



BELIZE

Annexes To

Prime Minister's Budget Speech

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

FISCAL YEAR 2024/2025

AS PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON MARCH 8TH, 2024

Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise

2024 MAFSE Highlights

Introduction

2023 has been a year with much to celebrate in agriculture. Despite the anticipated volatility for the traditional commodities- something which we could have seen coming because of the conditions in the banana, citrus and sugar industry, other commodity areas have shown that our agriculture sector has been resilient, adaptive and strong; we have seen bumper crops in some areas that leave no doubt about the capacity, ability and improvement in Belizean farming. The new direction towards diversification that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise has taken has been shown to be brilliantly successful as *#planBelize* has been put to work and has passed with flying colours. Perhaps no better proof of this is the report card for Belizean agriculture at the recently held CARICOM summit where the 20x25 goals were put on table for all Caribbean nations, and Belize's agriculture sector passed the self- sufficiency test with flying colours. We are on the right path, the strong steady support of this pillar of the Belizean economy is firm, and our farmers are winning. This is the execution of a plan that shows how we can, as a nation, adapt, persevere, and pull ahead.

On the front of traditional exports, both bananas and citrus particularly are still in a cycle of recovery. Finances and conditions in these industries have left farmers battling with issues such as disease, labour and access to financing, all situations that GoB is aware of and is actively trying to improve for these industries. Sugar has its own unique situations that affect production, such as droughts and fertilizer issues, but the good news here is that the international market prices for cane sugar are excellent, and so despite the drop in production for this year, the value of the contribution of the sugarcane crop to GDP and foreign exchange has been on par with previous years.

Other areas such as onion, red kidney beans and black bean productivity have been lower than last year, but not alarmingly so, as conditions that have by now stabilized had negative effects, as is the case with black beans with weather and pests affecting the crop this year, and sluggish market conditions for red kidney beans affecting the confidence of farmers for that commodity.

Once looking beyond the traditional exports, the news starts getting better. Industries such as shrimp are on the rise in both recovery and productivity. No longer affected by disease and on the rebound with their ability to produce, a renewed confidence permeates this once thriving industry and their future looks bright, as injections of financing and technology have stabilized their productivity. The cattle industry is another success story, as this year's productivity figures and resultant contributions to GDP/ foreign exchange earnings have both surpassed last year's. Even the sheep sub-sector shows upward mobility in productivity, a sure sign that both the efforts of the Taiwanese funded genetic breeding center to improve our national herd in sheep and goat capacity and market conditions for these commodities are improving. Coconuts, an emerging crop, are steadily rising in terms of acreage planted, as large, medium and smaller scale farmers are planting to ensure the water and copra bearing fruit will be available in export quantities in coming years. Production of crops such as soybean is on the rise as two factories, one in Blue Creek and one in Spanish Lookout, have had ground broken for their

construction, with the Blue Creek factory already operational. With these industries on the rise we are set to tap into the burgeoning regional markets for these commodities.

Perhaps the success of the *#planBelize* approach to diversification is best shown by this crop's productivity figures of non-traditional commodities such as avocado, pitahaya, soursop, cucumber, tomatoes, potatoes, rice and corn (both white and yellow taken together), just to name a few, all show healthy spikes upward. The beautiful thing about this is that it is mostly small farmers that are contributing to the increased productivity figures, as both the Ministry of Agriculture's message of trying new crops and the renewed confidence in the stability of the local economy show clear signs of our ability to feed ourselves, to provide for our domestic needs and to improve both the local cornucopia and satisfy demands of the tourism sector.

On the front of enterprise, another responsibility for this ministry, resounding success has been met with the Belize Marketing and Development Corporation and Corozal Free Zone, both largely thriving entities that have injected millions into local economy, provided jobs for thousands of Belizeans and stabilized markets for hundreds of farmers and producers. Belizeans now depend on the ability of these business entities that with renewed leadership, show the way forward in planning, development and improvement of Belize.

On all fronts *#planBelize* has been extremely successful in the agriculture sector. The goals of this ambitious plan included import replacement and substitution, export expansion and strengthening the linkages of tourism with our local productive sectors, affordable financing for farmers, diversification and innovative climate-smart systems, research and development partnerships with renowned universities, work with the associations of the four traditional exports, i.e. sugar, citrus, banana and shrimp, growing and producing more of what we eat and promoting more consumption of what we grow, improving storage and logistic facilities, improving our trade and market intelligence for international access and finding niche markets for the export of non-traditional products, as well as teaching of agriculture and agri-business in schools. Every single goal and target of *#planBelize* has been addressed successfully, as the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise has nurtured traditional and non-traditional crops successfully, has responded to issues such as storage and research in commodity areas, has ensured stability of local markets and production, and is actively seeking export markets for our commodities within our region, such as to CARICOM, Mexico and El Salvador. Linkages have been made with institutions such as Zamorano University to ensure research is continuous and agriculture is now active in dozens of schools around the country as the message of growing what we eat has resonated in primary schools, with so many gardening activities in place at schools that we now have trouble keeping up with all of them.

Agriculture, as it is said, is everyone's business, and this ministry is happy to note that everyone takes this business seriously. Belize is poised at a threshold that, barring catastrophic natural events, will sure propel the sector and to a larger degree the Belizean economy forward.

2023 Highlights

Agronomy Program

1. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MAFSE), in collaboration with the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), through the Agronomy Unit completed the construction and installation of a total of thirty (30) protective cover structures country wide. A balance of six (6) additional structures will be constructed in the month of March 2024. This initiative underscores the Government's unwavering commitment to advancing agricultural production strategies geared towards resilience and sustainability. The Covered Structure and Capacity Enhancement Project is valued at a total of \$348,678.73 US dollars, supported by the CDF and the Government of Belize executed through MAFSE.
2. The Research and Innovation Center (RDIC), Central Farm, has been providing technical training to farmers, students, technical officers. These training courses include plant and animal nutrition, genetic improvement, aquaculture production, best agriculture practices (BAP), and value addition. Furthermore, a wide range of products and services are provided such as pitahaya, coconut seedlings, grafted fruit trees, quality breeding stock, fingerlings, vegetable seedlings and extension service.

Through the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) project and MAFSE two (2) cooperatives have benefitted from a total of 1000 Maypan hybrid coconut seedling. MAFSE has also donated a total of 2,500 yellow Malayan dwarf coconut seedlings. In addition, farmers from both Cayo and Orange Walk district have a total of 2500 pitahaya plants. The total value of the above donation is \$33,000.00. This shows that the MAFSE is committed to establishing market development to compliment the thriving sectors.

Policy Unit

3. The Policy and Statistics Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Agriculture is responsible to support line ministries and private sector with providing support with market development, access to agricultural commodities, and agriculture data to develop and improve policy. The unit performs an essential role in enhancing accountability, transparency and coordination within the Ministry. Throughout 2023 the unit has been involved in various sessions, workshops, trainings, and project implementation. Some of the biggest achievements reported include collaboration with the World Food Program (WFP) with the implementation of the Hurricane Lisa Relief Assistance Program (HLRAP) in June 2023.

Through this initiative the WFP and the Government of Belize partnered to strengthen Belize's social protection system in response to shocks. Through the HLRAP an emergency cash assistance programme was launched to support farmers directly impacted by hurricane Lisa in November 2022. The key dataset used to extract beneficiary farmers was from the Belize Agriculture Information Management System (BAIMS). There were 717 farmers who

received support directly benefitting 704 farming households within Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize, Cayo and Stann Creek Districts. Each household benefitted with approximately BZD 1,000/USD 500 through DigiWallet in June 2023. Below is a breakdown of impact assessment (figure 1) and overview of beneficiaries (figure 2).

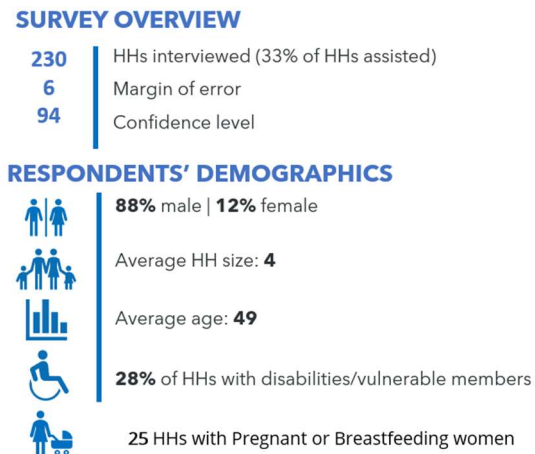


Figure 1. 717 Beneficiary Farmers Impact Assessment Overview of HLRAP

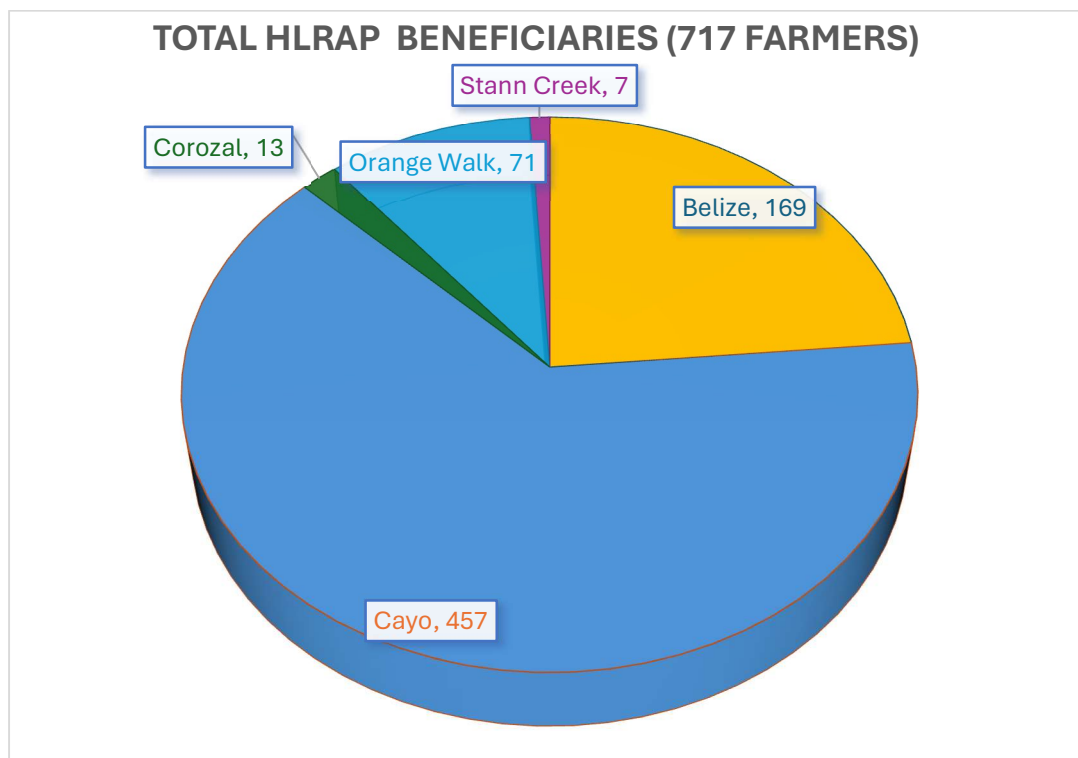


Figure 2. 717 Beneficiary Farmers HLRAP Distribution

4. Another key achievement of the Policy and Statistics Unit was the successful completion of 2023 production report. This report is vital to the national reporting schema of the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB), Ministry of Foreign Trade (MFT) and the Central Bank of Belize. In 2023 the key sectors that saw increases were the Livestock Industry specifically the cattle industry, the grains sector which saw aggregated increases within the corn, sorghum and soy sectors. The shrimp industry also saw a small increase which indicates that the industry is rebounding from the effects of early mortality syndrome. Another sharp increase was seen within the coconut sector accounting for 18,000 acres and estimated to increase over 20,000 acres in 2024. The Policy Unit keeps monitoring key commodities that have direct import on the food basket and as such policy decisions are taken based on statistical data and analysis.

Belize Bureau of Standards

5. In an increasingly globalized economy, adherence to measurement standards is paramount in trade. The Belize Bureau of Standards plays a crucial role in facilitating trade through its continued provision of legal metrology services. As a government department dedicated to developing the country's national quality infrastructure, the Bureau continues to provide support to industry stakeholders in the implementation of standards. The Bureau hosted an ISO 9001 training on Quality Management Systems for 82 public and private sector stakeholders. The ISO 9001 training equipped stakeholders with best practices for process optimization, risk management, and continuous improvement. The implementation of this standard will enable businesses to enhance quality, efficiency, and customer satisfaction while reducing risks and driving continuous improvement, positioning them for long-term success and competitiveness in today's dynamic business environment.

Belize Marketing and Development Corporation

6. Increase in rice production in the south is a major achievement. The Big Falls Rice Mill this year purchased 1.8 million pounds of paddy benefiting over 200 farmers in the Toledo District. This is up from 800,000 pounds from 27 farmers in 2020, and is in stark contrast with the plans of the previous government to scrap the facility.
7. Fruit Pulp processing is now a reality for our farmers. BMDC is now diversifying from the traditional crops to incorporate non-traditional crops to assist more farmers. Presently, the BMDC is helping farmers from three districts by purchasing Mango, Dragon Fruit, Passion Fruit and Soursop pulps. Belizeans can enjoy these fruits all year round and the tourism industry has a year-round supply of delicious, wholesome Belizean fruit.
8. Overall assistance to vegetable farmers in the purchase of their fresh produce is another success from the BMDC. The Corporation fulfills its marketing mandate for the Ministry of Agriculture by purchasing onions, potatoes, lettuce and carrots from farmers in different parts of the country.

Livestock

9. In 2023, cumulative beef exports to Guatemala and Mexico totaled 40,315 bovines or 28,220,500 lbs. of live beef with a value of \$70,551,250.00 of revenue. This represents a significant increase of 21.4% of more beef cattle exported in 2023 in comparison to 2022 when 33,197 head were exported, representing \$51,123,380 in total revenue, 38% more in 2023 when compared to 2022.
10. The cumulative poultry industry output (broilers, table eggs, turkey, and hens) for 2022 is \$140,910,889 which is 14.7% more when compared to \$122,776,363.00 poultry industry output in 2021.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise in close collaboration with national and international partners have worked closely with the poultry industry to ensure that we remain free of the highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

11. The honey sub-sector reactivated the National Beekeeping Symposium and Expo held on November 30, 2023, Centro Escolar Junior College, Corozal District. The Beekeeping symposium gathered a total of 550 active participants mainly beekeepers, technical officers, teacher, students, national and international experts. The objective of the beekeeping symposium was to share relevant technologies and innovations that can be adopted among beekeepers to build a climate-smart and Resilient Apiculture subsector in Belize.
12. The Livestock Genetic Development Program was able to assist a total of 500 livestock farmers with quality breeding animals of superior pedigree to increase production, productivity, and the quality of livestock meat in poultry, pigs, beef cattle, dairy, aquaculture, sheep, and goat. Additionally, a total of 600 livestock farmers directly benefited from technical trainings to increase their knowledge in the livestock production value chains to transfer climate smart technologies to make them more productive, competitive in livestock sustainable production systems.

National Food and Nutrition Security Commission

13. The Sembrando Vida Project has helped improve the quality of life for our rural population through the generation of employment with the contribution of agricultural products, technical as well as economic support. This incentivizes production of foods and the commercialization of the surplus of the foods produced. Registration started October 2022 with USD \$3.5 million dollars distributed. 2000 small farmers from all 6 districts are

benefitting from the project; 1,970 atm cards distributed, 60,000 assorted fruit and timber trees have been distributed to beneficiaries and 20 bio-factories have been built.

Projects Execution Unit

14. In 2023, MAFSE executed annual work plans of nineteen (19) national projects with a value of one hundred and ten million, one hundred and four thousand, one hundred and sixteen dollars (\$110,104,116), and three (3) regional projects with a value of nine million, three hundred and thirty two thousand dollars (\$9,332,000). These projects are funded by eight (8) agencies.
15. From the nineteen (19) projects a total of twelve (12) came to an end in 2023 with a value of eleven million, ninety five thousand, five hundred and twenty eight dollars (\$11,095,528) of which nine million, three hundred and forty seven thousand, four hundred and forty six dollars (\$9,347,446) was funded externally and one million, seven hundred and forty eight thousand, eighty two dollars (\$1,748,082) was co-funded by the Government of Belize.
16. There are 6 projects in the pipeline that will come online in 2024 with a combined value of one million, three hundred and seventy four thousand dollars (\$1,374,000).

Co-operatives Department

17. Nine new co-operatives have been registered. All have been in the agriculture sector, with vegetable farmers in the Belize, Cayo, and Corozal districts, coconut farmers in the Orange Walk and Toledo districts, and beekeepers in Orange Walk.
18. The Department of Co-operatives has also established alliances with other governmental, non-governmental, and intergovernmental partners and donors. One such alliance has resulted in grant funding of five hundred thousand dollars to benefit twenty-one co-operatives aimed at increasing their production, post pandemic, by providing needed equipment, infrastructure, and inputs. The ultimate objective is to assist these co-operatives in making sound investments to enable their members in making environmentally friendly investments to strengthen their economic activities and become more sustainable. These unique collective- based enterprises have proven to be resilient to national economic shocks but require investments to enable them to establish an improved production, financial, and governance system for their operations to be more financially stable, sustainable and stronger as they consolidate their endeavours in a growing economy.

Corozal Free Zone

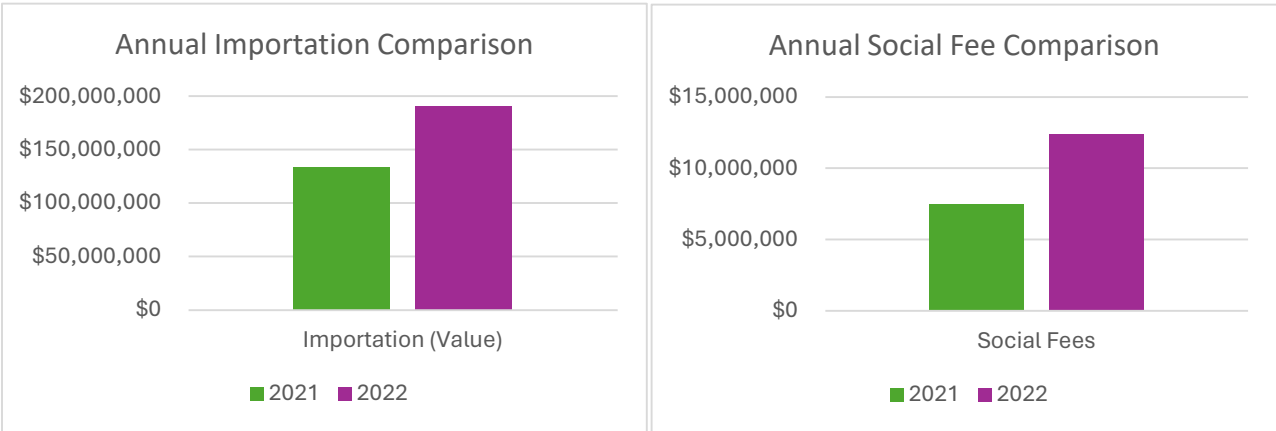
19. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Enterprise successfully navigated the challenges posed by the pandemic to reopen the Corozal Free Zone, which had been closed on March 21st, 2020. The zone was successfully reopened on February 1st, 2021, marking a significant achievement

amidst all the controversy. Since then, the Ministry has overseen remarkable growth and revitalization in the zone.

In February 2021, 108 businesses reopened their doors within the Corozal Free Zone. This number has substantially increased over time, with the latest data indicating that 308 businesses are now fully operational as of 2023. This growth reflects a positive trend in economic activity within the zone.

The impact on employment has been equally impressive. At the reopening in February 2021, 560 individuals started working within the Corozal Free Zone. Currently, there are 1500 employees directly employed, indicating a significant increase in job opportunities. Additionally, the Ministry's efforts have led to the indirect employment of 1500 individuals through various services and contract work associated with the operational businesses. This demonstrates a comprehensive approach to fostering employment and economic development within the region.

Importations in 2022 were valued at \$190,030,340.83 USD, an increase of 34.3% compared to 2021 (\$133,784,978.18 USD). As a result, social fees paid to the Government of Belize summed up to \$12,377,715.26 USD, an increase of 66.4% compared to 2021 (\$7,436,855.39 USD).



