009). The increasing trend in poverty, prior to COVID-19, is being attributed to the stagnation of the economy, stagnating GDP/capita, and wages. The OPHI Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), based on MICS data for 2011 and 2015-16, indicates that between those years the MPI for Belize has practically remained the same (0.018 and 0.017 respectively), but estimate (SERP, SIEA/UNDP), indicate that substantial increase is expected because of COVID-19 on livelihoods, income, and nutrition.</p> <p>Coverage of social protection programmes has increased in Belize in response to COVID-19, however, it still is quite insufficient to cover all the vulnerable population in need. The low coverage of Social Protection for children is particularly concerning as they are the least covered, but the most affected by poverty. A substantial increase in SP public investment for children is therefore needed, even more so to counter the devastating multidimensional impacts of COVID-19 (in education, nutrition, etc.).</p> <p>Prior to COVID-19, the country initiated the process of developing a national Social Protection Floor (2018-2019 four national Social Protection conferences, 2020 draft Social Protection Performance and Expenditure Review). This process is critical and has to be resumed as a priority, not only through vertical and horizontal expansion of existing programmes (BOOST/BOOST Plus, BCCAT), but also with substantial increase in public investment and ensuring that a comprehensive SP Floor is put in place, and the country advances quicker towards universal approaches such as Universal Child Benefits (as per ILO-UNICEF policy recommendations from the 2020 draft Social Protection Performance and Expenditure Review). Prior to COVID-19 3.9% of children 0-14, 45% of the 15-64, 56.8% of the 65 and over had BOOST COVERAGE (2020, draft ILO-UNICEF SPER); 30.7% of population covered by National Health Insurance: 8.3% of 0-4 years, 27% of 5-19 years, 43.3% of 20-64 years, 81.7% of the 65 years and over (2020, draft ILO-UNICEF SPER)</p> <p>Annual average loss from hurricanes accounts for US\$7.7 Million or 0.45% of GDP while earthquakes accounts for US\$883,000 or 0.05% of GDP (Belize Hurricanes and Earthquakes Risk Profile, World Bank, 2016.)</p>	<p><b>Target 1.1 Inter-nation Poverty Line Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 1.2 National Poverty Line Moderately improving</b></p> <p><b>Target 1.3 Social Protection Systems/ Measures Pop. Coverage Moderately Improving</b></p> <p><b>Target 1.4 Equal Rights to Economic Resources &amp; Access to Social Services Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 1.5 Build Resilience/ Reduce Exposure of Vulnerable Information not Available</b></p>

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
 <p><b>SDG 2: Zero Hunger</b></p> <p>Challenge remaining On Track</p>	<p>Hunger has a strong link to almost all the SDGs. Undernutrition and food insecurity increase GBV risk and gender inequality (SDG5), it leads to negative coping mechanisms, trapping families in a downwards cycle of poverty (SDG1), has severe impacts on educational outcomes (SDG4) and health (SDG3). It is linked to achieving SDG 8 (Decent work &amp; Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality) and is connected to SDG 13 (Climate Action) as families resort to negative coping mechanisms or increase their vulnerability to natural hazards.</p> <p>Undernutrition in Belize, though relatively low, was on the increase before the COVID-19 Pandemic, going against the trend in the region. The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 is likely to have eroded progress made as unemployment increased, household income and remittances declined, and families cut down on food intake or chose less healthy foods. Low-income household are likely to be the most affected, risking the achievement of “leaving no-one behind.” Expanding social protection systems to address shocks, including the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 is essential to maintain the SDG development gains. While Belize has reduced its prevalence of stunting, it is still higher than the average for the region. Vulnerable groups are the indigenous groups from the Mayan population and those among the poorest socio-economical wealth quintile including children under 5 years of age.</p> <p>Obesity and overweight are moving in upward trends and are an important concern for the country. The socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 is likely to further increase the rates of obesity as families change to less preferred and cheaper high calorie foods. People who are malnourished are more prone to suffering from diseases (communicable and non-communicable), children have lower chances of finishing their primary and secondary education and risk becoming a part of the employed labour force as adolescents. Boys have a higher prevalence of every form of malnutrition in Belize, linking SDG2 and SDG5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Between 2012 and 2019 stunting improved from 19.3% to 15%;</li> <li>o Between 2014 and 2019, malnourishment deteriorated from 5.8% to 7.6%;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target 2.1: End hunger &amp; safe/nutritious food Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target: 2.2 Nutrition, stunting, wasting On track</b></p> <p><b>Target: 2.3: Agriculture Productivity, small-scale food producers Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 2.4: Sustainable Food Production Systems/Resilient Agricultural Practices Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 2.5: Maintain Diversity of seeds, cultivated plants &amp; animals Information Not Available</b></p>

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
 <p><b>SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being</b></p> <p>Challenge Remaining Moderately improving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerning ethnic background – In Indigenous populations, Stunting was seen in 1 in every 3 children while Garifuna populations experienced 14.5% of their population being overweight.</li> </ul> <p>While estimated maternal mortality seems to be decreasing, the reported maternal mortality is fluctuating with an over-all trend towards an increase. This SDG is linked to other SDGs on education, gender equality, poverty, decent work, and economic growth, among others. A negative effect can be expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as lockdowns reduced mobile health visits to the rural communities, and districts with high COVID-19 community transmission.</p> <p>MMR 36/100,000 live births (2017); Births by skilled attendance 96.8% (2016)</p> <p>There is a general downward trend in neonatal and Under – 5-year mortality rate; however, gains in this area could easily be reversed if access to essential child health services such as Immunization is not provided. This SDG is linked to other SDGs on poverty, education of mothers, decent work, and economic growth, etc.</p> <p>Mortality rate, under-5 YEARS (per 1,000 live births) - 13.0 (2018) (14.8 in 2019); Neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) - 8.6 (2018) (7.7 in 2019)</p> <p>With Belize on the brink of malaria elimination and the country also working on the validation of its Elimination of Maternal to Child transmission of HIV (EMTCT) program, it is vital for the country to stay on course despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Close monitoring of this SDG will be required to ensure that previous gains will not be reversed. Other SDGs linked to this are SDGs on education, gender equality, poverty, decent work, and economic growth, among others.</p> <p>New HIV infections (per 1,000 uninfected population)- 0.8; Incidence of tuberculosis (per 100,000 population) - 30 (2018); Malaria incidence (per 1000 population at risk) - &lt; 0.1 (2018);</p>	<p><b>Target 3.1: Maternal Mortality (Less than 70/ 100,000) – Moderately Improving</b></p> <p><b>Target 3.2: Deaths of new-borns/ 1000 births and deaths under 5 years / 1000 births – Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 3.3: Communicable Disease (Malaria, hepatitis, AIDS, TB etc.) - Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 3.4: Mortality from non-communicable disease &amp; Mental Health- Moderately Increasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 3.5: Substance Abuse – Stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 3.6: Reduce Traffic Accidents by 50% - Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 3.7: Sexual Reproductive Health Care Services – Stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 3.8: Universal Health Coverage – Stagnating</b></p>


GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
	<p>Hepatitis B surface -1.49; antigen (HBsAg) prevalence among children under 5 years (%) - 1.49 (2015); Reported number of people requiring interventions against NTDs – 2158 (2018)</p> <p>NCDs are associated with poverty and create inequity within the community, as has clearly been seen in persons who suffer the complications of cardiovascular diseases, including Chronic Kidney Failure.</p> <p>Cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, e.g., are closely linked to nutritional consumption patterns, to accessibility and affordability of quality health care and to health seeking behaviours. Addressing SDGs No. 1 (No poverty), No. 2 (Zero Hunger), No. 4 (Quality Education) sets the stage to create enabling environments that would mitigate/reduce the risks for these health problems. Taking a holistic approach to address these SDGs would contribute to reduce gender inequalities that currently exist.</p> <p><b>Adolescent Health</b></p> <p>The Adolescent Health National Strategic Plan 2019-2030 was commissioned by the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) from the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture (MOEYSC) and the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation (MHDSTPA).</p> <p>Following this multisectoral approach, UNICEF, and MOH have developed an Adolescent Health Strategic (AHS) Plan with an M&amp;E Plan to advocate for efficient adolescent health services. This is to ensure that young people can access standard health care and health screening programs in adolescent- friendly facilities. It seeks to bridge the service gaps in adolescent sexual and reproductive health, adolescent development, and non-communicable diseases. The AHS will be launched in February 2021.</p> <p>1-in-10 females 15-19 years have had a live birth (9% Urban and 12% Rural. MOHW made efforts to make SRH services accessible to this population age group but the unmet need still is high.</p> <p><b>Mental health</b></p> <p>According to research carried out in 2020 by MOHW, in collaboration with UNICEF, 37% of adolescents aged 10-14, and 63% aged 15-19, experience mental health issues. Of these, 66% are male and 34% female. Tools have been developed to enable health workers, social workers, and designated personnel to measure mental health among adolescents at the population</p>	<p><b>Target 3.9: Death/ Illness from hazardous chemical and pollution - stagnating</b></p>


GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
	<p>level. These tools assess adolescent anxiety and depression (AD), Functional impairment (FX), and suicide ideation and attempt (SU). Mental health is among the NCDs (Non-Communicable Disease) that young people are struggling with, but little has been done to address the gaps that exist in this area. UNICEF, PAHO (Pan American Health Organization), UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population Activities), MOHW, and NCFC (National Committee for Families and Children) are collaborating to address mental health through multisectoral adolescent health initiatives. Mental health interventions are now being incorporated in the ongoing COVID-19 implementation strategies since there is an increase in mental health cases among young people due to the lockdown of schools and co-curricular activities.</p> <p>There is the need for joint evaluation, by different sectors of Government, of social determinants responsible for the diverse chronic diseases to improve the monitoring and evaluation function. Age-standardized death rate due to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease in adults aged 30–70 years (%): Ischemic heart disease: 145.8/100,000 pop; Diabetes: 85.6/100,000 pop; Cerebrovascular diseases: 79.9/100,000; Lung Cancer: 18.7/100,000; breast cancer: 14.8/100,000 pop; prostate cancer: 51.4/100,000 pop; Suicide mortality rate (per 100 000 population) in 2016: 4.7%; Male 7.9%, Female 1.6 %.</p> <p>Regarding extending coverage on the treatment for substance abuse, the MOH, through its National Drug Abuse Control (NDACC), aims to ensure that appropriate drug treatment, rehabilitation and recovery services are available for those requiring such services. There is a draft Substance Abuse Policy that considers general guidelines on treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery. Currently NDACC works along with the Kolbe Foundation and the Jacob's Rehabilitation Farm Centre in the Corozal district to support adults in the rehabilitation program.</p> <p>Drug use: Inpatient medical detoxification is &lt;10%; outpatient medical detoxification: 10-50%; outpatient abstinence-oriented treatment: &lt;10%, (WHO 2010)</p> <p>Total alcohol per capita (≥ 15 years of age) consumption (litres of pure alcohol) - 6.2 (2018)</p> <p>An improved and increased public awareness and enforcement of road safety regulations, e.g., surveillance on highways, can contribute to a reduction of road traffic crashes. This SDG links directly with SDG 11 (target 11.2) that refers to providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public</p>	




GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
	<p>transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons</p> <p>Traffic deaths (per 100,000 population): In 2018, road traffic accident deaths in Belize were 68 or 3.73% of total deaths. The age adjusted death rate is 23.7 per 100,000 population. In 2019 males accounted for 80% of deaths.</p> <p>Proportion of women of reproductive age who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods - 64.9% (2019); Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 adolescent females aged 15 to 19) - 68.5 (2017)</p> <p>This indicator has been stagnating for the past several years, in terms of public expenditure for health as % of GDP, boosting the budget will be constrained by contraction in the economy. This SDG links to all other SDGs.</p> <p>Universal health coverage (UHC) index of service coverage (worst 0–100 best) - 64 (2016 and 2017). Out-of-pocket expenditure as % of total health expenditure 22.9% (2016); Public expenditure as % of GDP 4.1 (2016) (PAHO Core Indicators 2019); According to WHO's Global Health Expenditure Database, Belize's total current health expenditure (CHE) as % of GDP was 5.6% in 2017, while Domestic General Government HE (GGHE-D) as % of GDP is 4%, which is 2% points shy of the international benchmark of 6% of GDP. Current Health Expenditure (CHE) per Capita is 280 USD. Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI) as % of Current Health Expenditure (CHE) is 6%, while Out-of-pocket (OOPS) as % of CHE is 24%. In general, GGHE-D has increased from 50% in 2000 to 68% in 2017, while OOPS has decreased from 35% in 2000 to 24%, although these figures have remained stagnant since 2007.</p> <p>Although there is some progress on WASH in Belize during the last decade, there is an urgent need to understand better WASH in the health facilities and also to ensure access to improved latrines and supplies like pads, tampons and trash cans, so girls can practice good menstrual hygiene in privacy. It is also important to advocate for national funding to ensure sustainability of WASH nationally. There is also a necessity of developing national public transport system to address ambient air pollution. It will also be useful to continue promoting non-motorized transport: (example: sidewalks and bike lanes, car -free areas etc.) to improve ambient air pollution.</p> <p>Age-standardized mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution (per 100 000 population) - 68.8% (2016); Mortality rate attributed to exposure to unsafe WASH services (per</p>	


GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
	100 000 population) - 1 (2016); Mortality rate from unintentional poisoning (per 100 000 population)- 0.5 (2016)	

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
 <p><b>SDG 4: Quality Education</b> Significant Challenge Decreasing</p>	<p>The education system is challenged to assure quality learning experiences facilitated by strong principal leaderships and well-trained caregivers and teachers who utilize child-centred teaching methods and foster strong child and parental involvement. The rigid examination systems give little room to heuristic learning, talent development and, specifically, does not effectively address the gender differentials, nor promote inclusion, of those who are most excluded. Indiscipline and violence in and around schools are rising, while repetition and dropouts also increase (rates of dropout) with boys being disproportionately affected. Gaps also remain in DRR planning, services for children with disabilities and learning difficulties, as well as parenting support towards quality early learning experiences for all children. Uneven public expenditure without a clear rationale as to unit costs and rates of return for different level of schooling, efficiency of budget allocation and disproportionate spending on teacher salaries remain pressing issues.</p> <p>At the completion of primary school: minimum proficiency level in Mathematics is 54.8% and minimum proficiency level in English is 56.7%</p> <p>Primary school completion: Total - 92%; boys: 91.8% girls: 92.2% Secondary school completion: Total - 69%; boys: 63.6%; girls: 74.2%.</p> <p>Attending pre-school education is important for the readiness of children before commencing primary school. Pre-school attendance is slightly higher for males (65%) than among females (62%). Almost three-quarters of the children in first grade in urban areas had attended pre-school the previous year compared to a little more than half among children living in rural areas. Regional differentials are remarkable as well: first graders in Belize City South Side region are close to two and a half times (92%) more likely to have attended pre-school compared to their counterparts in Toledo region (38%). Socioeconomic status appears to have a positive correlation with school readiness; mothers' educational level has a positive association with school readiness. Among first graders, two out of every three children of</p>	<p><b>Target 4.1: By 2030 equitable/ quality primary/ secondary education – Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 4.2: By 2030 access to quality early childhood development/ pre-primary education – Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 4.3: By 2030 equal access/ quality technical, vocational &amp; tertiary education – Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 4.4: By 2030 increase skills of youths/ adults for employment/ entrepreneurship – Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 4.5: By 2030 Eliminate education disparities for vulnerable &amp; gender – Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 4.6: By 2030 achieve literacy &amp; numeracy – Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 4.7: By 2030 Knowledge/ skills for sustainable development – Information Unavailable</b></p>

