

Response to the Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for Belize

Part One: Overview of trends in achieving gender equality and women's advancement

1. The Government of Belize is committed to the advancement of women in achieving equality, equity and justice. To honor its international commitment made at the 1994 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Government of Belize has undertaken a diversity of responses to achieve its mission of full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedom for all women. A multi-sectorial approach including Government and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) in the establishment of strategies, policies, legislation, and programs has been established around five priority areas.

An assessment of post-Beijing activities highlights gender main streaming, women and the economy (including poverty), violence against women, women's political participation and leadership, and women's sexual and reproductive health as the five priority areas for action.

To address the priority area of gender main streaming a national Equity and Equality Strategic Plan has been developed. This national plan envisions a society where each person is able to realize his or her potential and participate in active, meaningful roles in the development of Belize, and enjoy all benefits thereof. The mission is to create an enabling environment which allows women and men to empower themselves economically, socially, culturally, and politically. The Equity and Equality Strategic Plan proposes to achieve its mission by facilitating the implementation of a national Gender Management System spearheaded by a task force headed by the Women's Department and supported by other Government agencies, the Private Sector and NGOs.

In September of 1998, a work plan was presented to the Minister of Human Development, Women and Youth for approval. It included objectives:- to facilitate government and NGO capacity to develop and implement relevant policies and programs, to develop effective coordination among public and private sector organizations to ensure gender integration, and to institutionalize Gender Management Systems, monitor, and evaluate the progress of the plan. The task force is currently working on the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The Beijing Platform for Action identified twelve critical areas of concern. Two of those areas were - Women and Poverty and Women and the Economy. The second priority area for Belize is Women and the economy, including poverty. A Poverty Assessment Study was done in 1996, which indicated that 33.1% of the female population lived in poverty. That assessment has led the way for the development and the implementation of several programs aimed at alleviating poverty, especially among women and youth. Skills training programs for women and girls have been developed in most districts.

The Women's Department has been providing programs in computer skills training, as well as traditional skills like cooking, sewing and craft making. The Center for Employment

training has also created a curriculum for nontraditional skills training such as carpentry, and masonry, for women and girls. The Youth Enterprise Unit, a wing of the Youth Department, was established to offer young women and men the opportunity to acquire entrepreneurial skills to start their own business. The Social Investment Fund (SIF) was established to assist women and youth in poverty, with funds for projects. The National Committee for Families and Children developed a Day Care Policy that would allow for the establishment of day care services to assist working women, especially those from female headed households. The Government's efforts also included the introduction of a Sustainable Human Development Program to upgrade capacities for community leaders, including women.

Women's access to credit has been limited by their lack of access to collateral. Traditional credit agencies have not created lending programs aimed at low income borrowers and thus do not cater to people with low paying jobs, like those of many women. Non-traditional credit agencies like the Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST), the National Development Foundation of Belize (NDFB), and the Social Investment Fund (SIF) have been more accessible to women. One quarter of NDFB's clients is women. It has now put a gender policy in place regarding the processing of loans. BEST also has a gender policy in place and has nine Community Banking projects in the country. Other NGOs such as Help for Progress and Belize Association of Producers Organizations (BAPO) are helping rural women with funds for small income generating projects.

The issue of sexual harassment in the workplace was raised in the early 1990s by the Women Against Violence Organization and was completed by the Women's Department and other NGOs. In 1996 government passes the Sexual Harassment Act. The Act served to protect women in the workplace, institutions, and places of accommodation, whether business or residential. A revision of this Act was proposed as there were ambiguities in its implementation. This revision is important as the Sexual Harassment Act was a commitment to protect women in the workplace from unwanted sexual advances and abuse.

The third priority area for the Government of Belize in implementing its post-Beijing commitment is the area of violence against women. This is an area of great concern for most Belizean women. Significant development has taken place in this area. In 1992 Women Against Violence, an NGO, pioneered the Domestic Violence Law which took effect in 1993. Haven House, a shelter for battered women has been established to assist women victims of domestic violence with temporary housing and possible job placements. The Sexual Harassment Act of 1996 also serves as legal protection of women (and men) from sexual harassment. Family Court was also established to deal with cases involving violence and abuse within the home. It uses the legal system to protect victims from perpetrators by issuing fines, collecting child and family support, issuing restraining orders and even jail time. Counseling services is also available through Family Court and Women's Department. Workshops on the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual harassment are conducted countrywide by the Women's Department also.