- 20. In 2021, the Corozal Free Zone generated \$258,774,006.29 USD in revenue, while in 2022, the revenue increased to \$266,042,753.64 USD.
- 21. The Corozal Free Zone received approximately 1.1 million visitors in 2022. This represents a 20% increase in footfall compared to the previous year. The increase in footfall can be attributed to the opening of new stores and an increase in promotional activities. The CFZ also saw an increase in the number of vehicles from 242,481 in 2021 to 296,635 in 2022 which represents a 22% increase and contributed to the growth of the zone.
- 22. On December 8th, 2023, CFZ signed a contract with RJB Construction Limited to pave the Santa Elena Road Access to Corozal Free Zone valued at 2.9 million BZD. This was made possible through a loan from CABEL and funds from the GoB.
- 23. In addition to the quantitative achievements, the successful reopening of the Corozal Free Zone demonstrates effective government policies and strategic decision-making. The Ministry's ability to

adapt to the evolving circumstances of the pandemic, facilitate the reopening process, and stimulate economic activity reflects sound governance and proactive measures.

As the Corozal Free Zone continues to thrive under the Ministry's guidance, it serves as a testament to the resilience of the Agriculture, Food Security, and Enterprise sectors. The achievements outlined not only mark a successful recovery from the challenges posed by the pandemic but also lay a foundation for sustained economic development and prosperity in the region.

Non-traditionals

24. Shrimp continues on the rebound as farms are now producing and processing, with the export market for Mexico approved.
25. Soursop, coconut and pitahaya training continues as more small holder farmers are now involved in producing these commodities, with export markets actively being sought. Pitahaya, mango and passionfruit pulp is now being marketed by the Belize Marketing and Development Corporation, ensuring our farmers have an avenue for sale of their produce.

Supplies Control Unit

26. Consumer protection measures improved
 - a. Legislation to deal with issues such as price gouging
 - b. Supplies Control Unit active in its pursuit of non-compliant businesses; since September 2023, 109 tickets issued after only 14 issued over a span of 13 years.

Annex 1.

Production Statistics 2023, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise

Source: Policy Unit, MAFSE

Commodity	2023 production	2022 production	Percentage Change
Corn (white and yellow) (lbs)	247,821,061	243,944,015	1.6%
Rice (lbs)	39,023,200	33,871,831	15.2%
Sorghum (lbs)	66,264,300	45,632,400	45.2%
Soybean (lbs)	60,013,111	59,821,500	0.3%
Peanuts (lbs)	642,000	582,900	10.1%
Pineapple (lbs)	9,386,460	9,277,451	1.2%
Watermelon (lbs)	5,611,200	5,110,912	9.8%
Pitahaya (lbs)	74,250	38,000	95.4%
Potato (lbs)	3,265,040	1,305,000	150.2%
Ginger (lbs)	178,400	172,500	3.4%
Cardamom (lbs)	39,000	6,000	550%
Lime (lbs)	413,500	124,050	233.3%
Avocado (lbs)	63,000	46,200	36.4%
Soursop (lbs)	667,127	524,029	27.3%
Hot Pepper (lbs)	806,590	719,190	12.2%
Tomatoes (lbs)	3,357,690	3,000,049	11.9%
Sweet Pepper (lbs)	2,802,014	2,221,207	26.1%
Cabbage (lbs)	2,938,622	2,309,397	27.2%
Cucumber (lbs)	1,030,300	600,519	71.6%
Coconut (acres planted)	18,600	17,000	9.4%
Okra (lbs)	109,000	54,500	100%
Pumpkin (lbs)	233,350	184,000	26.8%
String Beans (lbs)	28,871	16,248	77.7%
Squash (lbs)	233,080	113,500	105.4%
Sweet Corn (ears)	539,600	87,200	518.8%
Cattle (head)	190,483	178,594	6.7%
Sheep (head)	18,007	17,535	2.7%
Poultry (birds slaughtered)	12,678,429	11,915,126	6.4%
Shrimp (lbs)	1,763	1,702	3.6%

Accomplishments - Blue Economy & Civil Aviation

Key Accomplishments 2023/2024 - Fisheries Department

1. In 2023, the value of the Fishing Industry was estimated at US\$18.4 million with a total 3,507 licensed fishers and approximately 15,000 Belizeans being direct beneficiaries of the industry.
2. Belize has achieved the designation of 11.65% of its Ocean as High Biodiversity Protection Zones and 20.3% of total Ocean protection. It is expected that by November 2024, Belize will achieve a total of 25% of its Ocean protection and by 2026 increasing to a total of 30% of ocean protection.
3. Belize continues to access international markets for Queen Conch Sustained access to markets for Queen Conch with supporting harvest control rules established for the 2023-2024 fishing season with annual catch quota of 950,000 pounds. The Fisheries Department carried out a national Queen conch stock assessment that informed the establishment of the national catch quota.
4. In November 2023, the Government of Belize through financing from the Inter-American Development Bank, signed the Blue Loan BL-1042 to the sum of US\$7 million. The loan titled: '*Program for the Promotion of Sustainable growth in the Blue Economy*' is focused on institutional strengthening and fishery resource assessments for lobster, conchs, and finfish within the territorial waters. The loan will provide funding to support diversification opportunities for fishers.

Major Achievement for MBECA FY 2023/24

1. MBECA successfully secured a US\$7 million loan from the IDB to promote sustainable growth in the Blue Economy.
2. Ocean Country Partnership Programme project (UK Government), which MBECA is the leading entity – seeks to provide support to the Government of Belize in “Achieving fair and effective marine protected and conserved areas through the IUCN Green List”. The Government of Belize, as part of its broader marine conservation initiatives under the Belize Blue Bond

Agreement, has committed to ensuring Green Listing of three of its Marine Protected Areas by 2026.

3. MBECA working to deliver a strategic governance and institutional framework for blue economy development in Belize (IDB- BL-T1145).
4. MBECA providing feedback to policies developed in maritime transport, protected areas assessment, mariculture policy development, among others.
5. MBECA led the development of Cabinet Memorandum for the i) Ratification of the UNCLOS BBNJ Agreement and ii) Establishment of the Blue Economy Commission and Blue Economy Cluster.
6. MBECA successfully represented at the Belize Investment Summit and COP28.

Key Accomplishments by Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) during April 2023-February 2024

- (1) Celebration of CZMAI's Silver Jubilee Year/25th Anniversary of Service to Belize

Incorporated in April 1998 through the Parliament of Belize's enactment of the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) celebrated its 25th anniversary in April 2023. CZMAI is a very important institution with a key role in helping to safeguard the wealth of natural capital in Belize's ocean space. As the leading authority for promoting the sustainable use and planned development of Belize's coastal and marine resources, CZMAI has achieved 25 years of impeccable service to the people and nation of Belize. CZMAI is charged with advising on the formulation and strengthening of coastal zone management policies for sustainable development and conservation. CZMAI also assist with promoting fostering sustainable blue economy growth and development, coordinating research and monitoring to track human use activities and their impacts on the coastal zone of Belize and promoting public participation in the management of our coastal resources.

- (2) Development of the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP) in support of Delivery of Blue Bond Conservation Commitments

In October 2022, CZMAI was designated as the Government of Belize's lead agency for the development of the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (BSOP), which is a central component of the Blue Bond Agreement. BSOP is a marine spatial planning being developed that will balance the need to protect and conserve key habitats and ecosystems with that of bolstering sustainable blue economy development and delivering sustained prosperity for all Belizeans. It is on track to be delivered on the 5th Anniversary of the Blue Bond Agreement in the year 2026 in accordance with Milestone 6. During this current fiscal year, CZMAI was able to meet key milestones for the MSP Process. The following are key accomplishments that CZMAI would like to highlight:

(i) Increased and strengthened institutional capacity to successfully undergo the BSOP development process by finalizing the establishment a dedicated unit with five Belizean technical experts.

(ii) Hosted over 30 multi-stakeholder meetings with participation from government, non-government, private sector representatives and coastal communities to ensure that the BSOP development process is stakeholder-driven, transparent and inclusive. This approach will allow the citizens of Belize to express their perceptions of how the resources and spaces are currently used as well as their preferences and hopes for the future. These meetings are in line with the governance framework and the stakeholder engagement plan for the BSOP development process to ensure equitable, inclusive, and meaningful participation of stakeholders.

(iii) Implemented Ocean Use Surveys (OUS)-a tool used to capture social, economic, and environmental information on how individual resource users and sectors utilize Belize's ocean space and associated resources. The target group is 27 coastal communities and 3 offshore atolls. During the months of January 2024 and February 2024, close to 70% of target respondents have participated in the survey, representing six of eight sectors.

(3) Leveraging global support to enhance local efforts towards improving the resilience of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System-World Heritage Site
CZMAI, in collaboration with the Belize Fisheries Department under the auspices of the Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation, launched the "Strategy for Reef Resilience in Belize" in April 2023. The strategy development process was made

possible through the Great Barrier Reef Foundation's (GBRF) Resilient Reefs Initiative (RRI), which is a global partnership working with World Heritage coral reef sites and the communities that depend on them to adapt to climate change and local threats.

In June 2023, CZMAI deepened its partnership with GBRF to secure and mobilize BZ \$1.1 million grant funding as direct investment for the strategy implementation. The strategy is focused on the delivery of three flagship actions together with local partners, including the national University to build the resilience of coral reefs and the communities that depend on them. Later in October 2023, CZMAI also mobilized an additional BZ\$80, 000 to provide urgent financial support to the members of the National Coral Reef Monitoring Network to facilitate coral bleaching surveys during the heat wave that was being experienced globally. Furthermore, in December 2023 CZMAI secured an additional \$0.6 million dollars in grant funds for a watershed project to be executed along with three key GOB agencies that will utilize a "ridge to reef approach" targeting watershed and coastal and marine areas in southern Belize.

CIVIL AVIATION ACHIEVEMENTS FIN YEAR 2023-2024

1. Installation of a Primary Surveillance Radar (\$11 Million)
2. Signed agreement for upgrade of control center (\$5 million)
3. Worked with the Ministry of the Public Service to add 12 air traffic controller posts, 4 technical, 2 managerial posts to meet our air traffic control and oversight obligations create more efficiency and overall cost savings.
4. Developed strategy for the strengthening of the aviation governance institution (proposal for Civil Aviation Authority the authority will be able to better respond to the needs of fast-growing industry)
5. Guaranteed the provision of air traffic services for 14 hours a day (6 am to 18 pm) with once new staff are trained, we will be able to extend hours to 18 hours (6 am to 12 am)
6. Strengthened aviation safety and security with new regulations, capacity building for inspectors and surveillance programs. (to be continued in 2024-2025)
7. Reached 65% completion of certification of PGIA

Proposed for 2024 -2025

1. Continue to improve on strengthening Aviation safety and security
2. Finalize certification of PGIA (more attractive to foreign airlines)
3. Implementation of e governance platform
4. Master plan for aviation (this will help manage the growth of the industry)
5. upgrade of air traffic control center (\$5 million)

BELIZE AIRPORT AUTHORITIES ACHIEVEMENTS FIN YEAR 2023-2024

1. Rehabilitation of the Caye Caulker and Sir Barry Municipal Airstrip
2. Installation of Papi lights at 4 major Aerodrome
3. Strengthening Aviation Security at the 4 major aerodrome

Ministry of Economic Development

Key Achievements and Major Projects

WORLD BANK

Country Portfolio and Performance Review Mission

The GOB and the WB held the inaugural country portfolio and review meeting in January 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for a complete review of bank-funded projects with a view to assessing implementation performance, highlighting successes and identifying challenges. Three projects were reviewed in the session: (i) the Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project, (ii) the Energy Resilient and Climate Adaptation Project, and (iii) the Belize COVID-19 Health Response Project.

Belize Blue Economy Project (pipeline)

A project team from the World Bank is currently working on the development of the Belize Blue Economy Project. The project's purpose is to improve Belize's management capacity for sustainable development of its blue economy and increase access to climate resilient and sustainable water and sanitation services in targeted coastal areas. The total cost of the project is estimated at US \$15.46 million.

The project will have two substantive components. Component 1, Policy Development and Capacity Building, will support three subcomponents: policy development, capacity building, and blue economy investment program. Component 2, Investments in Water, Sanitation and Waste Management, will support three subcomponents – upgrade of the Belize City Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), expansion of water supply in South San Pedro, and a waste management pilot in San Pedro.

Joint Inter-American Development Bank-World Bank Disaster Risk Finance Initiative

In August of 2023, the IDB and the WB signed a memorandum of understanding that provides the basis for collaboration on disaster risk finance. The objective of this joint initiative is to help Caribbean countries better manage the impacts of natural disasters on lives, assets, livelihoods and economies, and be better prepared for catastrophic events. The initiative focuses on supporting countries to strengthen the development and implementation of robust disaster risk finance strategies and effective financial instruments that would improve ex ante public financial management of rapid post-disaster response and recovery funds, including access to immediate liquidity, while addressing crisis preparedness and adaption needs.

As a first step in operationalizing support for Belize under the initiative, an orientation mission was held in Belize on January 24 and 25, 2024. The mission team advised on the main elements of the initiative, namely (i) the conduct of a joint comprehensive assessment, which will provide an evidence-based platform for (ii) the development of a national Disaster Risk Financing Strategy (DRFS) for Belize. In addition to supporting the development of Belize's DRFS, the initiative will also provide resources to help execute the activities articulated therein.

Work has begun in collecting relevant data and information that will help to inform the preparation of the joint comprehensive assessment.

Belize Public Expenditure Review

In August of 2023, the WB completed a draft Public Expenditure Review (PER) for Belize. The Public Expenditure Review (PER) provides a comprehensive analysis of the country's fiscal policies and spending patterns over the last decade and offers a road map for policy makers to achieve more sustainable and equitable development outcomes and enhance the performance of public institutions. The review highlights the significant progress made by Belize in recent years, particularly in terms of fiscal consolidation and debt management, and also identifies some areas for improvement in term of public financial management, and also efficiency and effectiveness gains to be had in the education and health sectors. A date for a dissemination event is currently being finalized, tentatively scheduled for March 2024.

Belize Renewable Integration and Energy Resilient System Project (pipeline)

In early 2023, the World Bank began work on the development of an energy project, titled the Belize Renewables Integration and Energy Resilient System Project. The development objective of the project is to enable integration of new renewable energy generation and enhance the electricity system resilience against extreme climates by strengthening the national transmission infrastructure. Preliminary estimates put the total cost of the project at approximately US\$64.5 million.

The project has two substantive technical components. Component 1 entails the supply and installation of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) at four locations, tentatively identified as Ladyville, Orange Walk, Independence and San Pedro, for a total capacity of 40 MW / 4h. Component 2 covers the supply and installation of grid resilient infrastructure (new or upgraded grid assets) to improve the resilience to climate events.

A number of project missions related to scoping, appraisal, implementation and procurement have been conducted and the project's final design is advanced.

World Bank International Development Association (IDA)

In 2023, Belize applied to the World Bank to be eligible for financing under the International Development Association (IDA). The International Development Association is the part of the World Bank that helps the world's poorest countries. It aims to reduce poverty by providing zero to low-interest loans (called "credits") and grants for programs that boost economic growth, reduce inequalities, and improve people's living conditions.

Belize's application was approved on February 14, 2024 and we are now eligible for highly concessional resources with zero or very low interest charge and repayment schedules stretched over 30 to 40 years. Preliminary discussions on how government wants to program its IDA allocation, estimated at USD \$17 million, is already underway.

THE MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION

The Belize Compact Development Team, under the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment, has contributed to the development of a Joint Design Document that defines the rationale and objectives for an Education and Energy Project to be funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The projects were designed collaboratively with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and relevant stakeholders and with technical guidance and financial support from the MCC. The projects aim to equitably increase in the availability of post-primary graduates with the competencies relevant to labour market demands and to lower the wholesale cost of electricity and are scheduled to be implemented in the five-year period 2025-2030. The total grant for the implementation of both projects is estimated to be US\$117,406,000.

CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

(All BZD)

- The civil works component of the **Coastal Highway Upgrading Project** concluded this year. The roadway was inaugurated as the Coastal Plain Highway on July 6, 2023.
 - Rehabilitation of approximately 59 km of roadway including pavement upgrading, safety improvements and climate adaptation works, bridge repairs and replacement, engineering and construction-related services, project management and capacity-building.
 - CDB Loan: 73,152,000
 - UKCIF Grant: 65,132,000
 - GOB Counterpart: 17,904,345
- Work continues on the **Philip Goldson Highway and Remate Bypass Upgrading Project** with completion scheduled by December 2024.
 - Road rehabilitation and upgrade of approximately 125km of roadway. Works include pavement upgrades, road realignments, junction improvements, culvert construction, signage, markings, sidewalks, bus shelters and pedestrian crossing installations, as well as the creation of safe zones at selected schools considered at high risk for road traffic incidents.
 - CDB Loan: 68,800,000
 - UKCIF Grant: 37,150,900
 - GOB Counterpart: 13,783,600
- The infrastructure component of the **Belize Education Sector Reform Project II** will resume during the coming financial year with completion expected by December 31, 2026.
 - Enhancement of the Learning Environment through physical infrastructure, furniture and equipment; enhanced mechanisms and capacity for quality service delivery by addressing institutional management issues that affect low participation and gaps in the current response to strengthening of the system
 - CDB Loan – 70,000,000

- CDB Grant – 920,640
- GOB Counterpart – 17,576,000
- **Lines of Credit to the DFC:** Disbursement is ongoing on the \$40 mn 8th Consolidated Line of Credit, and new lines have been secured for Education (12.0 mn) and to support agriculture and industry (\$27.5 mn)
- Interventions to facilitate trade:
 - **Enhancing the Belize National Quality Infrastructure** – Belize Bureau of Standards:
 - Procurement of OIML Class E1 and F2 mass standards and appropriate storage and handling equipment; (b) the calibration of existing equipment; and (c) training of BBS’ staff and external stakeholders in ISO 9001:2015 and ISO/IEC 17025:2017
 - CDB (EPA/CSME SF) Grant – 256,623
 - BBS Counterpart – 126,540
 - **Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Belize to Facilitate Trade** – Directorate General of Foreign Trade/Customs and Excise Department
 - Feasibility study on the technical, legal, and financial requirements for the establishment of an electronic single window (ESW) Facility and a performance tool to measure the effectiveness of operational procedures carried out by stakeholders in the standard processing of imports, exports, cross border and in transit movements; capacity building workshop in the design and conduct of a time release study (TRS); and sensitisation workshop to communicate the objectives and methodology of the TRS.
 - CDB Grant - 683,120
 - GOB Counterpart – 122,000
 - **Development of a Risk-based Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) Import and Export Control System for Belize**
 - Improvement to Belize's sanitary/phytosanitary control and inspection and compliance with SPS import requirements through the development of a web-based inspection management system for SPS operations and a risk-based SPS import and export control framework.
 - CDB Grant – 400,710
 - BAHA Counterpart – 114,000

CABEI

Non-Reimbursable Technical Assistance; Renewable Energy in Fisheries Sector

This pilot project aims to assess the feasibility of transitioning from traditional fossil fuel reliance to solar power for vessels and communication equipment within the fishing sector. The study is scheduled to span one year, with technical assistance for the project reviewed and approved by CABEI. A concept note outlining the scope of work has been developed into terms of reference (TOR) for the project. Pending approval from the MBECA team, implementation is anticipated to commence in 2024.

ANRI Modernization (Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute)

A proposal for the modernization of ANRI has been submitted for funding consideration by CABEI through the Taiwan Fund. This funding mechanism provides technical assistance up to US \$1,000,000 annually. The aim of this initiative is to upgrade ANRI's equipment and implement contemporary agricultural practices. Anticipated outcomes include enhanced employability for Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute (ANRI) graduates, elevated competency levels, and an overall improvement in the quality of skilled labour within the agricultural sector.

Municipal Climate Resiliency Initiative in Belize (MCRIB)

Belize, akin to many small island states, confronts a multitude of challenges stemming from climate change. The Municipal Climate Resilient Initiative in Belize (MCRIB) Project aims to address these challenges by implementing mitigative measures across various districts, as identified by the team at the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH). Through actionable approaches, the project aims to facilitate adaptation to climate change effects at the municipal level. Tailored interventions will be designed to address specific challenges unique to each municipality, encompassing issues such as coastal erosion, water drainage, flood management, and Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) surveys.

Currently in the pipeline stage with CABEI, the project is set to receive non-reimbursable cooperation. MIDH is in the process of developing TORs to delineate precise interventions for each district.