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
	<p>mothers with higher education compared to three in five of children of mothers with primary education attended pre-school the previous year.</p> <p>Proportion of children aged 24-59 months who are developing on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being; (MICS 2015): 87.5%; 87.3% boys; 87.8% girls)</p> <p>Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age): MICS 2015: 63%; 65% Boys 62% girls.</p> <p>TVET curriculum needs to be updated to provide skills, values, and attitudes for employability and entrepreneurship in 21st century jobs of the future.</p> <p>Amid COVID-19 TVET sector needs support to enable the practical hands-on experience of TVET in the virtual space. There is need for skills development amid the health pandemic and economic downturn. 3% of youth enrolled in TVET; TVET share of secondary enrolment - 8%.</p> <p>GPIA in gross enrolment ratio at pre-primary level: 1.05; at primary level: 0.95; at secondary level: 1.04; at tertiary level: 1.38 +</p> <p>GPIA in completion of primary level: 1.13; at lower secondary level: 1.27; at upper secondary level: 1.23</p> <p>Literacy: women 15-24 years: 93%; men 15-24 years: 91.2%</p> <p>Percent of students and youth with understanding of HIV and sexuality – 43%.</p>	
 <p><b>SDG 5: Gender Equality</b></p> <p>Significant challenges Moderately improving</p>	<p>Gender Equality is moderately increasing in Belize and prior to COVID-19, The Gender Policy (2013) is the guiding document for the mainstreaming of gender in Belize. During COVID-19, the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Plan of action and the gender policy are currently being evaluated to inform the development of the next iteration of these instruments which creates an opportunity for improve gender relations in country. MICS 2015 data shows that 3.9% of women age 15 – 19 and 5.1% of men age 15- 19, first married, or entered a marital union before their 15th birthday. Some 20.8% of women and 10.7% of men, 15-19 years, are currently married or in a union. In 2011, the MICS reported that 5.6% of women ages 15- 19 were married before the age of 15 while 15.2% were married or in a union. Therefore, while the percentage of women 15-19 who got married before age 15 has decreased since 2011, the percentage of women who are married or in a union has increased. Belize has the second highest rate of</p>	<p><b>5.1 Moderately increasing</b></p> <p><b>5.2 Moderately increasing</b></p> <p><b>5.3 Moderately increasing</b></p> <p><b>5.4 Moderately increasing</b></p> <p><b>5.5 Outlook/Trend not available</b></p> <p><b>5.6 Moderately increasing</b></p>

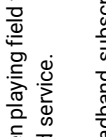

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
<p><b>SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation</b></p> 	<p>CMEU in the Caribbean. Prior to COVID-19 the government had commissioned a RoadMap to address CMEU. Whilst it is too early to tell how COVID-19 is affecting the incidence of child marriage, experiences from other emergencies, strongly suggests that girls and women will be disproportionately affected, particularly amongst the poorest and socially marginalised groups. Many of the complex factors that drive child marriage in stable environments are exacerbated in emergency settings, as family and community structures break down during crisis and displacement. A pandemic of this nature will also present unique challenges that can increase child marriage both in the acute and recovery phases. Challenges include the loss of household income, higher risk of violence in the household and lack of access to schooling. Two documents produced to guide agencies on collecting data are A Basic Guide for National Statistics Offices Survey and Guidance for Caribbean Countries. A gender inequality and cost of inaction study is being completed for Belize under the EnGender Project. This study should be completed in December 2020. The SRH Policy (2002) recognizes the right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education, and means to do so. According to the MICS 2015-2016, Belize's contraceptive prevalence rate was at 51.4%. While fiscal and geographical constraints hindered easy access to services, a large percentage of women give birth by a skilled birth attendant and have access to pre and postnatal care in the public health system. Even though the age of consent is 16, adolescents 17 years and below do not readily have access to service without parental accompaniment. This and the limited sexuality education in schools are contributors to the persistent adolescent pregnancy which is the second highest in the Caribbean. While condition persist, the recent development of the adolescent health strategy and adolescent health norms both supported by PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA, as well as the SRH Policy currently under revision with support from UNFPA, will foster greater accountability, the exercise of individual rights and responsibilities, and access to services.</p>	<p><b>Target 6.1 On track</b></p> <p><b>Target 6.2 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 6.3 Information unavailable</b></p>


<sup>1</sup> Javier Grau and others, *Water and Sanitation in Belize*, IDB-TN-609, (Inter-American Development Bank, 2013).

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
<p>Challenges remain On track</p>	<p>Water quality in Belize remains high compared to LAC region, however, contamination of water sources and the degradation of ecosystem services that protect these water sources are a major concern. Several factors contribute to the pollution of water in the country including the use of agrochemicals in farming, the release of untreated sewage, industrial effluent, sedimentation, and solid waste. Despite the lack of robust data, only 11% of the population in urban centres<sup>2</sup> have sewage treatment. Priority attention towards improving the efficiency of water usage with special attention to the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use Sectors remains necessary. Illegal access and overuse of water resources may accelerate due to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.</p> <p>Data to monitor progress on other areas is deficient. The implementation of Systems of Environmental Economic Account is lacking. Belize ranks among the 3 lowest recipient countries in LAC with lower amounts of water and sanitation ODAs. 20 % is the degree of implementation of integrated water resources management, below regional average of 29% in LAC.</p>	<p><b>Target 6.4 On track</b></p> <p><b>Target 6.5 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 6.6 Information unavailable</b></p>
<p></p> <p><b>SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy</b></p> <p>On track</p>	<p>Belize is on track to realizing target 7.1 with 98% of the population having access to electricity. However, rural populations continue to experience limited access, thereby exacerbating access to technology for education and other sectors. Access to clean fuels and technology moderately improving with hydro-power and solar generation accounting for 35% (2015) of energy mix. Advancement in this sector will be critical to the recovery efforts owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p><b>Target 7.1 On track</b></p> <p><b>Target 7.2 Moderately improving</b></p> <p><b>Target 7.3 Stagnating</b></p>


<sup>2</sup> Belize City, Belmopan and San Pedro destinations that benefit from tourism activities


GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
<p data-bbox="321 415 423 548">  </p> <p data-bbox="443 573 500 646"> <b>SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth</b> </p> <p data-bbox="532 688 589 762">           Major Challenge, Stagnant         </p>	<p data-bbox="326 594 412 1497">           For 2020, the decline in GDP is projected to be 16% (IMF) due to COVID-19 impacts. This will move GDP/capita to that of 2003 (SERP) with consequential negative income impact for the working class and the most vulnerable.         </p> <p data-bbox="448 594 534 1497">           Real GDP/Employed Persons during the period 2013 to 2019 also declined on average by 2.07%; indicating that purchasing power of employees declined on average contributing to a lower standard of living.         </p> <p data-bbox="571 594 678 1497">           Wage Employment decreasing from 66% in 2017 to 62% in 2019. Wage employment increasing is key to achieving impact on other SDGs given that with a more elevated and stable income, together with the social protection that it provides, for this sector of the labour force relative to non-wage employment.         </p> <p data-bbox="716 594 802 1497">           During the period 2017-2019 average monthly income remained stagnant at US\$557 while average income from males increased from \$582.50 to \$615 and that of females decreased from \$507.50 to \$494 per month.         </p> <p data-bbox="839 594 925 1497">           Labour market outcomes, as of September 2019, indicated an unemployment rate of 10.4% with under-employment (working an average of 17 hours/week) being 20%, with women having 33% and men 16% under-employment (LFS Sept.2019).         </p> <p data-bbox="963 594 1049 1497">           The Unemployment rate for men was 6.6% and for women it was more than twice at 15.7%. The unemployment rate among those 14-24 years was 21.4% with females in this group having 31.5% and males 13.9%.         </p> <p data-bbox="1086 594 1172 1497">           17% of the labour force had attained a tertiary level education with only 25% attaining secondary level education. This data indicates a labour force largely unskilled.         </p> <p data-bbox="1209 594 1295 1497">           Empowers the authorities to refer a collective dispute to compulsory arbitration, to prohibit a strike or to terminate a strike in services that cannot be considered essential in the strict sense of the term, including the banking sector, civil aviation, port authority, postal services, social security scheme and the petroleum sector.         </p> <p data-bbox="1333 594 1419 1497">           Tourism inflows relative to GDP and export earnings has been on the rise. During the period 2012-2018 it increased from 9.5% to 11.5% and from 32.5% to 48.8% on GDP and export earnings respectively. This indicates Belize increasing dependence on tourism. The         </p>	<p data-bbox="326 1507 383 1619"> <b>Target 8.1: GDP/capita Decreasing</b> </p> <p data-bbox="420 1507 477 1619"> <b>Target 8.2: Economic Productivity Decreasing</b> </p> <p data-bbox="514 1507 584 1619"> <b>Target 8.3: Policies support Productive Activities Information Unavailable</b> </p> <p data-bbox="621 1507 708 1619"> <b>Target 8.4: Decouple Econ. Growth from Environ. Degradation Information Unavailable</b> </p> <p data-bbox="745 1507 802 1619"> <b>Target 8.5: Full &amp; Productive Employment Stagnating</b> </p> <p data-bbox="839 1507 909 1619"> <b>Target 8.6: Youth Unemployment &amp; increase youth skills/ education Stagnating</b> </p> <p data-bbox="946 1507 1016 1619"> <b>Target 8.7: Labour Rights &amp; Safe/secure working environment Stagnating</b> </p> <p data-bbox="1053 1507 1123 1619"> <b>Target 8.8: Promote Sustainable Tourism Information Unavailable</b> </p> <p data-bbox="1161 1507 1230 1619"> <b>Target 8.9 Expand access to financial services/ Insurance Moderately Improving</b> </p>