Flaws in the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act have led to the creation of a Domestic Violence Task Force whose mission is also to develop a national plan to address domestic violence. Technical assistance from PAHO has allowed the development of a plan called

the "Integrated Model of Care for Family Violence: State and Civil Society Response 1998-2001." The plan involves multi-sectorial coordination and participation of agencies including the Police, Women's Department, Women's Commission and NGOs committed to eradicating domestic violence. The Women's Department also holds an annual Zero Tolerance Campaign on Domestic Violence in commemoration of International Day to End Violence Against Women.

The role of women in political parties and leadership, the fourth priority area, has changed very little over the years. Women make up approximately fifty percent of the country's population of 236,975 people, yet there is only one elected, female Minister in the Cabinet and two elected women (including the Cabinet Minister) in the House of Representatives. Women are grossly under-represented in Central Government just as they are in other leadership positions in public administration, civil service, appointed boards and private enterprise.

The General Elections of August 1998 also saw 5 out of 58 election candidates being women- a meager 8.6%. Of that small number one woman candidate won the largest percentage of votes in that election. Local government elections has seen an increase in women participation as candidates. 1998's City Council elections saw 6 of the 22 candidates being women. That was the highest percentage of women to ever contest the City Council elections. Four of those women won seats also. More women have also contested and won seats at the Town Board and Village Council levels. In the south of Belize, Garifuna women (indigenous women) have the highest rate of election success for women nationwide. Many have served as Mayors. Many other women from other ethnic groups have also served as Chairpersons of their villages.

Similarly, the appointment of women to other semi-political bodies, statutory bodies and Boards has increased, yet it is still not representative of the country's demographic distribution. Currently women serve as the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives. More women have been appointed Senators and Chairpersons of Boards, but these positions still hold less power than seats in the Cabinet.

The Government's decision to include more women in its list of important political appointments came out of a 'Women's Agenda that was tabled by the political party that was successful in the 1998 General Elections. The women's wing of that party lobbied for a 30% minimal women leadership representation in key positions. The appointments did not meet the minimal target, but they are a step toward increasing the numbers of women in leadership positions in Belize. The National Women's Commission is currently conducting a study to assess opportunities for women's political leadership in Belize. The results of this should provide more information on the situation of women political leaders and recommendations will be fed to Cabinet, all political parties, the Political Reform Commission, NGOs, trade unions, and other government bodies.

Women's sexual and reproductive health, the fifth priority area, has been a concern of several regional and international plans of action. In Belize, the post-Beijing Action Plan focuses on the National Health Plan which includes a gender approach component. This National Health Plan is currently being worked out. The Women's Department, PAHO and Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) are working on the integration of gender specific needs and concerns into a

Health Sector Reform Project. BFLA has broadened its scope of delivery and has moved away from direct family planning to sexual and reproductive health services and education. With the increase in the number of women and teens who are testing positive for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, Government and NGOs like BFLA have widened their scope of medical health care to include counseling and education. Currently most rural communities have access to primary health care, pre and post natal care, public awareness programs on cancer, HIV/AIDS, abortion, STDs, domestic violence, rape and teen pregnancy that are specific to women.

The goals of gender equality and the advancement of women are being pursued as a priority in relation to other public policy goals. These five critical areas do not just affect women but they also affect families, children, indigenous people and all other minority groups. For example lack of adequate education and skills training to qualify for a good paying job is not only an obstacle to self sustainability and economic status of women but to men and any other group as well. Therefore, when governments commit themselves to the alleviation of poverty, increase in health care, participation, protection from sexual harassment, improvement of education and elimination of all forms of discrimination, they are looking at the entire population and the advancement of the country and its entire population. Women issues are people issues.

The status of women and girls has improved since the Fourth World Conference on Women of 1995. National attention has been given to sexual abuse, domestic violence, poverty, discrimination, cultural attitudes and traditional structures that have kept women out of the economic, political, and social mainstream of Belize. Government and NGOs have been focusing on violence against women and girls. A unit within the Police Force has been established to deal with rape, incest, and domestic violence, all of which affect women and girls much more than they do men and boys. Women's Department and other NGOs have been involved with the task of sensitizing private and public service. A Political Reform Commission was created to review the system of governance of the country. Three women make up part of the team of fourteen, including one person from the Women's Issues Network.. The Commission's task is to analyze the current constitution and government system and make recommendations.

The area of violence against women has been the most successful in terms of public education, the reporting of cases of sexual abuse against girls and women, public support for victims of abuse, implementation of existing laws against abuse and availability of government local and international funds to support programs. The Medical and Police Departments have been involved in gender sensitization programs to improve their responses and other involvement in cases of violence against women and girls.