Modernization of 3 Hospitals in Belize (Punta Gorda, Orange Walk, Belize)

The Belizean healthcare system plays a pivotal role in shaping and safeguarding social structures. It not only embodies the standards of care but also underscores the value placed on citizen well-being within the nation. The recent modernization efforts targeting two healthcare facilities in Belize follow in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which laid bare systemic faults and shortcomings in need of urgent attention.

This initiative is focused on identifying weaknesses within the three identified hospitals and devising actionable resolutions. Remedial recommendations span from personnel retention strategies to infrastructure enhancements and the facilitation of healthcare accessibility across Belize. CABEI has committed to funding the necessary studies, under non-reimbursable cooperation, to explore the feasibility of these proposed advancements in hospital modernization across Belize.

National Rural Development Strategy

In 2018, around 52% of Belizeans were living in poverty, with 29% residing in rural areas. Recognizing the imperative to enhance livelihoods and alleviate poverty; there arose a pressing need for a comprehensive rural development strategy.

Through non-reimbursable cooperation, CABEI has committed to funding this study and is currently in the process of formulating TORs for its execution.

The study will serve as a blueprint, providing guidance for the development of the rural sector while pinpointing strategies geared toward poverty reduction and economic growth. Emphasizing inclusivity, practicality, and a focus on the social dimensions of economic development, this strategy aims to foster sustainable progress in rural communities.

BE-Multi Complex Efficiency Building and Compound

The BE (Blue Economy) Multi-complex Efficiency building will incorporate a range of energy-efficient features, including infrastructure designed for optimal energy usage, solar-powered outdoor lighting for both the building exterior and parking lot, water catchment and heating systems, an efficient wastewater disposal system, a well-designed drainage system, adequate ventilation, disability-friendly infrastructure, and hurricane shutters.

This complex is poised to serve as a catalyst for motivation among all stakeholders within the Blue Economy and Civil Aviation Sectors. Under the auspices of CABEI's non-reimbursable cooperation, this study will encompass the estimated costs associated with the development of the building, including the demolition of the old Fisheries Building, construction, supervision of works, and the subsequent inauguration.

KOREAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FUND (EDCF)

Delegations from the Republic of Korea and Belize met in Seoul on 1 August 2023 for the negotiation on the Framework Agreement for Grant Aid between the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of Belize.

This agreement promotes poverty reduction and the sustainable economic, trade and investment, and social development of Belize through grant aid from the Republic of Korea and further strengthens the collaborative relations between the two countries.

The following forms of grant aid programs include, but is not limited to:

- a) Inviting nationals of Belize to training programs in the Republic of Korea;
- b) Dispatching experts and volunteers to Belize;
- c) Providing Belize with equipment, machinery and materials in connection with grant aid programs;
- d) Constructing facilities that are necessary for implementing these grant aided programs;
- e) Coordinating with the respective authorities to implement the programs;
- f) Providing the Belize Government with other forms of grant aided programs, as agreed upon by both parties.

The meeting also resulted in the approval of a Korean Economic Development Cooperation Fund (ECDF) program at a 0.1% interest rate with a 30-year payback period.

CENTRAL EXECUTION UNIT

1. Strengthening Public Expenditure Management (SPEM) – Bz 16 Million IDB Loan

The objective is to increase the efficiency of public resources by strengthening public financial management through improved efficiency in the Ministry of Finance:

- Strengthened the Ministry of Finance Procurement office by hiring additional staff, remodeled office space and purchased office equipment including computers and printers and furniture
- Assisted in the establishment of the Internal Audit unit by hiring additional staff and hired a consultant to finalize the draft Internal Audit Act, and recommend for the acquisition of an Audit Management Software
- Hired a Gender and Climate Change Expert to support the Ministry of Finance in improving budgetary practices and incorporation of gender and climate change related expenditures/considerations
- Hired a consultant to review and update the existing chart of accounts (CoA) to bring them up to date with the International Public Sector Accounting and Government Finance Statistics Standards
- Coordinating implementation of additional SmartStream modules for Assets Management, Public Debt and Project Management as well implementation of a new cashiering module for the Treasury department
- Coordinating a partnership between the ministry of the Public Service and the University of Belize for institutional strengthening that will provide among other things an e-learning program for public officers beginning with Finance Officers. Also supporting the hiring of additional support staff, purchase of equipment and furniture and remodeling of space for the MPSCPR&RA
- Strengthening CITO's capacity by hiring additional staff, purchasing software and equipment including servers and data mining tools that will improve CITO's data warehouse platform/infrastructure and hiring a data warehouse and data mining expert consultant

2. Digital Innovation to Boost Economic Development – Bz \$20 Million

Signed a contract to Design, Develop and Implement a Civil Registry and Vital Statistics System on 11th April 2023 with Consulting firm Norway Registers Development (NRD) which will digitize and facilitate citizen services at the VSU. This project should be completed and rolled out by mid 2024

- Hired a consultant to design a cluster development plan for digital service providers which will increase the awareness of local digital service opportunities and create an enabling ecosystem for the uptake and adoption of digital services by MSMEs.
-

3. Sustainable and Inclusive Belize – Bz \$30 Million

- Commenced work with MAFSE and MTDA to develop the framework for a skills development ecosystem in the agriculture and tourism sectors.

- Trained 33 technical advisors in the tourism and agriculture sector focusing on mentoring and development of business plans. To ensure the sustainability of the pilot training, sixteen (16) of the 33 participated in additional “Train the Trainer” training focus in effective training techniques and delivery. These technical advisors will help individual farmers and small farmer organizations as well as MSMEs in the tourism sector access small grants to improve the quality and resilience of their products and services
- Supported the contracting of 3 Extension Officers in MAFSE and purchased motorcycles for them
- Purchased a data logger for the MET Service that will improve weather forecasting, monitoring, tracking and reporting

4. Saudi Fund for Development US\$45 Million loan for the construction of Tertiary Hospital in Belmopan

- Issued a Request for Proposal for the Design and Supervision of the Tertiary Level Hospital in Belmopan. The selection process should be completed by the end of March and a contract signed in April.

5. Saudi Fund for Development US\$77 Million loan for the construction of 60 MW Solar plants

- Working with BEL to construct the first 20MW plant using a design and site that they have already identified. This will help put in place the urgently needed energy production capacity faster than previously anticipated.

POLICY AND PLANNING UNIT

Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)

The MED continued engagements with the CDB during 2023-2024 under the Country Engagement Strategy (CES) 2022-2026. Strategic themes of the CES are building social resilience, building financial resilience, and building environmental resilience. These were later expanded to include building production and institutional resilience, respectively. The indicative support programme is presented in the table below.

CDB Projects Completed

NO.	PROJECT	END DATE	TOTAL COST (BZD)
1	Education Sector Reform Project II	Aug-23	88,496,640
2	Sixth Power Project - Electricity System Upgrade and Expansion	Sep-23	30,420,000
3	Enhancing the Belize National Quality Infrastructure	Dec-23	383,163
4	Sixth Road (Coastal Highway Upgrading) Project	Mar-24	155,416,660
5	Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Belize to Facilitate Trade	Mar-24	805,120

6	Seventh Power (Caye Caulker Submarine) Project	Mar-24	17,330,000
7	Development of a Risk-based Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) Import and Export Control System for Belize	Mar-24	514,710
	Total		293,366,293

World Bank

The GOB and the World Bank (WB) held the inaugural country portfolio and review meeting in January 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for a complete review of bank-funded projects to assess implementation performance, highlighting successes, and identifying challenges. Three projects were reviewed in the session: (i) the Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Project, (ii) the Energy Resilient and Climate Adaptation Project, and (iii) the Belize COVID-19 Health Response Project.

A. Belize Blue Economy Project (Pipeline)

A project team from the World Bank is currently working on the development of the Belize Blue Economy Project. The project's purpose is to improve Belize's management capacity for sustainable development of its blue economy and increase access to climate resilient and sustainable water and sanitation services in targeted coastal areas. The total cost of the project is estimated at US \$15.46 million.

The project will have two substantive components. Component 1- Policy Development and Capacity Building will support three subcomponents: policy development, capacity building, and blue economy investment program. Component 2- Investments in Water, Sanitation and Waste Management, will support three subcomponents: upgrade of the Belize City Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), expansion of water supply in South San Pedro, and a waste management pilot in San Pedro

B. Joint Inter-American Development Bank-World Bank Disaster Risk Finance Initiative

In August of 2023, the IDB and the WB signed a memorandum of understanding that provides the basis for collaboration on disaster risk finance. The objective of this joint initiative is to help Caribbean countries better manage the impacts of natural disasters on lives, assets, livelihoods, and economies, and be better prepared for catastrophic events. The initiative focuses on supporting countries to strengthen the development and implementation of robust disaster risk finance strategies and effective financial instruments that would improve ex ante public financial management of rapid post-disaster response and recovery funds, including access to immediate liquidity, while addressing crisis preparedness and adaption needs.

As a first step in operationalizing support for Belize under the initiative, an orientation mission was held in Belize on January 24 and 25, 2024. The mission team advised on the main elements of the initiative, namely: (i) the conduct of a joint comprehensive assessment, which will provide an evidence-based platform for (ii) the development of a national Disaster Risk Financing Strategy (DRFS) for Belize. In addition to supporting the development of Belize's DRFS, the initiative will also provide resources to help execute the activities articulated therein.

Work has begun in collecting relevant data and information that will help to inform the preparation of the joint comprehensive assessment.

C. Belize Public Expenditure Review

In August of 2023, the WB completed a draft Public Expenditure Review (PER) for Belize. The Public Expenditure Review (PER) provides a comprehensive analysis of the country's fiscal policies and spending patterns over the last decade and offers a road map for policy makers to achieve more sustainable and equitable development outcomes and enhance the performance of public institutions. The review highlights the significant progress made by Belize in recent years, particularly in terms of fiscal consolidation and debt management, and identifies some areas for improvement in term of public financial management, and efficiency and effectiveness gains to be had in the education and health sectors. A date for a dissemination event is currently being finalized, tentatively scheduled for March 2024.

D. Belize Renewable Integration and Energy Resilient System Project (Pipeline)

In early 2023, the World Bank began work on the development of an energy project entitled, "The Belize Renewables Integration and Energy Resilient System Project." The development objective of the project is to enable integration of new renewable energy generation and enhance the electricity system resilience against extreme climates by strengthening the national transmission infrastructure. Preliminary estimates put the total cost of the project at approximately US \$64.5 million.

The project has two substantive technical components. Component 1 entails the supply and installation of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) at four locations, tentatively identified as Ladyville, Orange Walk, Independence and San Pedro, for a total capacity of 40 MW / 4h. Component 2 covers the supply and installation of grid resilient infrastructure (new or upgraded grid assets) to improve the resilience to climate events.

A few project missions related to scoping, appraisal, implementation, and procurement have been conducted and the project's final design is advanced.

Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)

A. Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) Non-Reimbursable Technical Assistance; Renewable Energy in Fisheries Sector

This pilot project aims to assess the feasibility of transitioning from traditional fossil fuel reliance to solar power for vessels and communication equipment within the fishing sector. The study is scheduled to span one year, with technical assistance for the project reviewed and approved by CABEI. A concept note outlining the scope of work has been developed into terms of reference (TOR) for the project. Pending approval from the MBECA team, implementation is anticipated to commence in 2024.

B. ANRI Modernization (Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute)

A proposal for the modernization of ANRI has been submitted for funding consideration by CABEI through the Taiwan Fund. This funding mechanism provides technical assistance up to US \$1,000,000 annually. The aim of this initiative is to upgrade ANRI's equipment and implement contemporary agricultural practices. Anticipated outcomes include enhanced employability for Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute (ANRI) graduates, elevated competency levels, and an overall improvement in the quality of skilled labour within the agricultural sector.

C. Municipal Climate Resiliency Initiative in Belize (MCRIB)

Belize, akin to many small island states, confronts a multitude of challenges stemming from climate change. The Municipal Climate Resilient Initiative in Belize (MCRIB) Project aims to address these challenges by implementing mitigative measures across various districts, as identified by the team at the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH). Through actionable approaches, the project aims to facilitate adaptation to climate change effects at the municipal level. Tailored interventions will be designed to address specific challenges unique to each municipality, encompassing issues such as coastal erosion, water drainage, flood management, and Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) surveys. Currently in the pipeline stage with CABEI, the project is set to receive non-reimbursable cooperation. MIDH is in the process of developing TORs to delineate precise interventions for each district.

D. Modernization of 3 Hospitals in Belize (Punta Gorda, Orange Walk, Belize)

The Belizean healthcare system plays a pivotal role in shaping and safeguarding social structures. It not only embodies the standards of care but also underscores the value placed on citizen well-being within the nation. The recent modernization efforts targeting two healthcare facilities in Belize follow in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which laid bare systemic faults and shortcomings in need of urgent attention.

This initiative is laser-focused on identifying weaknesses within the three identified hospitals and devising actionable resolutions. Remedial recommendations span from personnel retention strategies to infrastructure enhancements and the facilitation of healthcare accessibility across Belize.

CABEI has committed to funding the necessary studies, under non-reimbursable cooperation, to explore the feasibility of these proposed advancements in hospital modernization across Belize.

E. National Rural Development Strategy

In 2018, around 52% of Belizeans were living in poverty, with 29% residing in rural areas. Recognizing the imperative to enhance livelihoods and alleviate poverty; there arose a pressing need for a comprehensive rural development strategy.

Through non-reimbursable cooperation, CABEI has committed to funding this study and is currently in the process of formulating TORs for its execution.

The study will serve as a blueprint, providing guidance for the development of the rural sector while pinpointing strategies geared toward poverty reduction and economic growth. Emphasizing inclusivity, practicality, and a focus on the social dimensions of economic development, this strategy aims to foster sustainable progress in rural communities.

F. BE-Multi Complex Efficiency Building and Compound

The BE (Blue Economy) Multi-complex Efficiency building will incorporate a range of energy-efficient features, including infrastructure designed for optimal energy usage, solar-powered outdoor lighting for both the building exterior and parking lot, water catchment and heating systems, an efficient wastewater disposal system, a well-designed drainage system, adequate ventilation, disability-friendly infrastructure, and hurricane shutters.

This complex is poised to serve as a catalyst for motivation among all stakeholders within the Blue Economy and Civil Aviation Sectors. Under the auspices of CABEI's non-reimbursable cooperation, this study will encompass the estimated costs associated with the development of the

building, including the demolition of the old Fisheries Building, construction, supervision of works, and the subsequent inauguration.

Caricom Development Fund

Project Title	Expected Duration	Amount (BZD)	Remarks
Component 7- Rudimentary Water System Upgrade	Jan 2020- July 2022 Ext- Dec 2023	1,791,634	TDD Extension Request to June 28, 2024- Pending
Honey Production Redevelopment Support Project	Nov 2018- November 2020 Ext- November 2021,2022,2023	1,050,535	Project Completed December 2023
Covered Structures Project	September 2019- August 2021 Ext-August 2022, 2023	917,867	Project completed 2023
DFC-CDF Line of Credit	Sept- 2019- Sept- 2023	6,200,000	Pending Request for project extension
		9,960,036	

A. Component 7- Rudimentary Water System Upgrade

Improvements to the Chunox, Georgeville, Mahogany Heights, and San Antonio (Toledo) Water Supply Systems. The project comprises small-scale infrastructure works and capacity building for key stakeholders. Water supply systems upgraded for Georgeville, Mahogany Heights, and San Antonio completed.

B. Honey Production Redevelopment Project

Increased beekeeper capacity: The project has trained 150 beekeepers, providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully manage their apiaries. New beekeeping equipment- Eighty-five (85) new beekeepers received new equipment for beekeeping. New apiaries built- The successful construction of three (3) apiaries in Escuela Mexico, Central Farm, and Stann Creek. Project Completed December 2023.

C. Covered Structures Project

Funded by the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), aims to increase and stabilize vegetable production using protected cultivation methods. Launched in 2020, the project focuses on supporting small-scale farmers, particularly women and disadvantaged youth, in adopting covered structures like greenhouses and shade tunnels.

D. DFC-CDF Line of Credit

The DFC-CDF Line of Credit (LoC) project in Belize is a partnership between the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) of Belize and the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF). This project aims to provide affordable financing to eligible businesses in the productive sector of Belize, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

DFC requested extension of project on December 22, 2023. The last report of about Q3 2023 did not show any movement in the line of credit. DFC to submit a clear plan prior to CDF review.

IADB: Inter-American Development Bank

The Inter-American Development Bank is steadfast in its continuous support in assisting in the development of our country. The Bank continues to focus on the strategic priority areas that are set out in its Country Strategy program.

Recently Approved/ Pipeline Project financed with IDB

Project Name	Executing Agency	Funding Agency	Project Cost (BZD)
Water and Sanitation Program for Rural Belize	SIF	IDB	\$9,280,000
Urban Municipal Infrastructure Program	CEU	IDB	\$30,000,000
Water Supply and Modernization Program	BWSL	IDB	\$24,000,000
Skills for the Future Program	MOE	IDB	\$30,000,000
			\$10,000,000
Advancing Water Disinfection in Urban and Rural Areas	BWSL	IDB	\$550,000
Support to the Integrated Water Resources Management Project	BWSL	IDB	\$500,000
Support Migration Initiative in Belize	IDB	IDB	\$300,000
Improving Efficiency, Quality, and Access in Belize's Health System	Health	IDB	\$17,600,000
promoting sustainable Growth in the Blue Economy Program	CEU	IDB	\$14,000,000
Supporting the preparation and execution of the migration portfolio in Belize	IDB	IDB	\$200,000

A. Water and Sanitation Program for Rural Belize - BZ \$9,280,000

The Government of Belize is committed to improve the quality of water services in Belize's rural areas through the following specific objectives: (i) improving the drinkability of water in rural areas; and (ii) strengthening the financial management of Village Water Boards (VWB) and the institutional capacity of Belize's water sector.

B. Urban Municipal Infrastructure Program – BZ \$30,000,000

The Government of Belize is committed to improve the quality of livelihood of all Belizeans and embarked on infrastructural development to improve the livelihood of three municipalities (San Pedro, Corozal, and Orange Walk).

C. Water Supply and Modernization Program – BZ \$24,000,000

The general objectives of the program are to contribute to reduced service gaps between urban and peri-urban/rural areas and to strengthen the institutional capacity of BWSL.

D. Skills for the Future Program – BZ \$40,000,000

The objective of the project is to contribute to the closing of the skills gap to prepare tomorrow's workforce of the fourth Industrial Revolution (4iR)

E. Advancing Water Disinfection in Urban and Rural Areas- BZ \$550,000

The objective of the project is to implement innovative on-site water disinfection technologies in Urban and rural areas of Belize.

F. Support to the Integrated Water Resources Management Project – BZ \$500,000

The objective of the project is to assess the conditions of water resources in critical watersheds in Belize and support the development of the institutional and legal framework for water resources management in Belize.

G. Support Migration Initiative in Belize – BZ \$300,000

The objective of the project is to increase government capacity to produce and analyse data related to migration to support project evaluation and decision making in Belize.

H. Improving Efficiency, quality, and Access in Belize's Health System- BZ \$17,600,000

The objective of the project is to improve the health of the population in Belize through increased efficiency, quality, and access to health services.

I. Promoting Sustainable Growth in the Blue Economy Program -BZ \$14,000,000

The general objectives of the Program are to improve income generation capacity of artisanal fisherfolks, and to maintain export levels of fisheries products while contributing to the sustainable use of commercial oceanic resources.

J. Supporting the preparation and execution of the Migration portfolio in Belize -BZ \$200,000

Technical Cooperation

The objective of this Technical Cooperation is to support the Government of Belize in the implementation of the migration-related portfolio and the generation of information to better characterize the needs and barriers of migrant population to comply with the eligibility criteria to use the GRF resources to expand the scope of the 2024 pipeline operations to benefit migrant population.

On August 1st, Dr. Osmond Martinez, CEO for the MED, and Mr. Park Yongmin, Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs of the Republic of Korea, signed a Historical Cooperation Framework Agreement, of which Hon. John Briceño, Prime Minister of Belize and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment was a witness.

This agreement promotes poverty reduction and sustainable economic, trade and investment, and social development of Belize through grant aid from the Republic of Korea, and further strengthens the collaborative relations between the two countries.