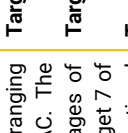
GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
	<p>population of tourists increased from 980,000 to 1,673,725 with growth coming from three sectors: Cruise Tourism, Land borders and air transport. One empirical evidence needed to be monitored on tourism growth is the issue of environmental sustainability since much of the sector is dependent on the natural resources of the country i.e., Mayan ruins, jungles, caves, beaches etc.</p> <p>Adults with an account at a financial institution 65.5%</p>	
 <p><b>SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Challenge remaining, Decreasing</p>	<p>Geography makes populations vulnerable since it creates an uneven playing field for accessing education, health care, transportation and marketing of goods and service.</p> <p>The Population utilizing internet access is 57% while mobile broadband subscription is 38% (2017) - progress facing major challenges.</p> <p>Manufacturing value added products as a proportion of GDP decreased from 12.2% (2013) to 5.6% (2018). Likewise, manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment decreased from 9.2% (2017) 7.7% (2019)</p>	<p><b>Target 9.1: Reliable/ Sustainable/ Accessible infrastructure Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 9.2: Sustainable Industrialization Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 9.3: Access financial Services by Small scale industrials Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 9.4: Adoption of Clean/ Environmentally sound technologies Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 9.5: Research &amp; Development Information Unavailable</b></p>
 <p><b>SDG 10: Reduced Inequality</b></p> <p>Significant challenge, Stagnating</p>	<p>For the period 2003-2012, IDB reported that median annual income for the employed labour force remained stagnant at 0.2% annual growth. For the period 2013-2019, income distribution for the labour force remained stagnant both in terms of GDP/capita and for average annual income going to the employed labour force. This indicates that for this period, poverty and standard of living could not have improved for the Belizean population, given that in 2009, 12.9% of the population was already vulnerable to becoming poor. This scenario makes it more difficult to reduce income inequality since the rate of economic growth is just not enough to keep up with population growth and inflation. During 2020, COVID-19 would have just</p>	<p><b>Target 10.1: Income growth of the bottom 40% of the population Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 10.2: Empowerment, social, economic &amp; Political Inclusion Information Unavailable</b></p>

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
	<p>exacerbated the poverty and inequality that already exists due to the large number of persons being unemployed and the reduction in wages and working hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Between 1993 and 2009 the Gini Coefficient improved from 60.3 to 42. No calculation made since then.</li> <li>o Between the period 2013 to 2019, labour share of GDP improved from 56% to 62% indicating a potential improvement in inequality.</li> <li>o Tax/GDP increased between the period 2017 to 2019 from 30.7% to an estimated 32.4%, again, indicating some potential redistribution of income and reduced inequality.</li> <li>o During period 2013 to 2019 average monthly income remained stagnant and increased nominally from \$567 to \$569; this would have contributed to potential increased inequality.</li> </ul> <p>Challenge for loan performance prior to COVID-19 on account of 2019 drought resulted in a rating of 18 on a scale of 1 to 25</p>	<p><b>Target 10.3: Equal opportunity / reduce inequality Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 10.4: Policies to achieve greater equality Stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 10.5: Regulation/ Monitoring of financial markets &amp; institutions Stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 10.6: Representation in global economic &amp; financial institutions Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration Information Unavailable</b></p>
 <p><b>SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities</b> Significant Challenge Stagnant</p>	<p>With 95.4% (2017)</p> <p>With 49.1% (2014)</p> <p>Average annual GDP loss on account of natural disasters &amp; climate change events 235 (2007-2011)</p> <p>Annual mean concentrate of particular matter of less than 2.5 microns in diameter (pm2.5) (ug/m3) - 21 (2016). Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by cities - 85%.</p> <p>With 95.4% (2017)</p> <p>With 49.1% (2014)</p>	<p><b>Target 11.1: Adequate, safe, and affordable housing &amp; basic social services On Track</b></p> <p><b>Target 11.2: Safe, affordable, accessible/ sustainable transport system Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 11.3 Inclusive &amp; Sustainable Urbanization Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 11.4 Protect &amp; safeguard the world's cultural &amp; natural heritage Information Unavailable</b></p>



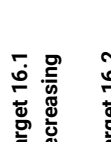
GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
<p><b>GOAL</b></p>	<p>Average annual GDP loss on account of natural disasters &amp; climate change events 235 (2007-2011)</p> <p>Annual mean concentrate of particular matter of less than 2.5 microns in diameter (pm2.5) (ug/m3) -21 (2016). Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by cities - 85%.</p> <p>Belize has made significant efforts to preserve its tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage includes pre-Columbian sites of the indigenous people with majority located along coastal and river waterways. As a result, these sites are vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Furthermore, through the efforts of the National Institute of Culture and History, Belize has developed a cadre of professionals for the preservation of pre-Columbian sites.</p> <p>Colonial and other historic period architecture constitute a significant part of the national identity of Belize. Belize City, the old capital, is currently undergoing preservation efforts regarding its colonial and other historic period architecture. Efforts are being made to protect the underwater cultural heritage and to combat of the illicit trafficking of cultural property.</p> <p>The government of Belize also procured a loan from the Taiwan International Cooperation Development Fund (ICDF) for the rejuvenation of the historic Downtown Belize City, also known as the Belize City Downtown Rejuvenation Project (BCDRP). Through this project several historic buildings will be restored.</p> <p>Belize is the State Party to the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage; 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.</p>	<p><b>Target 11.5 economic losses on account of natural resources Increasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 11.6 Reduce per capita environmental impact on cities Stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 11.7 Access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green, and public spaces</b></p> <p><b>Information Unavailable</b></p>
	<p>There is a coordination mechanism for SCP in the country, but a macro policy and action plans are still lacking. SCP plans may be hindered to the impacts of the pandemic.</p> <p>Belize achieved relative decoupling of economic development from raw material consumption. Country has been improving its material productivity (GDP/MF) since 1990, however national</p>	<p><b>Target 12.1: Framework Sustainable Consumption &amp; Production Information Unavailable</b></p>

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
<p><b>SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production</b></p> <p>Challenge Remaining, Stagnating</p>	<p>DMC rates also increased, denoting that part of the economic development experimented by the country has direct relation with higher rates of natural resources exploitation</p> <p>No national information available. FAO estimates that LAC is responsible for 6% of global food losses and the region loses about 15% of their food available each year.</p> <p>Signiant of all SDG 12-related MEAs, however is not party at the Minamata Convention. Sites to dispose hazardous materials are often surrounded by vulnerable communities, greatly impacting children, women, and elderly people.</p> <p>One of a few Caribbean countries to have a recycling and recovery regulations, however activities are still limited in scale. Recycling workers are often part of the informal markets, therefore have no labour social protections which is common in formal markets.</p> <p>No company holding an ISO 14001 Standard or an open Sustainability Report. Companies which proceed with ISO 14001 or Sustainability Reports tend to devote more attention to environmental and social issues, mainly in the surroundings of company's units.</p> <p>Environmental Sustainability is a guiding principle of the Belize's Public Procurement Procedures Handbook. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development outlines the Green Procurement Practices as one of the main needs of the ministry.</p>	<p><b>Target 12.2: By 2030 Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Moderately Improving</b></p> <p><b>Target 12.3: By 2020 half food waste / Post harvest losses by 50% Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 12.4: Environmentally Sound Management of Chemicals - Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 12.5: By 2030 reduce waste generation - prevention, reduction, recycle, reuse - Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 12.6 Sustainable Practices/ Reporting Stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 12.7: Sustainable Public Procurement Practices Information Unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 12.8: By 2030 Information/Awareness for Sustainable Development Information Not Available</b></p>
 <p><b>SDG 13: Climate Action</b></p>	<p>Belize ranks 5<sup>th</sup> at risk from climate change. Adaptation remains a high priority for the country albeit constrained by resources, with over 50% of the population living near the coast, and annual losses of close to 4% of GDP due to climate change. National policies and legal frameworks to cope with climate change are existent in the country, however climate vulnerability still requires a better understanding grounded in robust data availability to inform</p>	<p><b>Target 13.1 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 13.2 On track</b></p> <p><b>Target 13.3 Information unavailable</b></p>