The Equity and Equality Strategic Plan aims at implementing a national Gender Management System in the public and private sectors and in Government, therefore, all areas of society have been targeted for participation in the plan. The mission is to "...create an enabling environment which allows women and men to empower themselves economically, socially, culturally and politically." Public education campaigns, programs and projects have been proposed to institutionalize the approach among public and private sector organizations and institutions. Gender assessment has been done of school curricula, educational philosophies, teaching methods and text books, and recommendations have been made to the Ministry of

Education. Some schools have already made the switch to gender sensitive and gender neutral books, abandoning long held sex stereotypes.

Despite the advances in the road toward gender equity and equality for women in Belize, cultural and traditional attitudes towards women and their roles need to be modified. Many women still do not see themselves in "male" roles of leadership, especially at the national level. The structure of the male oriented political system with its lack of flexibility, and system of promotions according to seniority rather than merit, discourage women from getting involved as candidates themselves. Women have always been the driving force behind the political campaigns of both political parties, but find little support when they decide to accept the challenges of candidacy. Women have also traditionally seen themselves as wives and mothers and have made decisions based on those roles and sometimes have prefer the hidden role behind their men.

Financial, technical, and human resources have also been major setbacks in the implementation and expansion of programs aimed at improving the quality of life for girls and women. Traditional values and beliefs concerning man/woman relationships have also held back legislation, court actions, counseling programs and intervention programs on domestic violence and sexual abuse. The absence of data is another immediate obstacle in the analysis of the status of women and girls. Currently the Women's Department and the Women's Commission continue to work as the main arms of Government responsible for all initiatives aimed at advancing the cause of women and monitoring agreements between Government and any other bodies for the advancement of women in Belize.

Part Two: Financial and institutional measures

1. The annual budget for the Ministry which includes the Women's Department, as a percentage of the national budget is 7%. The budget of the Women's Department, as a percentage of the total budget of the Ministry responsible for this Department is 1.5%. There has been an increase in the Capital Two portion of the budget since 1995. The amount of local funds allocated to this Department has risen steadily to approximately three times what it was in 1995. The Capital Three portion of the budget has also increased since 1995. This portion of the budget covers international and bilateral donors. Women's Department is responsible for the distribution and use of these funds. A Department budget is worked out and projects and programs fit into these. The Audit Department is the wing of Government that monitors the use of Government funds. It does not investigate the programs and projects but rather does the Government accounting. The Ministry for Human Development, Women and Youth monitors the implementation of Women's Department programs.

The Women's Department and its supporting Women's Commission work in conjunction with other agencies and civil society to create task forces that address specific priority areas for the Platform of Action. For example the Gender Equity and Equality Task Force is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of initiatives toward the establishment of Gender Management Systems in the public and private sector. These task forces are multisectorial and attempt to represent all the necessary stakeholders. They meet at quarterly sessions to report on

individual responsibilities, achievements and obstacles.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) are important in the mission for equity and equality for all women. WIN Belize- Women's Issues Network of Belize and many other NGOs before WIN Belize have been important steering forces in the women's movement in Belize. NGOs like BOWAND - Belize Organization for Women and Development have been in action for twenty years and were largely responsible for the initiation of gender consciousness and continue to work with the Women's Department to provide training and public awareness in gender issues, as well as social, economic, and political issues that impact the lives of women. NGOs collaborated with the Women's Department in 1995 to prepare the Belize paper for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing while many other territories presented government papers and independent NGO papers.

The Women's Department, the Women's Commission, Civil Society, other NGOs and international organizations are all involved in the ongoing task of developing awareness of the plight of women in Belize, the region and the world. Many projects, programs, legislation, and campaigns have been launched to achieve equality and justice for all women. The Beijing Platform for Action and several other Conference Action Plans serve as the road map toward the goal of equality, social justice, and empowerment for all women.

PART THREE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, Belize's National Taskforce on Gender Equity and Equality identified five critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action that it considered priorities for the country: Poverty, Health, Education, Violence against Women, and Women in Power and Decision-Making. The efforts necessary for improvements in these five areas were expected to continue into the new millennium, and the Government of Belize has established a goal of the year 2003 for certain objectives. In 1998 a sixth commitment to the Beijing Platform was initiated with the development of the Belize Equity and Equality Strategic Plan, the purpose of which is to facilitate the implementation of a national gender management system. The following answers to section three of the questionnaire pertain only to the six areas of the Beijing Platform for Action that Belize has prioritized.

(A) Innovative policies, programmes, projects, and good practices

(4)

Poverty/Unemployment

Two crucial factors that contribute to the incidence of poverty in Belize, particularly among women, are lack of training and lack of access to affordable credit. In an effort to provide women with skills that will broaden their employment opportunities, several government and non-government agencies in Belize offer skills training courses in both traditional areas for women, such as sewing and office training, and non-traditional areas such as electrical wiring and small appliance repair. Some programmes incorporate personal development and business management components into their coursework. In addition to these programmes, the newly established Youth Enterprise Unit offers young women and men an opportunity to acquire the entrepreneurial skills necessary to start their own businesses. The Women's Department has also developed Income Generating Projects targeting women and young people in the Stann Creek and Toledo districts, areas that suffer the highest levels of poverty in the country.