Climate Finance Unit – Main Achievements

A. Green Climate Fund approved MED to act as Delivery Partner for 2023 Readiness Project.

MED went through a rigid GAP assessment process where there were several frameworks and policies that were required in order to fulfil the criteria towards accreditation. This GAP assessment gave rise to a plan of action to move closer to the overall goal. MED did a self-assessment using the GCF Financial Management Capacity (FMCA) and the report was provided to UNOPS for further evaluation and consideration for MED to be a delivery partner. As a result

of both GAP assessment and FMCA, MED planned strategically several consultancies under GCF Readiness Program 10. After several iterations of the FMCA, MED managed to prove to UNOPS that with it is capable to be a Delivery Partner for readiness projects, meanwhile it further seeks full accreditation. The ministry submitted to the GCF, the approved readiness project entitled, “Strengthening the Capacity of the Ministry of Economic Development for pre-accreditation to the GCF, totalling BZ \$627,236.” This readiness grant allows the MED to be positioned to seek GCF accreditation as a Direct Access Entity. This project will start implementation in 2024.

B. Building the Adaptive Capacity of Sugarcane Farmers in Northern Belize.

The National Designated Authority and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre have received confirmation from the GCF that the full funding proposal project entitled, “Building the Adaptive Capacity of Sugarcane Farmers in Northern Belize,” valued at BZ \$78 million will be tabled at the GCF Board Meeting for consideration and approval. The GCF Board meeting will be held from March 4-7, 2024, in Kigali, Rwanda.

C. Development Finance Corporation Accreditation to Green Climate Fund

The Ministry of Economic Development and the Caribbean Development Bank as the Delivery Partner have completed the implementation of the following readiness project entitled, “Belize Development Finance Corporation Capacity Strengthening for Accreditation to the Green Climate Fund”. The DFC has now uploaded all related documentation for accreditation to the GCF Accreditation Digital Platform which will be reviewed by the GCF personnel.

D. Fisheries and Coastal NAP (National Adaptation Plan) Completed

The first of 3 GCF (Green Climate Fund) Readiness Projects that have been approved for the completion of sectoral NAPs. Resulted in 1 concept note that has been submitted to the GCF. The NAP for the Water Sector is undergoing implementation and the recently approved Multisectoral NAP (health, infrastructure and land use, forestry, tourism, agriculture) is beginning implementation.

E. Adaptation Fund BZ \$10 million project approved.

Project entitled, “Building Community Resilience via Transformative Adaptation.” This project will begin implementation in 2024 under the management of PACT as the Accredited Entity, with collaboration from relevant government ministries, including the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Labor and Local Government.

F. Ambergris Caye Water/Wastewater Project – BZ \$100 million

GOB, BWSL and CCCCC are collaborating on the development of a BZ \$100 million concept note entitled “Building Climate Resilience into the Water and Wastewater Systems of North Ambergris Caye,” to submit to the GCF in 2024.

The total project is valued at BZ \$300 million, but we are accessing BZ \$100 million in grant funding from the GCF. So far, GOB has pledged to provide the CCCCC BZ \$2 million in project preparation support to fast-track the development of the full proposal.

G. Green Bonds

Belize's successful blue bond programme has resulted in the Government of Belize led by the Ministry of Economic Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management in identifying other non-traditional financings instruments such as thematic bonds, specifically green bonds.

As a result, the MED has managed to access technical corporation from the IDB to undertake an analysis of an existing portfolio of projects and programs to identify a potential sub-portfolio eligible for green bond issuance, including a gap analysis in terms of institutional capacity, existing information systems, monitoring systems, and reporting. This support will enable us to strengthen our work agenda in identifying the best suitable option of green bonds for Belize.

H. CORVI Initiative

Belize signs MOU with Taiwan for the commencement of Climate and Ocean Risk Vulnerability Index (CORVI) data and survey collection in Belize City and surrounding areas, valued at BZ \$660,000.

I. Monitoring and Evaluation of Climate Projects

The Monitoring and Evaluation desk within the Climate Finance Unit commenced implementation of bi-weekly project progress updates. This is done with the intent to keep a closer tab and track all the GOB projects being captured by the ministry to ensure commitments and timelines are best adhered to and proper executing of project deliverables.

Development of a preliminary in-house climate finance project information dashboard to provide rapid overview and general stats on climate project categories, development status and financing sources. The dashboard tool allows management to make fast decisions based on climate finance project data collected by CFU.

J. NAPGN (National Adaptation Plan Global Network) Peer-Learning Exchange in Bonn, Germany

GOB and Galen University attended peer-learning exchange for Central American countries to share experiences in NAP development with a focus on the involvement of academia in the NAP process. The team presented the progress and lessons learnt of the now completed Fisheries and Coastal NAP.

Ongoing Projects for CFU

1. Resilient Rural Belize – USD 20 Million (GCF)

With funding from the GCF, IFAD and co-finance provided by GOB, RRB aims to increase the economic, social, and environmental resilience of smallholder farmers, thus creating the conditions for farmers to have a sustainable market access for their produce. The programme promotes climate-smart agricultural production, investing in climate proof infrastructure, supporting producer associations, and strengthening value chains to reinsert smallholder farmers as reliable, competitive suppliers of domestic produce in Belize. There will be a request sent to the GCF to extend the project for an additional two years to mitigate the delays experienced during the COVID pandemic.

2. Enhancing Access for Climate Finance Opportunities, through pre-accreditation support to Belize Social Investment Fund (BSIF) and Ministry of Economic Development (MED)

and technical support for Belize National Protected Areas System (BNPAS) Entities, Belize – USD 600,000.

This project will provide technical support to the Belize Social Investment Fund (BSIF) and the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) in seeking GCF accreditation. In addition, the Belize National Protected Areas System (BNPAS) Entities. Belize will receive technical support for project preparation to access climate finance. The Belize Social Investment Fund is currently undergoing an assessment to develop a financial management framework and grant award mechanism, while the Ministry of Economic Development is in the process of developing their strategic plan.

3. Integrated Flood Management in the Upper Belize River Watershed – USD 671,221.

The Government of Belize, through its local government, the San Ignacio/Santa Elena Town Council and its partners, are intent in procuring additional funds through the GCF, to upgrade the drainage network in flash-flood prone areas of the San Ignacio and Santa Elena municipalities. Part of the funds will be used to finance the upgrade of drainage networks, pollution remedial treatment infrastructure, climate risk communication measures, and a comprehensive public awareness and education programme on climate risk management. These activities will be supported by a multi-disciplinary team from various specialised agencies and implanted via an integrated and participatory approach. Currently ongoing is the deliverable to conduct the feasibility study and Environmental and Social Impact Assessment for the project.

4. Traditional Savanna Fire Management Readiness Proposal to facilitate Emissions Reductions in the AFOLU sector in Belize – USD 400,000.

Belize identified AFOLU (including forest fires) as an important threat that would be aggravated by climate change. One of the key strategic aims identified was to “ensure the conservation, utilization and sustainable use of forest resources” by properly managing forest fires. Strengthening forest fire management and response and facilitating local level partnerships with communities are also prominent in Belize’s strategy. Project lead has been identified and implementation of activities will commence in March 2023. ISFMI conduct a mission in Belize in October 2024. A subsequent report was submitted to the GCF and are awaiting the further disbursement of funds.

5. Building Capacity for Climate Resilient Infrastructure and Sustainable Urban Land Management and Strengthening the Capacity of the Ministry of Economic Development for pre-Accreditation to the Green Climate Fund – USD 998,307.

This proposed Readiness grant is a two-tier proposal, (1) building the human resource capacity, policies and structures of the NDA, in its pursuit of seeking accreditation from GCF to become a Direct Access Entity; and (2) develop the strategic framework and institutional capacity of the Belize Association of Planners (BAP) and the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH) to guide the country in achieving climate resilient human settlements and infrastructures. A key deliverable is the development of 3 concept notes; these are being developed for BAP, the Belize Livestock Producers Association (valued at USD 20 million) and an e-mobility project (valued at EUR 23 million).

6. Enabling Activities for the Formulation and Implementation of a Multisectoral National Adaptation Plan for Belize – \$1,487,030

As a continuation of the recently completed NAP for the coastal zone and fisheries sector and the ongoing NAP for the water sector, the GCF recently approved funding for the formulation of a multisectoral NAP targeting the following 5 sectors: agriculture, tourism, land use, human settlement and infrastructure, human health and forestry.

7. National Adaptation Plan for the Water Sector - \$ 902,937.

This NAP is currently ongoing as the consultants are finishing the final deliverables. A stakeholder meeting to validate the document is proposed for March or April 2024.

8. Enhancing Climate Change Resilience of Health Systems in the Caribbean – \$250,000

This project is a regional readiness project targeting the health sector in 7 countries: Belize, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, Guyana, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago. Belize is facing some delays in the procurement of a new project coordinator.

9. Building Community Resilience via Transformative Adaptation - \$5,000,000.

Belize's second Adaptation Fund project was approved and will begin implementation in 2024. The first disbursement of funds was received on February 2, 2024. This project aims to build community resilience via transformative adaptation and specifically will work to improve Belize's long-term capacity to protect communities from climate threats posed by drought, unpredictable water availability, floods, and improper wildfire management.

10. Climate & Ocean Risk Vulnerability Index (CORVI)

Belize signed an MOU with Taiwan for the commencement of Climate and Ocean Risk Vulnerability Index (CORVI) data and survey collection in Belize City and surrounding areas. Consultants are finalizing data collection from surveys and interviews, which will be completed by March 2024. The next step will be to start the data analysis and draft the first index report card. The final report should be completed by October 2024.

11. Use of Nature-based Solutions to Increase Resilience to Extreme Climate Events in the Atlantic Region of Central America - \$4,000,000.

The objective of the project is to strengthen the climate resilience of communities and the ecosystems in the target area by deploying nature-based restoration efforts in a gender-conscious manner, providing access to community tools and training, supporting local/ community early warning systems, and implementing a regional approach that enhance scaling up possibilities for restoration ecosystems as an adaptation measures the Gulf of Honduras. Implementation is scheduled to start in the first quarter of 2024.

Developments in Education 2024-2025

1. Reforming the System of Education

Legislative Reform

Governance Reform is imperative for the Ministry of Education. Recognizing that the current legal framework governing the education sector is over a decade old, the budget allocated for the fiscal year 2024-2025 will specifically cater to the imperative task of conducting a comprehensive review and revision of existing education legislation, regulations, and policies. This will include a thorough examination of frameworks governing education councils, commissions, and boards, with the overarching objective of reforming the system to address the evolving requirements of Belize's educational landscape.

This commitment to reform is further exemplified by the recent Amendment to Legislation, which raises the School Leaving Age to 16. This change will bolster the retention rate among a demographic often identified as marginalized or at-risk and ultimately lead to a higher standard of education for our young people.

This extension of the compulsory school age aligns seamlessly with the Ministry's objective of broadening access to education, particularly through initiatives like the Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise.

Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise

The Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise is currently providing targeted intervention and support to 9 government-owned secondary schools catering for approximately 3,174 students. These include

- Gwen Lizarraga High School
- Excelsior High School
- Maud Williams High School
- Sadie Vernon Technical High School
- Agriculture and Natural Resource Institute – ANRI
- Delille Academy High
- Georgetown Technical High School
- Corazon Creek Technical High
- Toledo Community College

The reality is that families from lower socio-economic backgrounds encounter challenges in meeting the financial demands associated with their children's education. This difficulty significantly contributes to declining enrollment rates, high dropout rates, and poor student retention. The EUp program remains committed to alleviating these burdens by providing essential support such as meals, uniforms, footwear, school supplies, textbooks, transportation assistance, and coverage of school fees. Additionally, the project extends benefits to schools by enhancing infrastructure. This project focuses on achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and 4 (Quality Education).

The EUp program will enable the MoECST to inform policy decisions, mitigate dropout rates, bolster completion rates, enhance human resource capabilities, elevate transition rates, and, possibly most importantly, alleviate poverty levels by reducing unemployment.

In the 2024-2025 budget, the MoECST plans to add 12 additional secondary schools to the EUp program, increasing coverage to a target of 6,000 additional students. This expansion will include 9 government schools and 3 government-aided schools. With this expansion, the E-Up program will cover 16 of 18 (89%) government-owned secondary schools and 5 of 30 (16.7%) government-aided secondary schools. This expansion is anticipated to bring the total coverage of the Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise to 21 out of 62 secondary schools (33.9%) or 21 out of 48 government and government-aided high schools (43.8%) nationwide. The outreach to 21 schools will have a meaningful impact on an anticipated 9,526 of 22,051 secondary school students (43.2%). The expansion of the Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise will require an investment of \$10,612,768.00, representing an estimated increase of 6.6 million from 2023-2024.

The 12 additional schools include

- Belize Rural High School
- Ladyville Technical High School
- San Pedro High School
- Belmopan Comprehensive School
- Mopan Technical High School
- Valley of Peace SDA Academy
- Chunox St. Viator Vocational High School
- Escuela Secundaria Tecnica Mexico
- Belize High School of Agriculture
- Orange Walk Technical High School
- Bella Vista Government Secondary School
- Julian Cho Technical High School

2. Transforming Teaching and Learning

National Curriculum Framework

In alignment with prevailing national and global trends in educational development, the MoECST has facilitated the full rollout of its national curriculum reform, embracing a competency-based education framework for both primary and secondary education levels. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was successfully implemented by the academic year 2023-2024 after extensive consultations on the curriculum involving various education stakeholders such as teachers, school leaders, managers, MoECST personnel, and other partners such as the BNTU, Pathlight International, UNICEF, and The Love Foundation. Most recently, the National Preschool Curriculum Framework was launched in March 2024.

These significant achievements underscore the steadfast commitment of the GOB, facilitated by the MoECST, to transform the education landscape across all levels in Belize, spanning from foundational skills to upper secondary in this case. Efforts will persist in enhancing the post-secondary and higher education sectors.

The primary aim of the NCF is to facilitate the comprehensive development of 21st-century literacy, numeracy, technological, and critical thinking proficiencies. The 2024-2025 budget will primarily address the development of relevant national assessments aligned with the NCF at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels.

100% Salary and Service Benefits for Teachers

The GOB and the MoECST are dedicated to ensuring that their employees receive suitable service benefits and incentives, thereby fostering an enabling and highly productive work environment. The provision of comprehensive benefits and incentives will not only attract talented individuals but also motivate them to perform at their best.

The current system caters for 70% of the salary and service benefits of all government-aided secondary and tertiary teaching and support staff. Currently, there are 728 teachers at the 30 grant-aided secondary schools, which represent 50.7% of secondary school teachers nationwide and 151 lecturers at the 8 grant aided tertiary institutions represent (53% of tertiary level educators nationally) for a total of 879 teaching staff across both levels. At these grant-aided institutions, there are 128 support staff at the secondary level and 47 at the tertiary level for a total support staff of 175.

Aligned with the objectives outlined in the BESPlan 2021-2025, particularly Key Result Area 2.3: Teacher Development - Elevating the Profession, the GOB and the MoECST commit to assuming full responsibility for the payment of 100% salary and service benefits for all government-aided secondary and tertiary teachers and support staff, effective from 2024. This commitment will directly benefit over 900 teachers at the secondary and tertiary levels, as well as more than 175 support staff. The budget allocated for the fiscal year 2024-2025 will witness an increase in salary and service benefits, amounting to approximately \$14 million, resulting in a total expenditure of over \$220 million on teacher and support staff salaries and service benefits over the next five years (to cover all teaching and support staff of government and government-aided secondary and tertiary institutions). With this initiative, the MoECST aims to incentivize

quality teaching practices, implement Results-Based Education, and ensure proper accountability among all secondary and tertiary institutions and their staff.

3. Prioritizing Underserved Sectors

National Healthy Start Feeding Programme

The MoECST takes its mandate under SDG 2 to reduce hunger and SDG 4 to provide access to quality education for all children very seriously. These commitments align with the Belize Education Sector Plan 2021-2025 and #planBelize Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026. In doing so, the MoECST along with its donor partners, especially the Republic of China (Taiwan), expanded the National Healthy Start Feeding Programme to cater for a healthy meal for 4,000 primary school students from 35 schools and 2967 secondary school students from 9 schools in the EUp program. These figures equal an investment of around \$20,000.00 per day in meals. The number of beneficiaries keeps increasing throughout the year, and it is expected that by the end of the academic period in June 2023-2024, the NHSFP should cover at least 50 primary schools, thus substantially increasing the expenditure in meals per day. The NHSFP follows the Sustainable Schools model which:

- Provides a healthy meal for students at BZ\$3.00 per meal.
- Follows a school feeding menu (developed in 2022) for primary schools that includes breakfast and lunch options that are nutritionally balanced and prepared using over 70% locally produced items.
- Provides kitchen upgrades for participating schools.
- Targets the teaching of gardening for every school to develop students' ownership of food security and healthy nutritional habits.
- Links community farmers and cooperatives with schools with the intent that producers can provide items directly to school feeding programs (established through a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture).
- Provides employment opportunities for kitchen staff (31 cooks are currently employed)

In the 2024-2025 budget, the MoECST plans to expand the NHSFP to cover a healthy meal for students across the 12 additional secondary schools that will be added to the EUp program with an estimated enrollment of 5,950 students. With this expansion, the NHSFP programme will cover 16 of 18 (89%) government-owned secondary schools and 5 of 30 (16.7%) government-aided secondary schools. This is a true commitment from the GOB and its partners to ultimately increase access to quality education and to reduce hunger as stipulated by SDGs 2 and 4. The ultimate goal of the NHSFP is to get children to consume a wholesome meal while at school to improve their ability to learn.

Free Transportation for Students

In line with its dedication to expanding access to quality education, particularly in marginalized regions, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology (MoECST) has taken significant strides to enhance accessibility by continuing to provide free bus runs for students. Presently, the MoECST operates 258 official bus runs nationwide, representing a substantial investment in facilitating student transportation. The weekly contracts for these bus runs amount to approximately \$277,242.68, equating to an average monthly expenditure exceeding 1 million dollars. This considerable financial commitment underscores the ministry's proactive approach to fostering educational inclusivity and ensuring that students in underserved areas have the means to access educational opportunities. Undoubtedly, the 2024-2025 budget will see further improvements to the existing bus routes.

4. Maximizing Human Capital

STEAM Training in Belize

To address the growing demand for increased access to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) training, the Itz'at STEAM Academy (ISA), a government-owned secondary institution, opened its doors to 64 First Form students and 9 teaching staff in September 2023. This unique Academy delivers value driven, competency-based programs, and problem-based approaches to build knowledge in STEAM. ISA offers a high school diploma with key subject concentrations in areas such as Sustainable Development Projects, Digital Arts/Fine Arts, and Science and Technology, along with other subjects from the National Curriculum at the secondary level.

In the 2024-25 academic year, it is expected that the current first-form cohort will be promoted to second-form, and approximately 75 new students will be enrolled at the first-form level and 4 additional teachers will increase the teaching staff. Demand and growth are evident, and the target for 2026 is to have a population of 300 students across all form levels. Currently, the institution has received close to 100 applications for the 2024-25 academic period. This government is serious about STEAM training, so all necessary financial allocations will be made accordingly. The 2024-25 budget will, therefore, cater to the financial needs of the Academy as the GOB will fully compensate all employed teaching and staff support. Most importantly, although Itz'at Academy offers unique STEAM training which is typically quite expensive, the MoECST has ensured that this high quality education is affordable and accessible by subsidizing the cost and making it comparable to the cost of government-owned secondary schools at around \$550.00 per year.

MCC Transforming Education in Belize

In December 2021, Belize became eligible for a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) of the United States of America. A Constraints Analysis conducted by the

MCC revealed that Belize's education system is producing low quality of education that leads to a shortage of trained professionals in all industries.

In response to this finding, an ***Education Project*** is proposed to equitably increase the number of post-primary graduates with the competencies relevant to labor market demands (2024-2025 initial implementation phase). More specifically, the ***Education Project*** sets out 3 main activities to address the root cause of the problem identified by the Constraints Analysis. The MCC will provide 73,801,000 (\$US) for the implementation of the following activities:

1. **Transforming Teaching and Learning in Secondary Education** aimed at improving the numeracy, literacy and 21st Century Skills of secondary graduates.
2. **Access to and Progression through Secondary Education** aimed at increasing the percentage of primary graduates that enroll in and complete secondary education.
3. **Training and Transition to Work** aimed at improving the capability of TVET providers to deliver high quality training demanded by the labor market as well as to provide inclusive access to these training opportunities.