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
<p>On track</p>	<p>policy actions. Belize's NDC outlines capacity building, education, and awareness as one of the gaps where action is required.</p>	
 <p><b>SDG 14: Life Below Water</b></p> <p>On track</p>	<p>Plastic concentration on Belize's shorelines is a significant challenge estimated as ranging between 440 to 880 g/km<sup>2</sup>. It's the region with the second highest concentration in LAC. The Belize experience with sustainable small-scale fisheries demonstrates the advantages of ecosystems-based fisheries management as an important strategy for achieving Target 7 of Goal 14 and the related means of implementation at 14.b. Currently 21.0% of Belize's national waters are under protection, surpassing the SDG target of 10.0%<sup>3</sup>.</p>	<p><b>Target 14.1 on track</b></p> <p><b>Target 14.2 stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 14.3 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 14.4 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 14.5 on track</b></p> <p><b>Target 14.6 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 14.7 Information unavailable</b></p>
 <p><b>SDG 15: Life on Land</b></p> <p>Stagnating</p>	<p>Belize is one of only a dozen countries that have met Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), with 46% of important sites for terrestrial biodiversity under protected area management. Despite a high level of forest areas, forest cover declined from 74% to 60% since 1981. Some progress is being made towards sustainable forest management with the revision of a Sustainable Forest Management Plan, however the inclusion of indigenous communities requires attention. 81% of all lands are degraded and is likely to be exacerbated by rapid population growth and unsustainable agricultural practices.</p>	<p><b>Target 15.1 - stagnating</b></p> <p><b>Target 15.2 – Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 15.3 – Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 15.4 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 15.5 Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 15.6 Information unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 15.7 Information unavailable</b></p>

<sup>3</sup> Belize's Voluntary National Review, For The Sustainable Development Goals (Government of Belize, 2017)

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
		<p>Target 15.8 Information unavailable</p> <p>Target 15.9 – Information unavailable</p>

GOAL	DISCUSSION	OUTLOOK/TREND
 <p><b>SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</b> Moderately improving</p>	<p>Violence and insecurity remain a prevalent feature of social life in Belize. From 2018 -2019 the homicide rate per 100,000 people averaged 34.3, and young men (15-35) continue to be the main victims of death by gun violence. Women also experience high levels of physical violence.</p> <p>In the same period, the number of reported cases of domestic violence toward women grew from 676 in 2018 to 959 in 2019. This shows a continued upward trend of violence toward women. Children also experience both physical and sexual violence. The reported number of sexual offences against children was 13.31 in 2018 and 18.61 in 2019.</p> <p>The victims of crime and violence in Belize are young men, women and children but overwhelmingly access to justice is long and delayed. In 2014, there were a total of 80 inmates between the ages of 13 to 21 who were on remand for more than three years awaiting a trial date.</p> <p>Children from poor families and in rural areas were least likely to be registered and to have a birth certificate. In 2015, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) found that approximately 4 per cent of children were not registered.</p> <p>Currently, only 60% of Belizeans have access to internet. Approximately 100% of the population have access to mobile telephone which creates opportunity for SMS communication. However, people with low levels of literacy, living with disabilities, and women at risk of gender-based violence are those furthest behind in accessing information.</p> <p>The revised Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy which is currently under development aims to guarantee access to related services and information so that people can make informed choices in tandem with their sexual and reproductive rights, including family planning.</p>	<p><b>Target 16.1</b> <b>Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.2</b> <b>Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.3.1</b> <b>Information</b> <b>unavailable</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.3.2</b> <b>Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.3.3</b></p> <p><b>Information unavailable for: Target 16.4.1</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.5.1</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.5.2</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.6.1</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.7.1</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.7.2</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.8.</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.9</b> <b>Decreasing</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.10.1</b> <b>Moderately improving</b></p> <p><b>Target 16.10.2</b> <b>Information</b> <b>unavailable</b></p>

# Multi-Dimensional Risk Assessment

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## Methodology

A multidimensional risk assessment was conducted jointly by four thematic groups (People, Prosperity, Planet and Peace) using a customized template. Each risk area assessed relates to one or more SDGs, which are indicated in the first column. For each risk area, specific risk factors were identified and then assessed by probability of occurrence (1-Low, 2-Medium, 3-High) and impact on sustainable development (1-very low, 2-low, 3-Medium, 4-high, 5-very high). A priority ranking was obtained by multiplying the probability by the impact. This Priority Ranking is given in column 4 below, categorized as Low (1-5), Medium (6-10) or High (11-15). The results of this multi-agency exercise are summarised in the following tables.


SDGS	RISK AREA	RISK FACTOR STATEMENT	PRIORITY RANKING
	<b>1). POLITICAL STABILITY</b> Risks to the stability of established political and government structures in the territory resulting from politically driven factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Corruption compromises efficient, equitable and policy-driven governance</li> <li>*Clientelism erodes democracy and creates bias in the distribution of public goods and services</li> <li>* Weak opposition representation in the House of Representatives</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px;">9</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px;">8</p>
<b>Risk MITIGATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Attention to UN CAC, good governance, and transparency – constitutional and political reform – long term</li> <li>o Legislative review and reform – medium to long term</li> <li>o Short to medium term – good governance unit in Public Service or Office of the Prime Minister</li> <li>o Promoting transparency and accountability in public institutions and strengthening of human rights institutions</li> <li>o Capacity building in partnership with CSOs and public servants to ensure that the public is trained in good governance</li> <li>o Institutional strengthening of public service to retain expertise across changes of political administration. E.g. Permanent Secretary instead of CEO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Discrimination against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees due to COVID-19 fears</li> <li>* Prolonged disruption of access to economic and academic opportunities and social services for migrant workers and undocumented persons due to COVID-19</li> <li>* Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers risk criminal charges and incarceration if they seek employment and social services in the context of protracted applications to remain in country legally</li> <li>* Standard Operation Procedures within the Ministry of Human Development do not exist to support migrants, asylum seekers and refugee children</li> <li>* Increased unregulated migration caused by COVID-19 crisis</li> <li>* Persons incarcerated for immigration offenses are exposed to COVID-19 during incarceration</li> <li>* Irregular migration introduces additional COVID-19 positive cases, with border communities being at highest risk of infection</li> <li>* Increased pressure on natural resource base due to increased migration &amp; loss of livelihoods from COVID-19</li> <li>* The lack of birth registration among vulnerable populations including indigenous communities, migrants and undocumented persons exacerbates exclusion.</li> <li>* Increased exclusion among children of migrants and refugee parentage result from parents' low level of access to the systems and services. Parents lack documentation and are not aware of the policies in place to protect them.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px;">9</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px;">8</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px;">6</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #f1c40f; color: white; padding: 5px;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p>
	<b>2). DISPLACEMENT &amp; MIGRATION</b> Risks to the population and to the stability of the territory resulting from pressures associated with displacement and/or migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Legislative reform to decriminalize undocumented migration</li> <li>o Finalize and implement Migration Policy to establish rights-based guiding principles to guide immigration-related decisions</li> <li>o Conduct a Population Situational Analysis</li> <li>o Draft and implement a Population Policy which encompasses migration, mortality, fertility issues and related strategies</li> <li>o Implement SOPs within Ministry of Human Development for supporting migrants, asylum seekers and refugee children</li> <li>o Improve decentralization of vital statistic services at the community level including birth registration services</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">8</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px;">6</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c00000; color: white; padding: 5px;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #f1c40f; color: white; padding: 5px;">5</p>
<b>Risk MITIGATION</b>	<b>3). DEMOCRATIC SPACE</b> Risks to democratic and human rights institutions, and to civil and political rights resulting from shrinking civic space, exclusion, repression, and intimidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Limited participation by citizens in general (youth, women, indigenous people) in decision making on policy, legislation, public spending, and governance</li> <li>* Lack of access to SRH services by vulnerable populations, especially women and adolescents</li> <li>* Limited sensitization on the CRC among children and adolescents, especially children living in rural communities, children with disabilities, indigenous and migrant children</li> <li>* Limits to freedom of expression creates distrust in the governance institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Facilitate the establishment of advocacy CSOs to promote rights-based political platforms</li> <li>o Accountability of agencies charged with advocating for vulnerable groups and facilitate sensitization of CRCs especially for most vulnerable boys and girls</li> <li>o Facilitate capacity building for organizations promoting the CRC</li> <li>o Train the media in human rights principles and rights-based reporting</li> </ul>