Education Project	73,801,000 (\$US)
1. Transforming Teaching and Learning in Secondary	\$41,045,000
2: Access to and Progression through Secondary Education	\$16,256,000
3. Training and Transitioning to Work	\$16,500,000

Notably, the three key areas of interest identified within the ***Education Project*** by the MCC intersect with the four Strategic Priority areas outlined in the BESPlan 2021-2025. Essentially, the funding allocated for implementing these three activities aligns directly with the MoECST's 2024-2025 fiscal budget targets. The investment is proportionate to the extent of the work to be done by activity and need. Some of the specific targets of the Project include:

- a) establishing an Educational Quality Assurance (QA) System to assess and improve the quality of management and teaching as well as the achievement of learning outcomes;
- b) providing capacity building for educational leaders and teachers;
- c) providing adequate teaching and learning resources;
- d) ensuring support to increase the percentage of primary graduates that enroll in and complete secondary school and
- e) supporting the establishment of a National Training Agency (NTA)
- f) building the capacity of the TVET sector to implement inclusive TVET programs that are aligned to labor market needs.

These notable achievements for Belize's education system will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing Belize's workforce, thereby fostering rapid national development.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade

On the international front, and in fulfillment of Plan Belize, we continue to move forward with the expansion of Belize's diplomatic outreach by seeking the establishment of diplomatic relations, particularly with non-traditional partners. In the last 12 months we have established diplomatic relations with Benin, Cape Verde and The Gambia and the Solomon Islands. This initiative will allow us to explore new cooperation initiatives and seek new markets for Belizean products that will allow us to expand trade and promote Belize as a premier tourism destination with non-traditional partners.

As we maneuver through these complex international times it is clear that if we are to maintain the high international profile, we have achieved over the past three years it is necessary to strengthen our existing missions and establish new diplomatic missions abroad. In this regard we are working to identify the most suitable countries where we can obtain the best return for our investment to establish new diplomatic missions. Countries that not only offer cooperation but countries from where we can attract potential investments and which are strategically located to offer us access to other cooperation and investment opportunities. We are doing the analysis to present our recommendations to Cabinet to make a decision on the most suitable country/region to open a new diplomatic mission in order to obtain maximum benefit for Belize.

Our bilateral relations with our traditional partners continue to strengthen and expand in line with our Medium-Term Development Strategy targeting areas such as security, energy, education, digitalization and e-governance, health, agriculture, climate change and climate finance amongst other. Through the International Cooperation Council (ICC), we are now in the operationalization phase and we are gathering the relevant data and establishing working committees that will provide the relevant information to develop a comprehensive cooperation matrix. This will allow us to maximize the effects of our cooperation programmes, avoid duplication of efforts and identify where our development partners are most suited to assist us with our development agenda.

We continue to engage our European partners through the political dialogue mechanism where we engage in discussions to explore new areas of cooperation and follow-up on the ongoing cooperation programmes and projects funded by the European Union. During our political discussions we continue to advocate for Schengen visa waiver for Belizean nationals, who currently have to travel to other countries to apply for visas to travel to European countries. We continue to stress that our EU partners must honour their commitments to provide the necessary funds for small developing countries to invest in adaptation to fight off the negative effects of Climate Change. As we welcome the decision to operationalize the Loss and Damage Fund, we also stress that the Fund must be capitalized and have easy access to the fund for developing countries, particularly small island and low-lying coastal states, to recover from natural disasters.

As we move towards solving our number one foreign policy objective, ending the illegal Guatemalan territorial and maritime claim on Belize. The case is before the ICJ and both Parties

have complied with all written submissions are required by the ICJ and are now awaiting a date from to start the oral presentations. As we wait for the ICJ process to conclude we continue to work closely with the new Guatemalan Administration under the leadership of President Bernardo Arevalo to reduce tensions and ameliorate the problems along the Belize-Guatemala border, in coordination with the Office of the Organization of American States at the Adjacency zone. During our bilateral talks we stressed on the need for the establishment of a protocol to regulate the navigation along the Sarstoon River for civilians and military personnel to reduce tensions to avoid any possible confrontation.

In regards to the Honduras claim for sovereignty over the Sapodilla Cayes, case that is also before the ICJ, both Belize and Honduras have complied with the written submission as required by the ICJ and we now await a date to be set by the Court for oral hearings. We are confident that our case will prevail and we will be able to solve both claims once and for all and be able to move the bilateral agenda forward.

As we reflect on the achievements of the Belizean trade market over the past year, I am pleased to share a brief overview of our progress and the promising trajectory ahead. In 2023, Belize's real GDP expanded by 4.5% when compared to the previous year, reflecting the successful culmination of the work done by the Government in the main economic sectors. For trade developments, Belize continues to assert itself on the global stage, showcasing a robust export performance with a total value reaching an impressive BZ\$409 million, notably driven by increased market penetration of sugar, maize, lobster, and conch. Simultaneously, our commitment to expanding our import portfolio has been evident, with imports totaling BZ\$2,682 million. While some challenges persist, the year 2023 has seen a reduction in the balance of trade by nearly BZ\$35 million compared to 2022. As we continue to narrow the gap and promote the manufacturing and use of locally produced goods over imported products, we remain vigilant in our efforts for the future of the Belizean manufacturing sector.

One of the hallmarks of our accomplishments this year has been the strengthening of partnerships, particularly with Belize and Taiwan. Our inaugural Administrative Commission meeting under the Economic Cooperation Agreement (ECA) with Taiwan marked a significant milestone, demonstrating our shared commitment to fostering mutually beneficial trade relations. Additionally, negotiations for a Partial Scope Agreement with El Salvador have commenced, promising new avenues for collaboration and economic growth.

The Belize-Taiwan ECA, which came into effect in January 2022, has proven instrumental in facilitating duty-free access for agricultural goods from Belize and industrial goods from Taiwan. The successful shipment of sugar to Taiwan by BSI in December 2023 marks a tangible testament to the efficacy of this partnership. With more entities slated to take advantage of the enhanced market access in Taiwan for 2024, The ECA continues to positively impact the lives of Belize through bolstering exports. Furthermore, our proactive approach to Free Trade Agreement negotiations with Mexico, as evidenced by the Computational General Equilibrium (CGE) Study, underscores our commitment to informed data driven trade policy decision-making and sustainable economic growth.

In our pursuit of trade facilitation, Belize is advancing its Roadmap with zeal. Initiatives such as the feasibility study for an electronic single window (ESW) and the Time Release Study are poised to streamline trade processes, enhance the efficiency of border procedures, and elevate the

competitiveness of the Belizean private sector. Moreover, our continued collaboration within CARICOM to promote a regional interactive marketplace reflects our commitment to fostering economic integration among member states and concurrently providing more opportunities for intra-regional trade.

The agricultural core of the Belizean economy has remained resilient. Despite facing challenges of diseases, natural disasters, and pandemic-related disruptions, we have maintained high quality products and increased production in key sectors such as citrus and sugar maintaining our status as the primary supplier of agricultural products within the region. While concerns exist over declining Red Kidney bean exports, shrimp industry production levels, and the mounting costs of inputs in the banana industry, significant investments have been made to bolster these sectors. The citrus industry is poised for a strong recovery with the planting of over 280,000 disease-tolerant trees, while the shrimp industry is in a healthy rebuilding phase with the new injection of technological approaches to manage and contain the spread of Early Mortality Syndrome. Similarly, the Belize sugar industry remains at the forefront of innovation and the mechanization of the industry, developing improved cane varieties adapted specifically for the region and investing into new mechanized farming practices. Despite the hurdles we face, Belize remains resilient and adaptable, poised for sustainable development through strategic partnerships and continued investment, ensuring a prosperous future in the global marketplace.

For trade-in-services, tourism continues to propel the Belizean economy. 2023 saw a continued recovery of the industry as we welcomed 464,723 overnight visitors to our shores, highlighting a 24.7% surge from the 372,614 visitors that came in 2022. The visitor outturn for 2023 is slightly below the pre-COVID outturn established in 2019, but with the sustained marketing efforts, new airline routes and the full return of travel, Belize is well-poised to return to pre-COVID levels and set a record for 2024. Business process outsourcing (BPO) entities continue to thrive in Belize, with legacy entities establishing more branches across the country and new firms setting up offices for the first time in strategic locations.

As we look to the future, there is much cause for optimism. The upcoming second round of negotiations for the Belize – El Salvador Partial Scope Agreement in April 2024 presents exciting opportunities for further expansion. Similarly, the completion of the second phase of the Computable General Equilibrium and Time Release Studies will provide invaluable insights and enhance our strategic decision-making. Lastly, sustained interventions from key ministries and strategic investments in our troubled agricultural sectors will start to bear fruit this year.

In addition, our efforts to seek observer status to the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and pursue the possible implementation of the Central American payment system highlights our proactive approach to regional collaboration. Furthermore, the stage is set to continue the ongoing public awareness of CSME and its benefits that are derived from being a full member of the, underscoring our commitment to fostering a sense of regional identity and cooperation.

Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries

Information for Minister's Budget Debate 2024 – 2025

Ministry HQ

2023-2024 Achievements

1. The **implementation of a wellness program** demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing the challenges that police officers often face. By employing a clinical psychologist, the Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries provides a valuable resource for officers to access confidential and professional care. The opening of a support and wellness center further underscores the commitment to the well-being of police personnel, offering a dedicated space for them to seek support and guidance. This holistic approach not only acknowledges the unique stressors of police work but also aims to improve overall mental health and resilience within the force. The program's success will likely depend on its accessibility, effectiveness, and acceptance within the police community.
2. The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries, through the Special Branch unit of the Belize Police Department, played a crucial role in **supporting the Amnesty program** by assisting in the vetting of applicants. This support likely involved utilizing the unit's expertise in conducting thorough background checks and investigations to verify the information provided by applicants. By leveraging the Special Branch's resources and capabilities, the Ministry ensured that the vetting process was rigorous and comprehensive, helping to uphold the integrity and credibility of the Amnesty program. This collaboration between the Ministry and the Special Branch highlights the importance of interagency cooperation in effectively implementing initiatives aimed at promoting peace and security within the community.

3. In late 2023, the **Fix-Your-File initiative** was implemented to enhance the maintenance and organization of personal files for police officers within the Belize Police Department. This initiative has led to the implementation of standardized file maintenance procedures, improved communication channels, and the provision of necessary resources for effective file management helping to resolve issues with their personnel files, such as missing documents and updating their records. These efforts are aimed at improving record-keeping practices and providing better support to our officers. Consequently, the processing of police officers' gratuity and pension will become more efficient.
4. The ministry hosted a **sensitization awareness on vulnerable populations for senior police officers**. The intent was to raise internal and partnership awareness in respect of the dignity of vulnerable populations while identifying systematic, infrastructural, and professional culture gaps that lend to abuse and threaten equal treatment imperatives. We aim to raise awareness across the entire force to enhance the capacity of the police department in dealing with vulnerable populations. This effort will improve competencies and responsiveness of service, ensuring the protection and dignity of vulnerable populations who interact with or come into conflict with law enforcement.
5. To conclude Women's Month activities, the Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries **hosted the second Minister's Female Tactical Intelligence Challenge**. This event aimed to showcase not only the physical aspects of policing but also the intellectual component that is often overlooked by the public.
6. The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries **hosted the second Security Services Cup**, aimed at showcasing and encouraging national confidence in the security

forces. The event promoted positive rivalry between male and female participants, boosted internal morale, and provided the public with an opportunity to support the security forces.

7. The Ministry signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Education to implement the Positive Engagement and Civic Education (P.E.A.C.E.) program**. This program's curriculum is designed for primary and high school students, aiming to improve community relations with police officers and equip students with skills to resist illicit activities, bullying, gang involvement, and promote community policing for enhanced security.
8. The ministry embarked on **institutional strengthening and capacity building by engaging a Staff Officer and Legal Officer**. This initiative aims to enhance the ministry's efficiency and effectiveness in its operations. The Staff Officer will provide support to senior management, facilitate communication and coordination within the ministry, and assist in the implementation of policies and programs. The Legal Officer will ensure that the ministry's actions and decisions comply with relevant laws and regulations, provide legal advice and support to the ministry, and assist in drafting legal documents and agreements. These appointments will strengthen the ministry's internal capacity and enable it to better fulfill its mandate.
9. The **renovation of (9) police stations and substations countrywide** is a comprehensive effort aimed at enhancing the infrastructure that supports law enforcement operations. This initiative involves refurbishing existing facilities to improve functionality, efficiency, and overall working conditions for police officers. These stations include Hopkins Village Police Sub-Station, San Pedro Colombia Village Police Sub-Station, Pomona Village Police Sub-Station, Orange Walk Police Station, Caribbean Shores Police Sub-Station, Mesopotamia Police Sub-

Station, Lopez Mateo Park Boot (Community Policing), Commandant's Quarters-Police Training Academy, Officer's Quarters-Benque Viejo del Carmen.

The renovation project seeks to improve the overall appearance of police stations, creating a more welcoming and professional environment for officers and visitors alike. This can have a positive impact on community relations, helping to build trust and confidence in the police force.

The renovation of police stations and substations countrywide is a critical investment in the infrastructure that supports law enforcement efforts. By upgrading facilities and improving working conditions, this initiative aims to enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of the police force, ultimately contributing to improved public safety and security.

2024–2025 Activities

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries is **taking steps to formalize the New Growth Industries Unit**. This significant initiative involves establishing a dedicated unit within the ministry with a specific focus on fostering growth and development in emerging industries. The primary objectives of this unit will be to identify new opportunities for economic growth, develop policies and strategies to support these industries, and collaborate with stakeholders to facilitate their growth.

By formalizing the New Growth Industries Unit, the ministry aims to enhance its capacity to drive economic diversification and create new opportunities for employment and investment in Belize. This initiative aligns with the government's broader vision for economic development, which emphasizes the need to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on traditional industries.

The establishment of the Unit represents a proactive approach to economic development, recognizing the importance of identifying and supporting emerging industries that have the potential to drive future growth. By dedicating resources and expertise to this effort, the ministry aims to position Belize as a competitive player in the global economy and create a more sustainable and prosperous future for its citizens.

2. The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries will **enhance its institutional capacity by engaging staff for the New Growth Industries Unit**. This will include hiring a Director, Economist, and technical officers. The Director will provide leadership and strategic direction for the unit, overseeing its operations and ensuring its objectives are met. The Economist will conduct research and analysis to identify opportunities for growth in new industries, assess their potential economic impact, and develop policies to support their development. The technical officers will provide specialized expertise in areas relevant to specific industries, such as agriculture, technology, or renewable energy, to help guide the unit's work. These staff appointments will strengthen the ministry's ability to drive economic growth and development in Belize's emerging industries.
3. The Ministry is **expanding the staffing capacity of the Leadership Intervention Unit (LIU) to include trained social workers and youth development workers**. These individuals will possess an acute understanding of the needs of individuals who have been traumatized and made vulnerable by the experience of crime and violence.

This expansion aims to strengthen the social protection net for communities affected by crime and violence. The addition of social workers and youth development workers to the LIU team will enable the unit to provide more comprehensive support to individuals and families affected by crime.

This initiative underscores the ministry's commitment to addressing the root causes of crime and violence and supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals affected by these issues.

4. The Ministry is undertaking the **development of a comprehensive 5-year Strategic Plan**.

This plan will serve as a roadmap for the ministry, outlining its strategic objectives and priorities over the next five years. The development of this plan will involve a thorough analysis of the ministry's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

In addition to the 5-year Strategic Plan, the ministry will also develop and implement a short-term action plan. This plan will outline specific activities and initiatives that will be undertaken in the short term to support the achievement of the ministry's strategic objectives. The short-term action plan will include detailed timelines, responsibilities, and performance indicators to ensure effective implementation and monitoring.

By developing a 5-year Strategic Plan and implementing a short-term action plan, the ministry aims to enhance its overall effectiveness and efficiency in delivering services to the public. These plans will provide clear direction and guidance for the ministry's operations, ensuring that its efforts are focused on achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes for the benefit of Belize and its citizens.

5. The Ministry is undertaking a significant initiative to **revise the existing National Cybersecurity Strategy** and formulate an updated plan. This process is being supported by the Organization of American States (OAS).

One of the key objectives of this initiative is to work towards the accession of the Budapest Convention. This international treaty sets standards for combating cybercrime and facilitates international cooperation in this area. Accession to the Budapest Convention will enable Belize

to align its cybercrime act with international standards, making it easier to request and provide mutual legal assistance in cybercrime investigations.

The ministry anticipates collaborating with various agencies to establish Belize's first Critical Infrastructure Response Team (CIRT). This team will be responsible for responding to cyber threats and attacks targeting critical infrastructure, such as energy, transportation, and communication systems.

These efforts are aimed at enhancing Belize's cybersecurity capabilities and ensuring the protection of its critical infrastructure from cyber threats. By revising the National Cybersecurity Strategy, aligning with international standards, and establishing a CIRT, the ministry is taking proactive steps to strengthen Belize's cybersecurity posture and protect its digital assets.

6. In our **bilateral cooperation**, the Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries looks forward to **continuing our collaboration with the US Government through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)**. As part of our ongoing partnership, we are preparing to host a policy-level bilateral security meeting in the near future. This meeting will provide a platform for both parties to discuss our joint priority areas and explore ways to strengthen our collaborative efforts in tackling transnational crimes. These discussions will include topics such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, organized crime, and other security challenges that require international cooperation.

The meeting will also serve as an opportunity to review the progress of our joint initiatives and identify areas where we can enhance our cooperation. By working together closely, we aim to improve the effectiveness of our law enforcement efforts and contribute to the security and well-being of our respective countries and the region.

The Ministry has initiated contact with the relevant Ministry in **El Salvador** through our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This outreach aims **to reengage and implement our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation in the area of security.**

By reactivating this MOU, we intend to strengthen our ties, communication, and collaborative efforts with El Salvador. This partnership will enable us to enhance our collective security measures, share best practices, and coordinate our efforts to address common security challenges.

Through this renewed cooperation, we seek to improve the safety and security of our respective countries and the region as a whole. We believe that by working together closely, we can achieve greater impact and effectiveness in our security initiatives, ultimately benefiting our citizens and communities.

7. We plan to contribute to **strengthening of the criminal justice system with the support of the EU Pace Justice project.** The PACE Justice program aims to support Belize in reducing the backlog of criminal justice cases by providing integrated software, hardware, capacity building and legislated support. The ministry will benefit from US\$274,000.00 for the development of our strategic and implementation plans, the transition of a new information management system for Belize, ICT equipment for the police prosecution unit, a forensic utility terrain vehicle to support evidence collection in San Pedro, training for forensic staff and police officers.

Various representatives of the Ministry's departments will serve on the Criminal Justice Board, which is a multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary board, that was established in December 2023, by the Office of the Chief Justice. The objective of the board is to assist in the reformation of the criminal justice system in Belize by allowing for the cross-fertilization of

ideas and perspectives from various representatives and stakeholders within the criminal justice system, and for those persons to work collaboratively to identify novel innovative solutions to ongoing issues.

8. The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries is committed to continuing its **support for the Amnesty Program** by assisting in the vetting of applicants. This program is crucial in providing individuals with an opportunity to rectify their legal status or resolve outstanding issues related to immigration or other matters.

By participating in the vetting process, the ministry ensures that applicants meet the necessary criteria and comply with the program's requirements. This support helps to streamline the application process, facilitate the timely processing of applications, and ensure that the program operates smoothly and efficiently.

Through its continued support for the Amnesty Program, the ministry demonstrates its commitment to upholding the rule of law, promoting fairness and justice, and providing individuals with a chance to regularize their status and contribute positively to society.

9. The Ministry is taking steps to **enhance its wellness program** to better cater to the mental and emotional well-being of its staff and departments. Recognizing the importance of supporting the mental health of its employees, the ministry is expanding its wellness program to provide a more comprehensive range of services and resources.

This enhanced program will include initiatives such as mental health awareness campaigns, stress management workshops, counseling services, and employee assistance programs. These resources will help staff members cope with the challenges they may face in their roles, including the stress and emotional toll of dealing with sensitive or difficult situations.

The ministry is also working to create a supportive and inclusive work environment that promotes open communication and encourages staff to seek help when needed. By prioritizing the mental and emotional well-being of its employees, the ministry aims to improve overall job satisfaction, reduce absenteeism, and enhance productivity and effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate.

10. The Ministry is committed to **continuing its renovation efforts of police stations and sub-stations countrywide**. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to enhance the infrastructure and facilities of the Belize Police Department, providing officers with modern and functional workspaces that support their operational needs.

The renovation of police stations and sub-stations will involve upgrading existing facilities, repairing structural damage, improving security features, and enhancing the overall functionality and comfort of these locations. These renovations are crucial in creating a more professional and efficient working environment for police officers, enabling them to better serve their communities and fulfill their duties effectively.

By investing in the renovation of police stations and sub-stations, the ministry aims to improve the overall quality of service provided by the Belize Police Department, enhance public trust and confidence in law enforcement, and contribute to the safety and security of communities.

11. The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries is embarking on the **digitalization of the Police Record of Conduct system**, aligning with the government's National Digital Agenda. This strategic initiative aims to modernize and streamline the process of applying for police records of conduct, with a focus on improving efficiency, security, and accessibility.

By digitizing the Police Record of Conduct system, the ministry seeks to enhance the overall user experience for applicants and authorized personnel. Applicants will benefit from a more

streamlined and convenient application process, while authorized personnel will have access to up-to-date and accurate information, improving decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the digitalization of the Police Record of Conduct system will contribute to the government's broader efforts to promote digital transformation and enhance e-governance services. It will support the efficient management of police records, improve data security, and ensure compliance with international standards and best practices.

This project represents a significant step forward in modernizing Belize's law enforcement infrastructure and aligning with global trends in digitalization and e-governance.

Belize Police Department ACHIEVEMENTS FOR FY 2023/24

1. In June 2023, following months of rigorous training, the **Police Recruit Squad 96 successfully completed their training** and 223 recruits officially became Police Constables. The passing out ceremony, held at the National Police Training Academy (N.P.T.A.) in Belmopan City, marked the culmination of their training and the beginning of their careers in law enforcement. In September 2023, the Belize Police Department enlisted Recruit Squad #97, comprising 233 recruits, at the National Police Training Academy. These recruits embarked on their training journey, undergoing intensive instruction in various aspects of policing, including law enforcement, community engagement, and professional conduct. These recruits are scheduled to complete their training and pass out as fully-fledged Police Constables in April 2024. This passing out ceremony will be a significant milestone for the recruits, as they transition from trainees to active members of the Belize Police Department, ready to serve and protect their communities.

The recruitment and training of new police constables are crucial for maintaining an effective and professional police force. These new recruits will help to bolster the ranks of the police department, contributing to its mission of ensuring public safety and upholding the rule of law across Belize.

2. **The Belize Police Department (BPD) and the Financial Services Commission (FSC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate and strengthen regulatory oversight and supervision of financial services.** This partnership aims to enhance efforts to combat illicit activities such as money laundering, fraud, and other financial crimes. Under the MOU, the BPD and the FSC will work together to share information, intelligence, and resources to improve the detection and prevention of financial crimes. The collaboration will also involve joint training and capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and knowledge of both organizations in combating illicit activities in the financial sector.

By joining forces, the BPD and the FSC demonstrate their commitment to maintaining the integrity of Belize's financial system and protecting it from abuse by criminals. This partnership underscores the importance of interagency cooperation in addressing complex financial crimes and underscores the government's determination to combat illicit activities effectively.
3. **A multilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed to enhance cooperation in countering suspicious cross-border currency interdictions,** with a particular focus on combating money laundering and terrorism financing. This agreement involves multiple countries or organizations coming together to strengthen their efforts in addressing these critical issues.

The MOU aims to improve coordination and information sharing among the signatories to better detect and prevent illicit financial flows across borders. It establishes a framework for collaboration, outlining the roles and responsibilities of each party and providing a platform for joint initiatives and operations.

By signing this MOU, the participating countries or organizations demonstrate their commitment to combating money laundering and terrorism financing, recognizing the importance of international cooperation in addressing these global challenges. The agreement is expected to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to disrupt illicit financial activities and protect the integrity of the international financial system.

4. **The Organization of American States (OAS), through its Program of Assistance for Control of Arms and Munitions (PACAM), has generously donated a firearm marking machine to the Belize Police Department.** This equipment represents a significant contribution to Belize's efforts to enhance controls against the illicit trafficking of firearms and promote firearm traceability.

The firearm marking machine will enable the Belize Police Department to mark firearms in accordance with international standards. This marking is essential for tracing firearms used in criminal activities, as it allows law enforcement agencies to track the origin and movement of these weapons more effectively.

By improving controls and promoting traceability of firearms, the donation of the firearm marking machine will contribute to enhancing public safety and security in Belize. It will also support the country's compliance with international agreements and commitments aimed at combating the illicit trafficking of firearms and reducing armed violence.

The Belize Police Department expresses its gratitude to the OAS and PACAM for their valuable support and partnership in strengthening Belize's capacity to address the challenges posed by illicit firearms.

5. The Belize Police Department has undertaken further **strengthening of the Field Training Officer (FTO) Component of Recruit Training**, a critical step in ensuring the effectiveness of new recruits. This initiative includes the procurement of dedicated resources to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the program.

The FTO Component of Recruit Training plays a vital role in the professional development of new police recruits, providing them with practical, on-the-job training under the guidance of experienced field training officers. By strengthening this component, the Belize Police Department aims to improve the quality of training provided to recruits, ensuring they are well-prepared to handle the challenges of policing.

The procurement of dedicated resources for the FTO Component will include the acquisition of specialized training materials, equipment, and facilities to support the training program. These resources will help to enhance the training experience for recruits and ensure that they receive the highest standard of training possible.

The strengthening of the FTO Component of Recruit Training demonstrates the Belize Police Department's commitment to providing its officers with the skills and knowledge they need to serve their communities effectively and uphold the law.

6. As of December 31, 2023, the number **of murders in Belize decreased to 87 compared to 113 murders in 2022**. This significant reduction in murders is attributed to the great policing efforts implemented by the Belize Police Department. The efforts of law enforcement officers

have been instrumental in achieving this milestone, making the murder rate the lowest in a decade.

The decrease in murders is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the police force in addressing crime and violence in Belize. Through various initiatives such as increased patrols, targeted operations, and community engagement efforts, the police have been able to make significant strides in reducing violent crime.

As a result of these efforts, Belize has dropped out of the top 10 most violent countries in the region, marking a significant achievement in the country's efforts to improve public safety and security. This accomplishment reflects the effectiveness of the strategies and measures implemented by the Belize Police Department in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies and community stakeholders.

Moving forward, the Belize Police Department remains committed to maintaining this positive trend and further reducing crime and violence in the country. The department continues to work tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of all citizens and visitors to Belize.

CRIME	2020	2021	2022	2023
Murder	102	125	113	87
Rape	25	12	24	34
Robbery	160	167	183	170
Burglary	479	456	558	628
Theft	67	77	97	118
Unlawful Sexual Intercourse	55	46	60	50
Total	888	883	1,035	1,087

7. In January 2024, members of the **Belize Police Department, Defence Force, and Coast Guard underwent comprehensive weapons and ammunition management training.** This training aimed to enhance their skills and knowledge in the safe and effective handling, storage, and disposal of weapons and ammunition. Graduates of the training program were tested on their knowledge and skills as part of the Weapons Destruction initiative.

The Weapons Destruction initiative was a collaborative effort involving the Mines Advisory Group, CARICOM IMPACS, and the British High Commission. As part of this initiative, over 900 unserviceable weapons were destroyed. This initiative not only helped to improve the safety and security of Belize by reducing the number of weapons in circulation but also demonstrated the commitment of the Belize Police Department and its partners to combatting illicit arms trafficking and promoting peace and stability in the region.

The successful completion of the training program and the Weapons Destruction initiative highlights the dedication of the Belize Police Department, Defence Force, and Coast Guard to ensuring the effective management of weapons and ammunition. It also underscores the importance of international cooperation and collaboration in addressing common security challenges, such as the proliferation of illicit weapons.

8. The BPD rolled out the **Road Policing Unit** across the country. The purpose of Road Policing is part of our efforts to address traffic offences, and transnational organized crime. Although the Unit is young, it has proven to be successful since they have contributed to the detention of more than 80 irregular migrants and the seizure of several kilos of cannabis.
9. The Police Department has reactivated **Monthly Citizen Advisory Committed (CAC) meetings** countrywide with a view to addressing crime and other issues from a stakeholder approach. These

Citizen Advisory Committee meetings resulted in several follow-up meetings with many of the stakeholder groups. These interactions play a crucial role in the department's success of preventing crime.

NFSS Achievements 2023 to 2024

Innovation and Improvements:

1. The National Forensic Science Services **acquired, configured, and implemented an industry-standard Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)** at the Forensic Lab as a significant step forward for digital transformation in line with the Government's National Digital Agenda and ISO standards. To ensure a smooth transition of the System the Department conducted change management sensitization sessions on LIMS improvements with justice sector and law enforcement stakeholders countrywide.
2. The Department **installed a secure server at Scenes of Crime Main Office** to properly store and manage crime scene records and reports in line with the Government's National Digital Agenda and ISO standards.
3. **Invested in antivibration tables** to install calibrated analytical balances at the Forensic Laboratory to allow for quality-assured net weight reporting of seized drugs.
4. The Forensics Department **transitioned to virtually hosted of the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS) services** at the Forensic Laboratory for improved connectivity to correlation server and to alleviate space constraints.
5. **Extensive stakeholder consultations** were also held **to evaluate the country's medicolegal death investigation** system and propose legislation to repeal the outdated Coroner's System and introduce a modernized Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

6. **Expanded scopes of analysis** at the Forensic Laboratory to include outsourced fire debris analysis, outsourced general toxicology analysis and outsourced carbon monoxide testing.
7. **Established client relationship** with a new ISO-accredited DNA Laboratory in USA to achieve shorter turnaround times and expanded testing services for DNA cases.
8. **Convened bimonthly interagency crime gun intelligence meetings** with law enforcement stakeholders to increase the reliance on forensic ballistic (IBIS) hits in gun-crime investigations.
9. **Re-opened cold case murder and missing person investigations** from the late 1990s with assistance from FBI and Rutgers University.
10. Obtained International Review Boards (IRB) research approval from University of Belize to **conduct national population genetics study** of allele frequencies within the Belizean population.

Infrastructure and Equipment:

1. The Department **installed additional equipment** such as evidence drying cabinet, evidence refrigerator and fume hood at Scenes of Crime Main Office for secure evidence processing and handling, installed remaining histopathology equipment and environmentally compliant wastewater treatment system for the new Histopathology Laboratory under the Medical Examiner's Office.
2. The Forensic Laboratory **renovated its workspace** into separate, dedicated sampling areas for toxicology and seized drugs thereby enhancing workflow organization, resealed the Forensic Laboratory roof to mitigate against risk of water leakage and promote better safeguarding of

evidence and equipment, rehabilitated the Forensic Laboratory perimeter fence for adequate security and access control.

3. The Department also **purchased additional exhibit storage freezer and evidence shelf** at the Forensic Laboratory for proper evidence storage.

Standardization of Policies and Procedures:

1. **Revised internal documents** to ensure that technical forms, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and reporting templates used in forensic casework are in alignment with industry standards for ISO accreditation as well as incorporated a secure, digital internal Chain of Custody at the Forensic Laboratory for evidence transfers and updated policies outlining guidelines for impartiality and confidentiality for all forensic staff.
2. The Department **reconfigured Forensic Laboratory workflows** for Serology, Firearms, Analytical Chemistry, Toxicology and Exhibit Management Sections to include barcode-enabled evidence tracking and casefile management, in compliance with ISO requirements. The Department **implemented proper body custody procedures** including the enforcement of body bag seals to transport cadavers for forensic autopsies.

Training:

1. Personnel from the Forensics Department participated in several conferences and training opportunities including:
 - The Caribbean Medicolegal and Forensic Symposium in Barbados.
 - The American Society for Crime Lab Directors annual symposium in USA.
 - The American Academy of Forensic Sciences annual conference in USA.

- Bloodstain Pattern Analysis training in St. Lucia
- Lab and Scenes of Crime staff collaborated with DEA to deliver training for local law enforcement agencies.
- Crime Scene Technicians achieved international certification with the International Association for Identification.
- staff member underwent ISO 9001 quality management and internal auditor training.
- All new technical staff members continue to undergo rigorous internal training to demonstrate competency before being authorized to perform forensic casework, so as to maintain minimum standards for provision of quality forensic science services.

NFSS projections, projects and initiatives for 2024 – 2025

1. **Propose a bill to modernize** the National Forensic Science Service Act, Chapter 39:02 of the Laws of Belize, including establishment of an Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and at the same time propose a bill to repeal the antiquated Coroner's Act.
2. Through the CABEI Project the Forensics department will **commence the first phase of establishing a new state-of-the-art forensic laboratory and the country's first forensic morgue** in Belmopan. This new facility will allow for timely, adequate and thorough medicolegal investigation of all sudden, unexpected and suspicious deaths that occur in Belize.
3. As it relates to **training**, the Department will conduct **expert interdisciplinary training** for Medical Officers in the health system and Forensic Medical Examiners on proper management of sexual assault cases, undergo **training in ballistic shooting scene reconstruction**, procure advanced training for Crime Scene Technicians in **Bloodstain Pattern Analysis**, and

undertake in-depth training for all forensic staff in meeting ISO standards for forensic departments.

4. The Department will **acquire rapid screening technology** and pursue specialized training to conduct advanced forensic toxicology testing in country.
5. **Adopt and implement international standards** for reporting of net weight of seized drugs by the Forensic Laboratory.
6. **Construct an industry-standard Scenes of Crime Field Office in Dangriga** with INL funding.
7. **Purchase a Rapid DNA system** to enhance forensic investigative capacity of law enforcement by providing timely identification of suspects or missing persons and **purchase a new ballistic comparison microscope** to enhance capacity for forensic firearms analysis.
8. The department will **launch full histopathology services** to support medicolegal death investigations, provide **internal and external proficiency testing** for forensic experts to ensure quality services to the criminal justice system, conduct a **population genetic study** of the Belizean population to prepare for forensic DNA testing in country and **engage international partners to conduct a DNA assessment** with the intent of developing a DNA legislation to improve the reliance on DNA evidence in the criminal courts.

LIU 2023 – 2024 Achievements

1. The William Dawson Digi-Sprite Basketball Tournament and the William Dawson Peace

Cup football tournament have emerged as significant events, attracting participation from over 300 young men from primary urban and peri-urban areas of Belize City. These tournaments have become more than just sporting events; they serve as platforms for social cohesion, community engagement, youth empowerment and the promotion of peace and non-violence.

- **Social Cohesion:** The tournaments bring together young men from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie among participants. Regardless of their differences, the shared love for sports unites them and creates a positive atmosphere of inclusivity.
- **Community Engagement:** These tournaments are not just about sports; they also engage the wider community. Families, friends, and residents come out to support the teams, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere that strengthens community bonds.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Participation in these tournaments empowers young men by providing them with a platform to showcase their talents, build confidence, and develop important life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and perseverance.
- **Promotion of Peace and Non-violence:** By promoting sportsmanship and fair play, these tournaments contribute to a culture of peace and non-violence, offering an alternative to negative influences that may be present in urban areas.

The William Dawson Digi-Sprite Basketball Tournament and the William Dawson Peace Cup football tournament are not just about sports; they are about building a stronger, more united community, empowering youth, and promoting positive values that benefit society as a whole.

2. The continued **expansion of the Community Work Program** represents a vital initiative aimed at addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by communities in south side Belize City affected by gang and gun violence. By providing meaningful employment opportunities for 250 young people, this program not only offers immediate economic benefits but also contributes to long-term community development and crime prevention efforts.

- a. **Economic Empowerment:** The program empowers young people by providing them with decent employment opportunities, enabling them to earn a livelihood and support themselves and their families. This economic empowerment can have a ripple effect, leading to improved living standards and reduced reliance on illegal activities for income.
- b. **Community Development:** Through their work in the program, participants contribute to community development efforts, such as infrastructure improvements, beautification projects, and other initiatives that enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods. This active involvement can foster a sense of pride and ownership among residents, leading to a stronger, more cohesive community.
- c. **Crime Prevention:** By engaging young people in constructive activities, the program helps reduce the likelihood of their involvement in criminal activities. Employment provides them with a sense of purpose and belonging, steering them away from negative influences that may lead to gang involvement or violence.

- d. **Skills Development:** The program offers participants the opportunity to develop valuable skills, both technical and soft skills, that can improve their employability and future prospects. These skills can range from vocational training to communication and teamwork skills, enhancing their overall personal and professional development.
- e. **Positive Role Models:** The program can also serve as a source of positive role models within the community. Participants who succeed in the program can inspire others and serve as examples of how hard work and determination can lead to positive outcomes.

The expansion of the Community Work Program is a crucial step towards addressing the root causes of gang and gun violence in south side Belize City. By providing employment, promoting community development, and empowering young people, the program contributes to building safer, more resilient communities for all residents.

3. The **skills training program for the first cohort of at-risk youth provided by the TUBAL Vocational Training School** has been a significant success, with an impressive 88% graduation rate among those who enrolled in the program.

One key aspect of the program's success is the provision of starter kits within the graduates' respective areas of concentration. These kits are designed to help graduates kickstart their entrepreneurial careers by providing them with the tools and resources they need to start their own businesses. This support not only helps the graduates become financially independent but also contributes to the overall economic development of their communities.

By focusing on practical skills training and providing tangible support for entrepreneurship, the skills training component of the LIU program is not only empowering at-risk youth but also helping to build a more resilient and prosperous society. This model of education and support could serve as a blueprint for other programs looking to make a positive impact on their communities.

4. **The Microgrant Provision to Community Groups** initiative has been instrumental in supporting grassroots social activities within southside Belize City. This program provides small grants to community groups, enabling them to continue their vital work in addressing local social issues and improving the quality of life for residents.

These microgrants have had a significant impact on the community, empowering local organizations to implement projects and programs that directly benefit their neighborhoods. From youth development initiatives to environmental conservation projects, these grants have supported a wide range of activities that promote community engagement and social cohesion. By supporting grassroots organizations, the Microgrant Provision program has helped to build a sense of ownership and pride within the community. It has also fostered a spirit of collaboration, as groups work together to address common challenges and achieve shared goals.

The Microgrant Provision to Community Groups initiative has been a valuable tool in promoting positive social change within southside Belize City. It has empowered local residents to take control of their futures and has contributed to the development of a more vibrant and resilient community.

5. **The Small Engine Repair Training program**, conducted in collaboration with the Department of Youth Services, is a valuable initiative aimed at empowering at-risk youths in

southside Belize City. This program provides participants with practical skills and knowledge in small engine repair, equipping them with valuable vocational skills that can lead to employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods.

The collaboration with the Department of Youth Services underscores LIU's commitment to partnering with key stakeholders in community development. By working together, these organizations can maximize their impact and reach a wider audience, ultimately benefiting more youths in need of support and guidance.

Through this training program, participants not only gain valuable technical skills but also develop important life skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication. These skills are essential for personal and professional development and can help participants build confidence and resilience.

The Small Engine Repair Training program is a shining example of how collaboration between government agencies can lead to meaningful change. By investing in the future of at-risk youths, this program is helping to break the cycle of poverty and crime and build a brighter future for southside Belize City.

6. The Leadership Intervention Unit has **spearheaded an Acute Conflict Tracing and Mediation exercise** which is a specialized approach to conflict resolution that focuses on identifying and addressing conflicts in their early stages to prevent escalation. This method involves carefully tracing the root causes of conflicts and employing mediation techniques to resolve them effectively.

In the context of the Belize Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries, Acute Conflict Tracing and Mediation plays a crucial role in promoting peace and stability within communities. By promptly identifying and addressing emerging conflicts, this approach helps

prevent them from escalating into larger disputes that could threaten social cohesion and security.

Acute Conflict Tracing and Mediation also aligns with broader efforts to enhance community policing and foster positive relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. By promoting dialogue and understanding, this approach contributes to building trust and cooperation between different stakeholders, ultimately leading to safer and more resilient communities.

Acute Conflict Tracing and Mediation is an essential tool in the Ministry's efforts to promote peace and security, emphasizing proactive and collaborative approaches to conflict resolution.

7. **A police officer attached to the Leadership Intervention Unit (LIU) was recently awarded a scholarship to pursue a master's degree in social work** at Galen University. This opportunity not only reflects the officer's dedication to professional development but also highlights the importance of academic qualifications in enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts, particularly in areas related to social intervention and community engagement.