SDGS	RISK AREA	RISK FACTOR STATEMENT	PRIORITY RANKING
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Human trafficking with children and women being disproportionately affected</li> <li>* Socially excluded urban male children and youth susceptible to gang recruitment and criminal lifestyles</li> <li>* Extremely high levels of gang -related gun violence particularly affecting young males</li> <li>* Abuse of police powers during COVID-related state of emergency</li> <li>* Limited capacity in Police Department for investigation, case preparation, forensics</li> <li>* Transnational drug trafficking</li> <li>* Police brutality carried out with impunity</li> <li>* Lack of trust in law enforcement agencies</li> <li>* Increase in violent property crimes resulting from COVID-related economic impacts.</li> <li>* Increase in gang-related crime resulting from COVID-related economic impacts.</li> <li>* Cyber-exploitation and cyber-bullying</li> <li>* Increased threat to services that prevent and respond to violence, abuse and neglect are suspended. Many children/adolescents are detained in the justice system or confined in orphanages and other institutions</li> </ul>	<p>15</p> <p>15</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>5</p> <p>3</p> <p>8</p>
	<p><b>4). INTERNAL SECURITY</b> Risks to the security of the territory, its people and infrastructure, and to the ability of the international community to operate effectively as a result of security issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Sensitization and awareness of international standards as it relates to justice system</li> <li>o Partner with CSO and development partners in providing alternatives to youths in living in the urban poor areas</li> <li>o Provide helplines for victims of human trafficking and transnational drug trafficking</li> <li>o Capacity building for the Police department on how to treat the population and build trust</li> <li>o Implement UPJ recommendations and concluding recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking</li> <li>o Increased access to vocational and technical training for male and female youth</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>RISK MITIGATION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Incarceration of children and adolescents</li> <li>* Access to justice delayed due to systemic inefficiencies and resource gaps</li> <li>* Low conviction rates for murder</li> <li>* Lack of implementation of alternatives to imprisonment or court action with risks of violation of children's rights</li> <li>* High proportion of incarcerated persons are unsentenced detainees awaiting trial.</li> <li>* Increasing use of states of emergency for crime control</li> <li>* Insufficient social workers available to serve children in conflict with the law and other vulnerable, which is exacerbated by COVID-19 and similar emergencies</li> <li>* Low rates of birth registration by children from poor families, migrant families, and rural areas</li> <li>* Low budget allocation for Judiciary impedes necessary improvements needed to improve access to justice</li> <li>* Vulnerable groups have limited access to legal representation</li> <li>* Increased exposure of vulnerable groups under COVID-19 Statutory Instruments</li> </ul>	<p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>6</p> <p>5</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>
<p><b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> 			
<p><b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> 			



SDGS	RISK AREA	RISK FACTOR STATEMENT	PRIORITY RANKING
<p><b>Risk Mitigation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase budget allocation to the Judiciary</li> <li>○ Develop and submit report to the treaty body for Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment</li> <li>○ Improve capacities of lower and higher courts (including training; establishment of guidance tools; use of technology; revision of procedures)</li> <li>○ Implement Convention on Children's right</li> <li>○ Pass legislation to require the court system to complete trials of accused within a limited time period similar to civil cases</li> <li>○ Strengthen the prosecution branch of the Police department</li> <li>○ Facilitate easier registration of births particularly in rural areas and for migrants</li> <li>○ Provide alternative to formal prison for children awaiting trial and/or convicted.</li> <li>○ Implement UPR recommendation to establish a national human rights institution</li> </ul>	<p><b>6). REGIONAL &amp; GLOBAL INFLUENCES</b> Risks to the integrity, stability, safety and prosperity of the territory and its people because of the actions of external actors or the influence of external events.</p>	<p>* Unresolved Belize-Guatemala Territorial Dispute may result in military aggression from Guatemala</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
<p><b>Risk Mitigation</b></p>	<p>Continue with the process of confidence building measures (Guatemala/Belize) and on the roadmap to the International Court of Justice on the territorial dispute</p> <p>Strengthened participation in regional integration system (SICA)</p>	<p>*Deterioration of water quality from agrochemicals, untreated sewage, urban/industrial effluent, sedimentation, and solid waste</p> <p>*Human health threatened by air, water and land pollution and inadequate waste management as well as land management practices</p> <p>*Expansion of agriculture frontier and urban spaces pushing land degradation</p> <p>* Intensification of climate change influences on natural and development processes</p> <p>*Limited institutional, technical, and human capacity for the implementation of existing laws, regulations and plans related to natural resource management</p> <p>* Climate change adaptation approach &amp; practices not fully integrated into local development planning or fully adopted at community/ household level</p> <p>*Coral reef damage from rising SST, boats/ships, hurricanes, tourism, untreated sewage, acidification, eutrophication, overfishing and unsustainable fishing practices</p> <p>*Unsustainable exploitation of natural resources</p> <p>*Unsustainable coastal development (tourism, urban development, fisheries) compromising natural resource base</p> <p>* Increased economic pressure on natural resources as a direct impact from COVID-19</p> <p>*Insufficient financing and fiscal incentives for sustainable resource use</p> <p>*Conflicts arising from resource depletion and deterioration, increased competition over natural resources.</p> <p>*Power outages and water shortages caused by disasters have a devastating impact on health centres and their patients, including children – such as loss of life, property and livelihoods, injury, illness or displacement – or more subtle, eroding development progress and deepening deprivations already faced by vulnerable children and families.</p> <p>*Increased frequency of natural disasters</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>8</b></p> <p><b>8</b></p>
<p><b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p><b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> <p><b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p><b>14</b> LIFE BELOW WATER</p> <p><b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND</p>	<p><b>7). ENVIRONMENT &amp; CLIMATE</b> Risks to the ecology of the territory, its ecosystem and its people resulting from issues associated with the environment, climate, and natural resources.</p>	