Upon completing his studies, the officer intends to continue supporting the LIU, bringing back valuable knowledge and skills to further strengthen the unit's ability to positively impact the community. This achievement underscores the Ministry's commitment to staff empowerment and upliftment, recognizing the importance of investing in personnel development to enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of law enforcement agencies. The Ministry's support for the officer's pursuit of higher education not only benefits the individual but also contributes to the overall improvement of the department's capabilities and service delivery to the community.

LIU 2024 – 2025 Proposed Activities

1. **Continued support and network expansion of grassroots groups** within Belize City to assist with the mentoring, feeding, positive socialization and education of children and youth in vulnerable communities.
2. **Continuation of community intervention through Sports i.e William Dawson Digi-Sprite Cup and William Dawson Peace Cup** that continues to provide a platform for athletic development and character building for participants with embedded life skills and interpersonal skills trainings.
3. **Enhanced partnership with ministries and departments** such as the Department of Youth Services, Community Rehabilitation Department, Community Policing Unit, National Commission for Families and Children and High Schools i.e GEM Schools to continue to expand the reach to youth at risk of being negatively affected by gang and gun violence.
4. **Continued offering of vocational training opportunities** to participants within the Community.
5. **Beautification and Rehabilitation Work Program** to facilitate a smooth transition from the program into employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
6. **Roll out of the Agricultural program** in collaboration with the Department of Youth Services and the Ministry of Agriculture for the training and temporary land provision to participants of the project at Rhaburn Ridge and Grace Bank Village.
7. **Provide targeted support and training to male parents** within the program by collaborating with the NCFC, Belize City Council and UN Agencies for the positive engagement of Males in the overall well-being of themselves and their families.

8. **Pilot of Belize's first reintegration program** for those who encounter the law with the provision of mental health services, access to school re-entry support and job preparation/entrepreneurial services. Re-entry into high schools will be done with the support of school principals and counsellors to veer youth away from gangs and into positively reinforced social groups.
9. **Continued emphasis on conflict tracing and mediation** as a meaningful tool in the fight against gang and gun violence with the continued training and specialization of the police and civilian team of the LIU.

BELIZE CRIME OBSERVATORY

2023 – 2024 Achievements.

1. Supported the Ministry of Human Development's ATIPs Council with a **Geospatial Mapping of the City of Belmopan**. This initiative is geared at enhancing Belize's surveillance and operational awareness to combat Human Trafficking, through Inter-Agency collaboration and coordination using Geospatial Technology and innovation in the City of Belmopan.
2. **Facilitated a consultation on Sexual offences assessment**. It is our hope that with this assessment which sought and received the input of a wide range of stakeholders representing the public, private and civil society that we can strengthen our legislation as well as utilize and roll-out the use of our Sexual Offenders Registry.
3. **Conducted training for media personnel on the role and impact the media has in contributing to public policy** since the media plays a crucial role in advocating and shaping public policy. The training allowed representatives of various media houses to receive information on how to handle and deliver crime-related statistics. Having the skills to

effectively use statistics will further enable journalists to make accurate comparisons and better contextualize facts, as well as avoid being fooled by misleading data. The training offered techniques on asking critical questions and addressing quantitative data, helping journalists distil complicated information and engage the average reader while not compromising accuracy.

4. **Public awareness campaigns** on road safety, suicides and drowning incidents. These public awareness campaigns are aimed at raising awareness by providing historical data, with an emphasis on help-seeking behavior, encouraging positive behavior change, and inform of available support.

2024 – 2025 Planned activities

1. **Use the recommendations from the sexual offences assessment report to strengthen legislation**, finalize a MoU, and develop Policies and Procedures with public, private, civil society and academia on the use and access of Sex Offenders Registry.
2. **Repopulate the Sex Offenders registry** and mainstream use.
3. **Complete development work on an Integrated Information Management Platform (IIMP)**, that would allow us to share and validate data and expand user base to include other Ministries such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Human Development thereby expanding on the data that we report and share.
4. **Increase public awareness campaigns** and sharing of data with the public and policy makers.

BELIZE CENTRAL PRISON

The Belize Central Prison is overseen and managed by the Kolbe Foundation. This correctional facility plays a crucial role in the country's justice system, housing individuals who have been sentenced or are awaiting trial. Kolbe Foundation, a non-governmental organization, operates the prison with a focus on ensuring safety, security, and humane treatment of inmates while also offering rehabilitation programs to support their reintegration into society.

Under the management of the Kolbe Foundation, the Belize Central Prison has undergone **significant improvements and modernization efforts**. These include enhancements to the physical infrastructure, such as the renovation of the Control/Search Area, which is vital for the admission and discharge processes of inmates. Additionally, the prison has implemented various programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of inmates, including education, vocational training, and counselling services.

Kolbe Foundation's management of the Belize Central Prison emphasizes the importance of maintaining a safe and secure environment for both inmates and staff. Through its efforts, the foundation seeks to contribute positively to the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, ultimately aiming to reduce recidivism rates and promote a safer society.

2023– 2024 Achievements under the management of KOLBE

1. The **launch of the Prison Information Management System (PIMS)**, made possible through the InfoSegura Project, represents a significant milestone for the Belize Central Prison. This new system will revolutionize the management and organization of prison-related information, moving from traditional paper-based methods to a modern, digital platform.

The implementation of PIMS will enable the prison management to consolidate all inmate records, administrative data, and operational information into a single, centralized system. This will streamline data management processes, improve efficiency in information retrieval, and enhance overall operational effectiveness.

The adoption of PIMS aligns with the National Digital Agenda, showcasing Belize's commitment to embracing digital technologies for enhanced governance and service delivery. By transitioning to a digital platform, the Belize Central Prison will not only improve its internal operations but also contribute to the broader goal of digital transformation across the country.

Overall, the launch of PIMS marks a significant step forward for the Belize Central Prison, enhancing its capacity to manage information effectively and efficiently while advancing Belize's digital agenda.

2. In 2023, the **Belize Central Prison's Parole Board reviewed the cases of 342 eligible inmates**, ultimately approving parole for 41 individuals. This process involves a thorough evaluation of each inmate's behavior, compliance with prison rules, participation in rehabilitation programs, and overall readiness for reintegration into society.

Parole is granted based on a variety of factors, including the nature of the offense, the inmate's behavior and conduct while incarcerated, their willingness to participate in rehabilitation programs, and the assessment of the risk they pose to the community. The Parole Board carefully considers all these factors before making a decision.

For the 41 inmates who were granted parole, this marks a significant milestone in their rehabilitation journey. It offers them a chance to rebuild their lives, reunite with their families, and contribute positively to society. However, it also comes with conditions that they must

adhere to, such as regular reporting to a parole officer, maintaining employment, and avoiding criminal activity.

The Belize Central Prison's parole program plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. By granting parole to eligible inmates, the prison aims to reduce overcrowding, promote rehabilitation, and ultimately contribute to a safer and more inclusive society.

The Belize Central Prison is proud to announce for the third consecutive year since 2021, there were zero (0) escapes from the compound. Highlighting the high-level security measures set in place for the safety of Kolbe's civilian employees and the country at-large.

3. In April 2023, the **Visiting Justice program was reactivated**, with visits commencing at the end of that month and continuing monthly, except for July, totalling 13 visits for the year. During these visits, complaints and concerns were communicated through letters, face-to-face discussions with the inmates, and interviews. Issues related to information sharing, such as requested adjournment dates and clarity of sentencing, were promptly addressed, with checks made with the respective courts and information shared with the inmates. More complex matters were communicated via email to the CEO, Chief Magistrate, Visiting Justices, and the Superintendent of the Kolbe Foundation, as necessary.
4. As it relates to **building improvements and renovations**, the Control/Search Area, situated in the main building, underwent renovations to enhance its functionality. This area serves as the point where inmates are formally admitted to and discharged from the prison, requiring it to meet specific standards. The upgrades included the installation of cameras, the replacement of flooring with tiles, and the expansion of private search rooms to improve privacy and security

during the admission and discharge processes. Two (2) new towers were added to the compound. These towers were placed in strategic positions for optimum surveillance.

The medical facility/infirmary was destroyed during Hurricane Lisa in 2022 prompting management to build a secure structure to withstand natural disasters such as hurricanes. The medical facility started construction immediately after the storm and was completed in 2023.

The prison's library facility and computer lab and storeroom where all food items are stored were also renovated.

5. In 2023 the Prison acquired a 250-kilowatt generator to complement the dedicated power supply from Belize Electricity Limited. This asset is important to the organization because of the constant demand for electricity to assist in the security of the compound.

Belize Central Prison 2024 – 2025 Planned Activities

Under the management of Kolbe, the prison will continue to support:

- 1. The visiting justice program by appointing additional justices.** Efforts are being made to appoint approximately five more Visiting Justices. It is important to note that all Magistrates are ex-officio Visiting Justices.

The Visiting Justice program aims to provide a fresh perspective to address inmate concerns and assist in preserving their humanity while incarcerated or awaiting trial. The program operates with confidentiality, and concerns related to prison administration are shared with the Kolbe Foundation for appropriate action. As the program moves forward into the new year, there is a renewed commitment to its mission, recognizing the crucial role it plays in ensuring the humane treatment of inmates and their successful reintegration into society upon release.

2. In 2024, the Belize Central Prison plans to **embark on the construction of a new Farm Guard Tower** to replace the existing tower, which has surpassed its useful life. The new tower will enhance the supervision of inmates working in the industrial zone, where they receive vocational training and skills in agriculture and animal rearing as part of their rehabilitation program.
3. The Belize Central Prison has plans to undertake **renovations at the Ashcroft Rehabilitation Center (ARC)**, a facility that allows prison inmates to participate in rehabilitation and addiction treatment programs targeting drug and alcohol addiction, among other issues. The building, which was donated by Lord Michael Ashcroft in 2004, has been in continuous use and is now in need of improvements.

The renovations will include retiling of the floors, a complete facelift of the interior and exterior walls, and enhancing security by replacing worn-out wickets and burglar bars. These renovations will not only improve the aesthetics of the ARC but also ensure that it remains a safe and conducive environment for inmates undergoing rehabilitation and addiction treatment programs.

4. The Belize Central Prison has plans to **undertake a roof replacement for the poultry processing plant**, which houses the chickens consumed by the prison. This project is crucial to ensure the continued operation of the poultry processing plant, which plays a vital role in providing food for the inmates. The new roof will improve the facility's infrastructure, ensuring a safe and hygienic environment for poultry processing operations.



MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING



PROJECTS BEING IMPLEMENTED BY THE MIDH

- Philip Goldson Highway & Remate Bypass Upgrading Project
Mile 24.5 to Santa Elena Border
- Upgrading of the San Estevan Road
Banquitas Bridge - San Estevan Village
- Upgrading of the Bullet Tree Road
Joseph Andrews Drive in San Ignacio to Bullet Tree Village
- Corozal to Sarteneja Road Upgrading
Corozal to Sarteneja Village
- Caracol Road Upgrading Project - Phase II
Pinol Line to Caracol Archaeological Site
- Haulover Bridge Replacement Project
- Construction of Joe Taylor Bridge
- Construction of J&W Bridge in Belmopan
- Repairs to Roundabout by Benny's Apartments - Philip Goldson Highway
- St. Matthews Government Primary School
Replacement of classes damaged by Fire
- Expansion and Rehabilitation of the Philip Goldson Highway
Mile 8 - 24.5

- George Price Highway Upgrading Project - Section VI

San Ignacio Town to San Jose Succotz

- Banana Bank - Farmers Express Road
- Hawkesworth Bridge Maintenance Project
- Construction of 50 Studio Homes

Highland Estates - Belmopan

- Maintenance of Farm Roads, Rural Roads and Secondary Roads
Corozal District - 26 miles secondary road and 102 miles farm road
Orange Walk District - 40 miles secondary road and 168 miles farm road
Belize District - 82 miles secondary road and 30 miles farm road
Cayo District - 36 miles secondary road and 9 miles farm road
Stann Creek District - 115 miles secondary road and 28 miles farm road
Toledo District - 83 miles secondary road and 9 miles farm road

- Municipal Infrastructure Development

Upgrading of Streets in Benque Viejo Town - 14 Streets

Upgrading of Streets in Punta Gorda - 6 Streets

Upgrading of Streets in San Ignacio - 13 Streets

Upgrading of Streets in Belize City - 7 Streets

Ministry of the Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform and Religious Affairs

Accomplishments for the Ministry of the Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform and Religious Affairs for the Year 2023 to 2024.

Human Resources Management

I. Revamping the selection Process - As part of the Modernization of the Human Resource Management (HRM) System in the Belize Public Service, this unit successful concluded the selection process of (1) set of Finance Officers and (1) set of Administrative Officers mostly on promotion. The main significance of this HR process is the fact that it is an improved procedure that derived from a study conducted in 2022. The main feature is the three-prong approach to the selective process. Each candidate earns points at each stage which includes (1) Documentary Evaluation, (2) Written Evaluation, (3) Oral Evaluation. A standard is created in which only those who earn 70 points out of a 100 are considered promotable and the top candidates from this bracket are recommended to fill the immediate available positions. This process ultimately provides an environment with selection by merit, and it eliminates the perceived subjectivity of a simple selection by only oral interviews. This process will be replicated to other recruitment and promotion that requires a position-based approach to recruitment and selection. This goes towards achieving the mandate of the Ministry in pushing forward “Good Governance”.

II. Tour of Government Officers - During the Month of July 2023, about 80% of the Government Departments and Units were visited with the objective of hearing personal concerns. The schedules for the out-District tour did not occur until a later time.

One main achievement in this activity is the fact that communications for individual officers were opened in which they were encouraged to write to this Ministry on their concerns, particularly as it relates to their conditions of service. They were also encouraged to visit the Ministry. There has been an increase in communication from individual public officers countrywide and an increase in visits to the office of the Director, HRM.

III. Partial Achievements - In the last report of 2023, the following areas were projected priorities for this unit as it relates to our operational plan during this reporting period. These are work in process and thus providing updates on progress made in each during the financial year.

- a. To re-engineering our Process Flow to address the efficiency of this Ministry to respond to its customers in a timely manner.
- b. The digitization of records as part of establishing an Electronic Records Management System to complement the new process flow for this Ministry’s activities.

- c. Modernize our HRM Systems, Processes, Policies, and practices.
 - d. Updating of HR Manual in tandem with a renewed HRM system.
- i. To re-engineering our Process Flow to address the efficiency of this Ministry to respond to its customers in a timely manner.

Update

- In the last report it was indicated that this was placed under the workplan of the E-Governance Unit. It was determined in 2023 that there was too much work undertaken by the E-Governance Unit and therefore it was decided by the Senior Management Team to proceed with a consultancy. This is work in process.
- ii. The digitization of records as part of establishing an Electronic Records Management System to complement the new process flow for this Ministry's activities.

Update

- This undertaking was also taken off the E-Governance Unit workplan and was to be dealt with inhouse. In the meantime, the IT section of HRMIS continue to work on a customized web-based database for the Registry Section of this ministry, particularly to capture the Ministry activity related to incoming and outgoing correspondence. This will allow the HRMU to review activities and task going to staff for action as well as cases being concluded or still pending at the various desks. It is at the stage of synchronizing terminologies for data input in order to get clear usable reports that can easily be analysed. This I also work in process.
- These sub-systems are expected to be eventually merged into one bigger system. The digitization of all records will surely be a bigger undertaking which has not commenced as yet.

- iii. Modernize our HRM Systems, Processes, Policies, and practices.

Update

As reported in the previous year, a scientific study was conducted on the current HRM system with a focus on recruitment and promotion through merit. The report provided several recommendations which include but not limited to;

- a) The review and modernization of the current HRM System to ensure that all subsystems are interlinked and integrated to synergize all HR activities.
- b) Most importantly, there is an immediate need to establish a comprehensive and proper mechanism to administer the various models of recruitment and selection whether as new entry or as promotion.

- c) It was agreed during the year in review that the approach to conduct these reviews be through a consultancy. A Term of Reference for the Consultancy was prepared and approved. It was advertised twice, and the last deadline was in Mid-December 2023. There were no suitable applications received and therefore another approached was agreed upon and it is believed that that a suitable applicant will be selected to begin the consultancy.
 - d) While the revamping of the procedure and the system in its totality is work in process, the new approach to the selection process to include a multi-stage approach is a part of this progress.
- iv. Updating of HR Manual in tandem with a renewed HRM system.
- This activity is dependent on the revamping and modernization of the HRM system so that all the procedures are to be captured in one manual for the Public Service. This is also work in progress.

Training and Development Unit:

I. Induction Training

- Historic launch of a formal Induction Training Course for the Belize Public Service (Self-Paced Course) on the University of Belize's Learning Platform. The Induction Training Course for the Belize Public Service officially welcomes and provides a strategic guide to inductees into their work environment.

A total of two hundred and seventy (270) public officers have successfully completed their Induction into this course and received E-Certification. Cohort 3 is scheduled to commence in March, 2024.

II. Clerical and Secretarial Promotional Programmes

- Restructuring and expansion of the Clerical and Secretarial Promotional Certificate Programmes to include a Good Governance and Conflict Resolution Modules. These programmes are a part of the promotional criteria for Secretary III's, Second Class Clerks and Technical Clerks (Audit Clerk II, Immigration and Nationality Clerk II, Postal Clerk II, Tax Clerk II and Customs and Excise Examiners III).
- Implementation of Clerical Promotional Programme: One hundred and sixty-seven (167) Clerical and Technical Clerks completed this Programme. This programme will be offered on the University of Belize's Learning Platform for the next intake.
- Implementation of Secretarial Promotional Programme offered on the University of Belize's Learning Platform for the first time in history. Seventeen (17) Secretary IIIs completed this training.

- III. Professional Development Certification Programme – The development of the Professional Development Certification Program for First Class Clerks, Administrative Assistants and Administrative Officers in collaboration with Galen University. These trainings will be offered by the Galen University Institute for Leadership Development and Lifelong Learning by cohorts. A total of ninety (90) public officers are in cohort one. This program was launched on 29th January 2024.
- IV. Elections and Boundaries Development Programme – The Development of Election and Boundaries Draft Certification Program for the Belize Public Service in collaboration with Galen University Institute for Leadership Development and Lifelong Learning. These Trainings are scheduled to commence in March, 2024.
- V. Offboarding Handbook and Training Materials for the Retirement Process.
The Onboarding Handbook was created in 2022 and offers a formal welcome into the service. The Unit saw the need to complement this process with a formal separation process in the structure of an Offboarding Handbook. An interactive and engaging consultation is currently in process with key stakeholders in each district.
- VI. Financial Assistance: Approximately three hundred (300) public officers have received support in the form of study leave, financial assistance and increments for higher qualification to date (25th January 2024).

Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS)

- I. During the past few months, the HRMIS Unit has been a key partner in the processing of increments, with its resumption on 1st April 2023. This process involved verification checks to ensure that all outstanding Performance Appraisal Reports were conducted and salaries verified.
- II. Piloting of the MyGOB (Leave Management Module) in collaboration with the E-Governance and Digitalization Department. The project was undertaken to streamline the application and approval of vacation and sick Leave in the Public Service, thereby transitioning the system from strictly paper based to a more accessible and efficient web-based system.
 - a. In September 2023, the MyGOB was piloted to 6 Ministries and 2 Departments
 - 1. Ministry of Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform and Religious Affairs – *HQ*
 - i. *Elections and Boundaries Department*
 - 2. Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics and E-Governance - *HQ*
 - i. *Department of Postal Service*
 - 3. Office of the Prime Minister - *HQ*
 - 4. Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation - *HQ*

5. Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Management – *HQ*
 6. Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government – *HQ*
- b. Based on feedback received from the pilot Ministries, adjustments were made to enhance the system.
- III. Roll out of MyGOB - Leave Management Module
- a. The roll out of the system to all other Ministries and Departments, on phase by phase approach, will occur during the period January to April 2024
 - b. By May of 2024, all Ministries and Departments will be onboarded to the MyGOB.
- IV. The Unit recruited a Web Developer whose role will be instrumental in the expansion of the MyGOB, to incorporate additional HR functions. This initiative is in line with the Government's plan to transform the Public Service.
- V. Job Search and Employment Application website, continues to be accessed and utilized by the general public as the primary source for recruitment into the public service. Traffic to the site has increase significantly.
- a. As of January 2024, there are:
 - i. 48,597 visitors to the site
 - ii. 142 vacancies have been advertised on the site.
 - iii. 2,159 persons have created their electronic resume.
 - iv. 2,418 job applications have been submitted.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

- I. The EAP Unit has increased staffing.
- The EAP has been staffed with two new social workers. A Senior Social Worker and Social Worker, both social workers demonstrate a high level of competence and are fully equipped to meet the demands of the EAP Unit. This brings the Unit to a total of 3 staff members.
 - Increasing the cadre of practitioners by 6 this year. 2 new psychiatrist and 4 Mental Health Practitioners.
- III. Successful Launched of the remarketing of the EAP strategies.
- Even though the EAP Unit and the services provided has been in existence since 2013, many public officers were unaware of the programme. For this reason, the unit launched remarketing strategies to build awareness amongst the larger public officers. These strategies included conducting several media visits to highlight the EAP existence as well as the services offered.

- As part of the remarketing process all administrative officers were provided with an EAP Sensitization session.

IV. The EAP sensitization workshop: A Workshop was conducted to provide administrative officers with the knowledge needed to assist public officers in times of Crisis. Fostering a relationship between AO's and the EAP, is key to the programme's success.

- Ongoing sensitization sessions throughout the ministries countrywide, starting from top-management. Several Ministries has its individual challenges, educating top management about the processes of the EAP will always remain important since majority of referrals made to the EAP unit is by recommendation of those in leadership positions. Sensitization sessions however remains an ongoing process.
- The unit have received positive feedback by public officers who have accessed the services of EAP Practitioners, as well as positive feedback from supervisors across ministries.
- Drafting of the post-evaluation tool to evaluate service providers has been completed.
This tool will enable the unit to effectively assess the services being provided by the practitioners to all public officers who access their services.
- Since April 2023 to date the EAP has provided services to 209 public officers.

Job Classification and Compensation Unit

- I. Conducted Organizational Development Review for the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Transport, Ministry of Health and Wellness and Attorney General Ministry, which includes the following:
 - Designs current organizational charts, critiquing the weaknesses within the structures and proposed new organizational designs rectifying the weaknesses of the current structures.
 - Designs both current and proposed organizational charts depicting proper 'Span of Control', clear reporting relationships and career path.
 - Develops standardized Job Descriptions (Management and Non-Management) for all positions within the ministries listed above that were reviewed. This includes writing job descriptions with clear and meaningful job specifications, requirements, experience, and compensation, as well as ensuring that the 'Job Title' of positions are reflective of the duties and responsibilities of the job.
 - Sets the authorised number of job positions required to fulfil the mandate of the Ministry/Department being reviewed.

- Prepares Round -2 Report of the ministries being review detailing the Legal Authority, Ministerial Portfolios and functions of the Ministry and linking each Ministry's Mission to the Organizational Design and staffing level.
- II. The Unit also participated in strategic meetings/sessions with other Ministry/Department such as Department of Civil Aviation, National Climate Change, Office of the Ombudsman, Office of the Commissioner of Stamps, National Meteorological Service, Fisheries Department, Ministry of Human Development, Ministry of Economic Development etc. to discuss matters such as:
- Analysis and restructuring of the organization structure and plans.
 - Creating of units and positions and facilitate the development job descriptions for positions requested.
 - Review and upgrade of salary scales for various ministries such as the Ministry of Health and Wellness as it relates to the positions of Pharmacist and Drug Inspectors.
 - Initiated the process of upgrading positions within the Ministry of Human Development for all the 'Social Work' positions across the three (3) Departments within the Ministry.
- III. Apart from conducting Organizational Development Review the JCCU also did the following during this period:
- Process numerous requests and made recommendation on for the creation, redesignation, reclassification and upgrading positions across the Public Service.
 - Assisted several Ministry/Department with the restructuring, addition, and removal of positions to their organizational structures.
 - Developed and updated new and existing job descriptions for various positions outside of those job descriptions done under Organizational Development Review as per request by Ministry/Department.

Good Governance Unit

I. MESICIC

- The Director, Good Governance Unit and the Legal Assistant participated in multiple planning sessions with the review sub-group as one of the two (2) State Parties to review the Bahamas and the final on-site (virtual) visit with the Bahamas country experts to review their compliance with articles of the OAS' Inter-American Convention Against Corruption that dealt with Bank Secrecy, Bribery, Illicit Enrichment and extradition between April and August, 2023.
- In September of 2023 the Director and Legal Assistant attended the 40th meeting of the Committee of experts of the OAS Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (MESICIC) in Washington DC to update on Belize's advancement in

meeting different articles of the convention's state obligations. The review and passing of the Country Review Report of the Bahamas was approved and presentations of best practices of Conflict of Interest were made.

- Belize has received invitation to attend and update on Belize's progress and present to the Special Session "Beneficial Ownership: Transparency for Fighting and Preventing Corruption" at 41st Meeting of the MESICIC Committee of Experts to be held on 11th – 14th March 2024.

II. UNCAC

- In June 2023 Belize received the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Country Review Report done by Uruguay and the Marshall Islands to update through a review by the appropriate government departments/units. Discussion questions were also submitted to us to prepare for the on-site visit of the UNCAC team along with the country experts from Uruguay and the Marshall Islands.
- On the 20th of August 2023 the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), the secretariat responsible for the United Nations Convention Against Corruption team along with the country experts of Uruguay and the Marshall Islands arrived to conduct a country visit to review the state of Belize's Implementation of Chapter 2, Preventive Measures and Chapter 5, Asset Recovery of the UNCAC. The Review team spent three (3) days listening to presentations, asking questions and having discussions with twenty (20) different government departments plus the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and the National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB).
- On 9th – 11th October 2023 the UNODC hosted the Conference to Launch the Regional Platform to Fast-Track the Implementation of UNCAC in the Caribbean. Belize was represented by the Chief Executive Officer, the Director of Good Governance, the Contractor-General, the Financial Intelligence Unit, Legal Counsel, and Belize Chamber of Commerce Industry Policy Analyst. Belize joined the Caribbean Platform (Hub) and participated in discussions that resulted in the development of a proposed roadmap to develop, or strengthen, the institutional framework and national policy to fast-track anti-corruption strategies among stakeholders in procurement, whistleblower protection and civil asset recovery.
- The Chief Executive Officer and Director, Good Governance Unit attended the 10th Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in Atlanta from the 11th - 14th of December 2023. At this conference, attended by 160 member countries of the United Nations, the CEO and Director attended plenary sessions on national anti-corruption reports and took time to attend

meaningful meetings of program strategies on challenges of environmental crimes, civil asset recovery, civil society partnerships and institutional framework development. We also got oriented on anti-corruption funding programs and, through the UNODC, held discussion with state experts from Brazil on exploring possible assistance with developing institutional law enforcement of environmental policing.

III. Good Governance/Anti-Corruption

- The many conferences and orientations have resulted in the recognition and development of multiple strategies to.
 - Creatively launch an anti-corruption public education orientation
 - Orient and survey the Public Service and other public and private governance agencies on good governance/corruption gaps/assessment to develop a National Good Governance Medium to Long term Strategy.
 - Partner with both government and non-government stakeholders to develop and institute good governance policies/programs.
 - Develop the institutional framework with mandated and negotiated relationships with our institutional partners to coordinate our anti-corruption agenda to fulfil our obligations/commitments, local and international to combat corruption in all its manifestations.

IV Anti-Corruption Awareness Month

- 8th November 2023 – Launch of Anti-Corruption Poster, Essays and Canvas Art Contests
- 13th & 14th November 2023 – Media visits to Channel5 “Open Your Eyes” and LoveTV Business Hour.
- 22nd November 2023 – Official Launch of Anti-Corruption Month.
- 24th – 29th November 2023 – Individual Presentations to Ministries on Corruption, the Impact of Corruption, and recommendations of how to Mitigate.
- 4th December 2023 – Integrity Walk in couple communities (Belmopan, Dangriga)
- 7th December 2023 – 1st National Anti-Corruption Conference, San Ignacio that included many government (GGU, Public Service, PSC, FIU, FSC, Customs, Police) and non-government (Women, YLAB, NSUB, Youths for Justice, BCCI, BBB, NTUCB, PSU) agencies in attendance. Listened to presenters both local (Women, Youth, Business, Union) and international (UNODC, Jamaica’s Attorney General Chambers, Trinidad & Tobago Office of Procurement Regulation). Discussions resulted in development of Anti-Corruption Declaration that was endorsed on 31st January 2023.

IV. Induction Training

- Staff from the Good Governance Unit have successfully completed their Induction Training into the Public Service.

Customer Service & Quality Assurance Unit (CSQAU)

- I. To facilitate fostering a customer-centric organizational culture while also providing support for continuous learning and development, the CSQAU conducted customer service training sessions for public officers across the public service and countrywide in collaboration with the Training Unit of the MPS and other ministries and departments. Such included training for:
 - a. Secretarial & Clericals Promotional Programs (3 cohorts)
 - i. 94 Clerks
 - ii. 18 Secretaries
 - b. 225 Police Recruits
 - c. 221 School Wardens
- II. Champion and provide continuous support for the value and virtues of Public Service and Public Officers, the unit facilitated and ensured that recognition and show appreciation is institutionalized, shown, and commemorated across the public service and country of Belize; thus managed the Public Service Day & Awards Program in collaboration with its Public Service Day National Committee, and as a result organized:
 - a. Countrywide information fairs, employee's appreciation and engagement events, including health walks, sporting events, professional attire fashion show and community enrichment and outreach initiatives in seven (7) municipalities.
 - b. Recognized and showed appreciation for some 1654 public officers who achieved significant milestones of 10 through to 35 years of service plus a Special 9 individuals who readily avail themselves for national disaster duties for and to the Government and People of Belize.
 - c. Organized 2 special award ceremonies for some 250 and 100 attendees respectively.
 - d. Oversaw the development and launch of the Website and e-library for the Belize Public Service Walk of Recognition and Appreciation

	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
APPOINTMENTS													
- APPOINTMENT	77	26	29	26	23	16	26	6	31	38	51	26	375
- CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENT	14	20	7	11	10	13	9	6	1	5			96
- ACTING APPOINTMENT	1	2	1	2						1			7
- TRANSFER ON APPOINTMENT	4	4	3	3	1	5		2	1		5	1	29
PROMOTIONS													0
- PROMOTIONS	68	29	29	16	40	27	31	9	30	28	36	11	354
- TRANSFER ON PROMOTION	10	6	2		1	2	1	2	15	3	7	1	50
TRANSFERS													0
- NORMAL													0
- EXIGENCIES OF THE SERVICE													0
DISCIPLINARY													0
- DISCIPLINARY	1			2	2	1	1	1	4	2	2		16
- SUSPENSION			1			1	1	1	1	1			6
- LIFTING OF INTERDICTION	1				2		2		1	1			7
- INTERDICTION				2	1				1	2	1		7
- LIFTING OF SUSPENSION													0
- CHARGES INSTITUTED													0
- CONCLUDED	1	1	1										3
- PENDING													0
REMOVAL FROM OFFICE													0
- TERMINATION	2												2
- RETIREMENT	2	37	28	31	13	7	17	11	16	16	10	11	132
- DISMISSAL					2		3				2		7
- REMOVAL FROM OFFICE													0
- RELEASE	1	2							1		1		5

SECURITY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2023													
APPOINTMENTS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
ACTING APPOINTMENT	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	47	-	-	-	-	55
PROMOTIONS													
PROMOTIONS	22	1	8	1	32	-	1	15	20	-	4	2	106
PERMANENT REGULAR COMMISSION	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5
COMMISSION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	1	3	8
LEAVE													
EXCESS SICK LEAVE	36	11	-	-	2	1	-	2	5	4	3	3	67
ADDITIONAL SICK LEAVE	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	8	9
SPECIAL LEAVE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MATERNITY LEAVE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
STUDY LEAVE	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
LEAVE WITHOUT PAY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
TRANSFERS													
NORMAL TRANSFERS	46	-	-	2	16	-	1	11	2	4	-	-	82
EXIGENCIES OF THE SERVICE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DISCIPLINARY													
INTERDICTION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LIFTING OF INTERDICTION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
SUSPENSION	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

JUDICIAL AND LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION'S REPORT FOR 1ST JANUARY TO 31ST DECEMBER 2023.

	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
APPOINTMENTS													
- APPOINTMENT	3				4	2		2		2	4		17
- CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENT		1		2	1			1					5
- ACTING APPOINTMENT		1	1										2
- TRANSFER ON APPOINTMENT											1		1
- CONTRACT/RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS		7	1	1		6	1						16
PROMOTIONS													
- PROMOTIONS				1									1
- TRANSFER ON PROMOTION	1							1			1		3
TRANSFERS													
- NORMAL							1	1					2
- EXIGENCIES OF THE SERVICE													-
DISCIPLINARY													-
- DISCIPLINARY													-
- SUSPENSION													-
- LIFTING OF INTERDICTION													-
- INTERDICTION													-
- LIFTING OF SUSPENSION													-
- CHARGES INSTITUTED													-
- CONCLUDED													-
- PENDING													-
REMOVAL FROM OFFICE													-
- TERMINATION													-
- RETIREMENT	1					1							2
- RESIGNATION				1			1		1				3
- DISMISSAL													-
- REMOVAL FROM OFFICE													-
- RELEASE													-

Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations

In a year defined by resilience, innovation, and collective effort, Belize's tourism industry demonstrated good recovery in 2023, approaching pre-pandemic levels and setting the stage for continued success. The overnight sector experienced a rebound, surpassing 2022 figures by 25%, with 92.4% recovery compared to 2019 levels. The cruise sector also showed improvement, recording 904,189 cruise visitors, marking a 47% increase from the previous year. Major cruise lines, including Carnival, Norwegian, and Royal Caribbean, resumed calls, and new lines expressed interest, contributing to the ongoing rebound in the cruise sector. Despite challenges faced globally, Belize's tourism industry demonstrated remarkable resilience in 2023, and is poised for another successful year in 2024, with January and February already proven to be record-breaking months.

The global tourism outlook is positive, and when compared to pre-Covid, Belize's 92% recovery in 2023 was ahead of global recovery for international tourist arrivals, which was at 88%. Belize was also ahead of recovery in the Americas, which was at 90%. In 2024, international tourism is projected to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels, with an estimated 2% growth beyond 2019 figures, according to the UNWTO. The global outlook is optimistic, with the reopening of source markets and destinations in Asia, the acceleration of Chinese tourism facilitated by visa policies, visa and travel facilitation measures in the Middle East and Africa, Europe's anticipated driving force with additions to the Schengen area and the Summer Olympics in Paris, and strong travel from the United States. However, economic and geopolitical challenges, including inflation, high interest rates, oil price volatility, and trade disruptions, pose ongoing risks. Tourists continue to prioritize value for money, domestic travel, sustainability, and adaptability, while staff shortages and geopolitical tensions remain concerns impacting the industry's recovery. Despite the challenges, these trends present unique opportunities for Belize.

Marketing efforts will continue to position Belize as a premier destination for adventure, ecotourism, and diverse natural and cultural experiences. The strategic focus on the North American market, together with a focus on the Latin American and European markets, as well as ongoing engagement with the Belizean diaspora, continue to yield positive results. Increased awareness and a greater share of voice resulted in increased arrival numbers and a rise in repeat visitors. Regional marketing will be a focus in the coming year, with the engagement of a company to represent Belize in Latin America. We will also continue to actively participate in regional integration efforts. In January of 2024, Belize took on the Presidency Pro-Tempore of the Mundo Maya Organization for the next two years. We are committed to working with the relevant agencies to improve land border and seaport connectivity to facilitate travel within the region.

Regarding aviation development, the year 2023 saw significant enhancements in both new services and increased capacities. JetBlue initiated service from New York JFK on December 6, providing a new travel option to Belize. Additionally, Southwest is set to commence flights from Baltimore starting March 9. American Airlines increased the Charlotte route to daily flights, from the once-weekly schedule in 2022. The Miami route also increased, with American Airlines adding frequency to twice daily in the high season compared to once daily. Alaska Airlines also expanded services, with daily flights from Los Angeles and an increase in seasonal Seattle flights to four times weekly in January, up from two in 2022. WestJet boosted seasonal capacity, increasing Calgary flights to twice weekly and Toronto to three times weekly, and extending the season by six weeks into May. Delta responded to increased demand by increasing the seasonal Minneapolis route to twice weekly from the once-weekly schedule in 2022. Notably, COPA announced the permanent addition of a second flight from Panama in April, utilizing a larger aircraft with double the capacity compared to 2022. Southwest added to the summer 2024 schedule by announcing an increase in Houston flights from daily to eight times a week. Also, United responded to peak-period demands by adding week-to-week frequencies on routes from Houston, Newark, and Chicago, further enhancing Belize's global accessibility. There will be increased efforts in 2024 to engage more airlines and encourage new routes, with particular emphasis on attracting a European route, as well as more regional routes.

International Awards showcased Belize's excellence and commitment to sustainability, with over 35 Belize hotels and destinations recognized for awards by Travel & Leisure, Conde Nast Traveller, Travel Weekly and others. The government's commitment to sustainability will be showcased in September of 2024 as Belize will host the World Sustainable Travel and Hospitality Awards, reinforcing Belize's global leadership in sustainable tourism. Sustainable Tourism Development progressed through the updated National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan and the launch of the revised National Cruise Tourism Policy in 2023. The government is committed to prioritizing the actions outlined in these plans, ensuring a sustainable and responsible approach to tourism development.

Tourism Security and Safety remained a top priority, with the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) supporting the expansion of the Tourism Police Unit, reinforcing security infrastructure and equipment, and establishing the National Tourism Security Task Force. In 2024, the emphasis on tourism security and safety initiatives will continue.

Training and Capacity Development saw substantial achievements with the National Training Program "Elevate," providing over 1,400 courses in 2023, fostering skills in Customer Service, Food and Beverage Management, Safety and Security, Business Management, and Tour Guiding. The extension of Tour Guide Training to various locations produced around 700 new

tour guides. The government's commitment to ongoing training and capacity building in 2024 will continue to strengthen the tourism workforce.

Infrastructure Development will remain a key focus in 2024. Some areas include road upgrades, improved directional signage, beautification of gateways and towns, and urban upliftment projects such as the Fort George Tourism Zone, Mahogany Street Food Hub, Constitution Park and others. Anti-Litter and Civic Pride Campaigns also continue with the aim to keep Belize clean. Investing in tourism infrastructure is paramount to ensuring an enriched and seamless tourist experience, and investment in this area will continue in 2024. Adequate infrastructure, including well-maintained roads, efficient transportation networks, and modern facilities, plays a pivotal role in enhancing the overall appeal of a destination. By allocating resources to improve infrastructure, the government not only facilitates smoother travel logistics for tourists but also contributes to the overall economic growth of the region. Robust infrastructure investments can generate employment opportunities, stimulate local businesses, and elevate the quality of life for residents. The government's commitment to advancing tourism infrastructure underscores its recognition of tourism as a vital economic driver.

Belize's hotel infrastructure continues to expand, with notable projects like the Four Seasons hotel on Caye Chapel. These types of developments underscore our commitment to supporting high-end developments, which are critical to the growth of the overnight sector. There is also significant potential for nautical tourism. Attracting investment in state-of-the-art marinas will enhance the visitor experience and support growth in this sector.

Support for Sports Tourism, Culture, and Events will continue as a part of the government's dedication to sports tourism and the orange economy, with ongoing investments in cycling, football, basketball, volleyball, Pok ta Pok Games, Ruta Maya, Battle of the Drums, and numerous festivals. These cultural initiatives contribute significantly to Belize's identity, fostering community pride. The government's support of events such as the International Music and Food Festival, the Chocolate Festival, the Belize Birding Festival, and September Celebrations further reinforces its dedication to developing cultural tourism. Through these engagements, Belize celebrates its unique identity, fostering community pride, and providing immersive experiences for both locals and tourists. The government's support for a spectrum of cultural events will continue in 2024, and will not only help to preserve the nation's heritage but also contribute significantly to the economic and social vitality of Belize.

In summary, Belize's tourism industry demonstrated resilience and growth in 2023, with tourism investments evident in various sectors. The Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations will continue to focus on the strategic objectives of its ministry and its statutory boards (the Belize Tourism Board and the Border Management Agency).

This year's commitment to increased investments to improve industry performance in areas of tourism marketing, diaspora relations, safety and security, sustainable development, training, international recognition, aviation development, infrastructure development, and cultural events will position Belize for another successful year, contributing to economic growth, community development, and global recognition.