SDGS	RISK AREA	RISK FACTOR STATEMENT	PRIORITY RANKING
<p><b>RISK MITIGATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More resilient and sustainable structures and technologies are needed to guarantee electricity, hot water, and optimal vaccine and supplies storage</li> <li>○ Strengthen national capacities and regional cooperation for disaster risk management</li> <li>○ Encourage and mandate more sustainable practices by the agriculture and fisheries sectors through awareness and training programmes and through the implementation of suitable management laws</li> <li>○ Investment in climate resilient infrastructure (housing, roads, utility, and productive infrastructure such as irrigation and drainage and SMART agriculture practices)</li> <li>○ Implement environmental regulations and laws on air, water, and land pollution as well as on biodiversity and ecosystems conservation, and strengthen the department of the environment</li> <li>○ Ensure that large investment projects in agriculture and tourism include environmental and social viability apart from economic viability</li> <li>○ Diversify the tourism market and transform/shift towards eco-tourism</li> <li>○ Provide economic opportunities to buffer communities to ensure they do not damage the bordering protected areas</li> <li>○ Provide fiscal incentives to the private sector to foster partnerships for the sustainable use of natural resources</li> <li>○ Promote and support investment in blue/green economy</li> <li>○ Measures to climate proof of cities and production sectors.</li> <li>○ The strengthening of legislative and regulatory architecture enabling sustainable management and utilization of natural resources</li> <li>○ Promote community-based adaptation and community management of natural resource base</li> <li>○ Promote system of integrated water, land, and biodiversity management</li> <li>○ Improve information management systems and strengthen feedback mechanisms enabling the tracking of and data informed responses to environmental challenges</li> <li>○ Investigate mechanisms for sustainable financing of natural resource management</li> </ul>			
	<p><b>8). ECONOMIC STABILITY</b> Risk to the economic, financial, and fiscal stability of the country which could impact governance, social cohesion, or people's ability to satisfy their needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Poverty level and multi-dimensional poverty remain high or increases</li> <li>* Decreasing fiscal space for public investment in social protection and sustainable development</li> <li>* Contraction of the economy due to COVID-19-related impacts</li> <li>* Susceptibility of economy to external shocks and natural hazards</li> <li>* Debt to GDP ratio rises to unsustainable levels</li> <li>* Protracted economic recovery beyond 2025 from prolonged COVID impacts</li> </ul>	<p>15</p> <p>15</p> <p>15</p> <p>12</p> <p>9</p> <p>8</p>
<p><b>RISK MITIGATION</b></p>	<p><b>9). PUBLIC HEALTH</b> Risk to the population, the economy and stability of the territory resulting from actual and emerging health emergencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PUBLIC Debt moratorium, debt cancellation, and/or debt swap (long-term)</li> <li>○ Seek financing to programme country poverty assessment regularly and MPI – currently no time series immunization (short to medium)</li> <li>○ Development / maintenance of the human capital through education and health over the long-term</li> <li>○ extension of moratorium on private debt up to December 2021 (short to medium) – central bank has already given permission</li> <li>○ improved risk mitigation through disaster risk reduction planning (reducing coastal vulnerability, energy mix, business continuity planning) (both short to medium and long-term)</li> <li>○ Central Bank to maintain a reduced reserve requirement for private banks to create liquidity for loans (short to medium term)</li> <li>○ economic diversification (long term)</li> <li>○ reduce fiscal imbalance (long term)</li> <li>○ Adoption of MPI to inform policy</li> <li>○ Diversification of economic activity through empowering MSMEs through tools; access to finance;</li> </ul>	<p>10</p> <p>10</p> <p>7</p> <p>17</p> <p>2</p> <p>8</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Provision of universal healthcare services is limited</li> <li>*Health systems unable to cope with epidemics/pandemics</li> <li>*Preventable or treatable health issues are increasing</li> <li>*Drugs/treatments for a range of conditions are harder to purchase</li> <li>*Presence of unregulated chemical, radiological, biological agents</li> <li>* Increasing cost of menstrual hygiene matters sanitary materials resulting in increased impact on Household Income</li> </ul>	

SDGs	Risk Area	Risk Factor Statement	Priority Ranking
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Increasing low vaccination rates among children</li> <li>* Low care seeking rates among young people</li> </ul>	<p>10</p> <p>6</p>
<p><b>RISK MITIGATION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o National standards and norms for adolescent's health</li> <li>o Implementation of the Adolescent Health National Strategy</li> <li>o Increase use of online platform to engage adolescents and young people</li> <li>o Adoption of health financing options as an extension of the National Health Insurance</li> <li>o The introduction of "SIN TAXES" for commodities such as tobacco and alcohol and utilization of this revenues to strengthen health service delivery</li> <li>o Strengthen health promotion and primary and secondary prevention, especially for NCDs which contribute to morbidity and mortality in the population</li> <li>o Promote health living (diet and exercise) as way to reduce increasing burden of NCD</li> </ul>		
  	<p><b>10). SOCIAL COHESION, GENDER EQUALITY &amp; NON-DISCRIMINATION</b></p> <p>Risks to social unity and equality resulting from direct and indirect discrimination, horizontal inequalities, and demographic trends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* COVID-19 socio-economic impacts reduces families' ability to meet basic needs</li> <li>* Sexual violence against children disproportionately impacting girls</li> <li>* Social exclusion of boys and male youth in high crime areas</li> <li>* Lack of population &amp; poverty data to make evidence-based programme interventions</li> <li>* Sexual violence affecting women</li> <li>* Income disparity</li> <li>* Reduced access to protective services by abused children and women due to COVID-related regulations</li> <li>* Ethnicity and geographic factors reducing access to services</li> <li>* Demographic pressures (high dependency ratios / youth / elderly bulges)</li> <li>Public investments in poverty reduction insufficient to significantly reduce poverty rate and social exclusion</li> <li>* Low political participation of women</li> <li>* Family violence (disproportionately victimizing women and children)</li> <li>* Widespread gender-based discrimination</li> <li>* Extensive discrimination on basis of sex, race/ethnicity, belief</li> <li>* The (domestic) safety and security of children is routinely threatened</li> <li>* Regular episodes of hate speech in the public domain</li> <li>* Minority groups are socially excluded</li> <li>* Access to resources (e.g.) land unequal / discriminatory</li> <li>* Early unions/motherhood limits education attainment and economic opportunities for females</li> <li>* Minority groups have unequal rights</li> </ul>	<p>15</p> <p>15</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>10</p> <p>10</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>7</p> <p>7</p> <p>7</p> <p>7</p> <p>7</p> <p>6</p> <p>4</p>

SDGS	RISK AREA	RISK FACTOR STATEMENT	PRIORITY RANKING
<b>RISK MITIGATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative framework to strengthen protections and access to education and economic opportunities for marginalized groups</li> <li>Same measures for economic diversification</li> <li>Develop skill sets to match existing job market and new markets and services with particular focus on re-tooling for emerging economic opportunities.</li> <li>Support for MSME's especially for unemployed and under-employed and economically marginalized</li> <li>Improving environment for business development, growth, and access to capital</li> <li>Education curricula preparing students for job market</li> <li>Social protection for persons in informal economy</li> <li>Harness the opportunities created by COVID-19</li> <li>Finance project with BEL TRAIDE to create a knowledge centre to facilitate virtual and online training so that existing training courses can be accessed online.</li> </ul>			
		* Unequal to access to quality education and economic opportunities	12
		*Provision of social security / social protection is limited in scope / reach	10
		*Infrastructure (roads, rail, river, communications) is limited	10
		*Value of social security / social protection is inadequate	10
		*Access to services and infrastructure largely determined by location	10
	<b>11). INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES</b> Risks to society and the population resulting from a lack of availability or limitation on access to physical infrastructure, and/or basic social services	* insufficient access to clean water for consumption due to lack of infrastructure in rural areas and extreme weather events	8
		* susceptibility of infrastructure and built environment to extreme weather events	8
		*Basic service (water, energy, health, education) provision inadequate	7
		*Basic service (water, energy, health, education) provision routinely disrupted	7
		* Limited access to technology increases lack of access to services especially for vulnerable groups	6
		*Increase of out of school children, child protection issues, and quality education due to extended school closure.	8
		* Limited access to mental health support and social activities for school children due to extended school closure	8
		* Increased inequities due to low investment in child-responsive urban planning, among municipalities.	8
<b>RISK MITIGATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build upon existing safety-net structures to cover vulnerable school children</li> <li>Government and school managements plan for strong wrap-around services in schools to support safety, psychosocial support and remedial instruction for the most vulnerable population</li> <li>Stronger collaboration among government entities, UN agencies and the private sector for Sustainable Child Friendly Municipalities</li> </ul>			
	<b>12). FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURE &amp; LAND</b> Risk to people, agriculture, and/or production in the territory resulting from crop, food production, livestock, and related issues.	*Food insecurity in families living in poverty	12
		*Agricultural productivity and output and access to market threatened by climate change impact, natural disasters, and diseases	9
		*Unequal land distribution	6
		*Land use rights are disputed	5

SDGs	RISK AREA	RISK FACTOR STATEMENT	PRIORITY RANKING
		<p>*Lack of evidence-based policies and practice relating to land distribution, ownership, and use</p> <p>* Children who benefit from school feeding programmes could already be nutrient deficient, vulnerable or at risk.</p>	4
<p><b>RISK MITIGATION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Disaster preparedness planning to address climate change impacts on food security</li> <li>○ risk management which should address adaption, mitigation, resilience building and recovery planning into policies and plans</li> <li>○ Social protection systems – to facilitate targeted responses to families in need</li> <li>○ building resilience into agricultural systems – climate smart practices</li> <li>○ Evidence-based land use policy implementation to increase access to land for agricultural productivity</li> <li>○ Ensure food and nutrition needs of vulnerable schoolchildren are considered when designing any large-scale national response and prepare duty bearers for the school reopening and the continuation of school feeding, health, and nutrition services.</li> </ul>		8

# CCA Consultation Process Results

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# CCA Consultation Process Results

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Consultations were carried out with the following: UNCT/PMT, International Financial Institutions, Development Partners, Diplomatic Corps and Government. The salient points of the consultation reflected the following input:

## 1). Organization For Persons with Disabilities

National policies are not in place to ensure that persons living with disabilities are able to live dignified and productive lives – **National Policies**

People living with disabilities are economically excluded. There are no legal provisions to ensure that they can access the workforce and remain supported while working – **Economic Exclusion**

The most prevalent disabilities are intellectual but there is a service gap for this group since many programmes and services target mainly people with physical disabilities – **Mental Disability**

Consideration of the particular needs of the elderly are not being included in national planning – **Elderly**.

There is a need for skill certification, other than academic degrees, for people with disabilities. – **Skills Gap**

Older persons and other marginalized groups are digitally excluded from accessing much needed social protection services. – **Digital Exclusion**

An assessment is needed on mechanisms for the state to provide a minimum living allowance to persons living with a disability – **Universal Income Support**

## 2). Private Sector Stakeholders

Need to implement E-Governance which would minimize opportunities for corruption.

The UN can assist in developing a **one-stop platform to support micro and small businesses**.

**Poverty** is one of the key challenges facing Belize and this plays a pivotal role in perpetuating the other social ills and inequalities that affect Belize e.g., health services, education, gender equality and other development areas.

**Small farmers** are constrained in implementing environmentally friendly methods because it is too costly given their low profit margins. This creates a strained relationship between rural farming populations and environmental agencies – **Productivity of Small Farmers**.

Belize needs an **energy policy** that supports the use of solar energy and the buyback of **solar energy** by the electric company. This is especially important for rural communities that cannot afford the cost of electricity from the grid.

## 3). Environmental Sector Civil Society Organizations

**Rural communities are the most excluded** because of their remoteness, lower education levels, limited access to finance. Providing services to them is more expensive and requires greater effort.

**Indigenous people tend to be excluded** from opportunities for sustainable forest management by the inaccessibility of the forestry license application process to them.

Certain government decisions are inconsistent with

Belize's environmental policies, such as the approval of **environmentally unsound development projects** and giving out land that is within protected areas.

Many projects are evaluated considering only the economic benefits and without proper analysis of social and environmental impacts – **External Cost of Projects (Economic/Social)**

The UN can help to bridge the **financing gap (approx. USD \$10 million)** for conservation management, which cannot be met through public sector financing.

Great concern was expressed that Belize's economic recovery does not **jeopardize the natural resource base**.

Economic recovery presents an opportunity for Belize to refocus on **eco-tourism** rather than cruise tourism.

The UN can assist CSOs to provide better support to **buffer communities in sustainable economic development activities**. This is very challenging because there is a great need for capacity building in entrepreneurship and marketing which are not necessarily areas in which environmental CSOs have capacity.

#### **4). Other Civil Society Organizations, Academia and Statutory Bodies**

**National datasets are not disaggregated** by different population groups which makes it difficult to tailor services and programmes to meet the particular need of vulnerable and excluded populations.

Achieving **SDG 2 – Zero Hunger** is critical as it affects the achievement of so many other SDGs. Citizens must take care of basic needs before they can focus on sustainable development.

Achieving **SDG 4 - Quality Education** is also very important because it can break the cycle of poverty

and contribute towards achieving many other SDGs.

The way forward to economic recovery for Belize must include **protecting the natural resource base**.

Support is needed for the sustainable growth for the tourism, agriculture, and fisheries sectors.

#### **5). International Financial Institutions**

Government has made it clear that it does not want to go into an **IMF program**. Government has closed itself off from accepting loans from World Bank, IDB and CDB but has asked IMF for technical support.

Current **budget is very constringent**, and the economy is very fragile. Government may need to have a multi-year strategy. It is a difficult situation and the debt sustainability.

Previous CDB strategy intended to support the government in a poverty assessment to get more detailed poverty numbers but didn't happen because of COVID. World bank is implementing a project which should include **poverty assessment**.

Government is still deciding on what issues they would like to **prioritize**.

CDB internally reviewing internally the previous strategy that will guide how CDB can support **priorities over the next 3-4 years**.

#### **6). Development Partners & Diplomatic Corps**

Retooling the labour force (for example through technical, vocation and education training) for greater resilience is very important as the country explores new opportunities in terms of economic investment and diversification.

There are several challenges and difficult times ahead. The international development cooperation policy framework is not very developed in Belize.



There is expectation that sector policies will change. There is a role to play, not only by UN but also by other donors to assist the government in developing a modern and efficient sector policies.

Belize does not have reliable and updated development data.

EU has very strong collaboration with institutions in Belize and have supported UNICEF, FAO, PAHO, and the Spotlight Initiative and is planning a new partnership agreement with UNDP (e-mobility).

Call on UN to fulfil the role of establishing a donor coordination mechanism for distributing meaningful development cooperation. The UN can take on the role of cooperation framework and convene the international cooperation and donors to map out to see what is happening in the areas of external cooperation.

## **7). Government**

Government identified the following areas as sectoral and/or ministerial priorities:

Support to implement e-passport system, e-government activities as it relates to the vital statistics unit and cybersecurity

Access to modern energy carriers and energy efficiency in the transportation system

Define Sectoral priorities and plans

Strengthening of primary health care services; mental health services and wellness as it relates to non-communicable diseases

Sustainable management of aquatic resources; eco-system management, protected areas, and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations;

School feeding program and universal secondary education;

Value chain development in agriculture and health

# Development Challenges

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# Development Challenges

#	KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY 7 UN AGENCIES
1	High and increasing levels of poverty and inequality.
2	Limited Social Protection coverage (including the National Health Insurance Scheme) for the poor and vulnerable including children.
3	Access to quality learning and education, vocational and continuing education.
4	Women and girls experience gender-based violence & trafficking, and early unions.
5	Economic Stagnation & Declining standard of living.
6	Health (immunisation, prevention and control of NCDs, sexual & reproductive health and mental health) access by marginalized, vulnerable and indigenous population.
7	A need for climate resilient planning, climate smart practice disaster risk preparedness and climate risk mitigation (adaptation and mitigation).
8	Covid-19 Pandemic and other public health crisis.
9	Children & adolescents' exposure to violence, exploitation, and crime in their communities.
10	High level of crime & citizen insecurity.
11	Low skilled labor force and mismatch between job skills and labor market.
12	Food Security and quality nutrition: Access & utilization impact on hunger and health.
13	Need for Good governance, greater levels of transparency and improvement on the prevention, detection, and reduction of corruption in the public sector.
14	Need to have an enabling environment for the growth and development of micro, small and medium enterprises.
15	Unsustainable fiscal situation, public debt management with limited fiscal space for planning and integrating SDGs.
16	Children, vulnerable and marginalized communities' access to justice, legal services, and the courts.
17	Belize's poor Commitment to human rights standards & norms through low treaty ratification Percentage.
18	Adapt/build back better using nature-based solutions (blue/green economy – eco-tourism, sustainable agricultural practices, ecosystem services) as a pathway to sustainable development.
19	Agriculture productivity and growth being negatively impacted by pests & diseases.
20	Undiversified economic base (goods and services) and trading partners makes Belize un-resilient to shocks.
21	Opportunity for the development of the digital economy.
22	Migrants, asylum-seekers & refugees not adequately protected under immigration and labor laws. This limits the migrant's population access to economic opportunities, reaching their potential and contributing to the communities where they reside.
23	Opportunity for greater levels of partnership between the Government and the private sector/ civil society.
24	Prevent and minimize pollution, waste generation, promote responsible consumption and sustainable production practices such as circular economy (for example convert waste into a resource and increase recycling rates through Reduce, Reuse, Recycle).
25	Enactment and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations to protect and conserve rich biodiversity, ecosystems, natural resources (wildlife/ protected species, terrestrial & marine resources), which is the bedrock of the Belizean economy.

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