In order for these acquired skills to be converted into sustainable employment, the Government of Belize has recognized that it is imperative for women to have access to affordable credit, an opportunity which is often hampered by women's lack of capital or property as collateral. In 1996 the Social Investment Fund (SIF) was created as a poverty alleviation programme focusing on community development projects. In an extension of this programme, SIF is about to embark on a micro-credit venture in conjunction with the Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (B.E.S.T.) targeting women and youth. Beginning late last year, the Small Farmers and Business Bank established a special window designated for women interested in obtaining loans. During a four month period (28 December 1998 – 30 April 1999), 189 women from around the country accessed a total of \$1, 058,195.00 BZE, amounting to 29% of the overall funds disbursed. All of these loans were granted for the establishment of small businesses. This effort on behalf of the Small Farmers and Business Bank reflects the commitment made by the People's United Party in its 1998 electoral Manifesto to increase women's access to affordable credit.

The introduction of a sustainable Human Development Programme has also aided in the economic empowerment of women in Belize. This programme operates from the point of view that effective economic development can only be achieved when it is integrated with social development. This holistic approach focuses on building the capacities of community leaders, especially women, through workshops and leadership training programmes. The 1998 annual report from the Women's Department show that approximately seven thousand women benefited from these programs. In an effort to facilitate women's participation in leadership positions and the labour force, the Government of Belize with the guidance of the National Committee for Families and Children is also currently drafting a national day care policy, which will particularly benefit women in female-headed households.

Health

The National Health Plan of Belize now includes a partial gender planning approach, including desegregation of data by sex. Since 1996, however, the Government

has been engaged in health sector reform, the diagnostic phase of which has recently concluded. Strategic options for gender mainstreaming, among other issues, have been identified and a loan application is being developed for submission to the International Development Bank and other funding institutions. There is also a move towards more private provision of health care services in certain areas and a decentralization of services at the district level. Through this medium patients who can afford will be able to have easier access to Health care services. More autonomy will also be give to district personnel for the delivery of Health services.

Several initiatives have been launched in response to the need for more sexual and reproductive health services and education. The Maternal and Child Health programme of the Ministry of Health has identified Adolescent Health, Contraception, and STD during pregnancy as three of its five priority areas. The Ministry of Health has also been involved in coordinating a tri-national project between Belize, Mexico, and Guatemala to address different women's health issues, in particular reproductive health. Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) has broadened its scope of delivery to include not only direct family planning, but also more sexual education programmes and reproductive health services. In 1998 the Ministry of Health and UNFPA funded a project through the Pan American Health Organization Multisectoral Committee to develop norms and protocols in the provision of family planning services as well as increase community awareness regarding sexuality, reproductive health, and the delivery of services in the Cayo district.

The National Women's Commission, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Human Development joined together in 1998 to conduct an analysis of women's health and published the book, *From Girls to Women: Growing Up Healthy in Belize*. This comprehensive publication has been an important resource for information regarding the health situation of women in Belize, and will hopefully be updated if funding can be acquired. In response to the increasing incidence of cancer, the National Women's Commission also produced a handbook focusing on breast and cervical cancers in an effort to educate women and to offer encouragement to persons living with cancer.

Education

Belize recognizes that both formal and informal educations are essential to the empowerment of its women. Thus in addition to primary, secondary, and tertiary school programmes, many skills training programmes are available, as discussed in the earlier section regarding Poverty and Unemployment. In formal education the participation rates of female children are equal to or better than their male counterparts, especially beyond the primary level. However, this trend obviously applies only to children who have the opportunity to attend school. Some children, especially girls, are forced to drop out of school due to financial reasons, being unable to meet school fees, the cost of uniforms, books, etc. These costs seem to increase with the level of education.

Violence against Women

One of the most prominent issues of concern for Belizean women over the past decade has been domestic violence. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, studies were conducted in the Belize and Orange Walk districts to assess the effectiveness of the 1992 Domestic Violence Act. Data indicated that the law had been poorly implemented, and as a result a taskforce was established to develop a national plan of action to address family violence. Consultations have since been held at district and national levels, but as of yet a comprehensive plan is still being developed. The Women's Department conducts training sessions on the dynamics of family violence, and this outreach effort has led to an increased number of domestic violence cases acted upon by the Family Court. Since 1996 the Family Court has recorded approximately 1,300 reported cases of domestic violence, 165 of which occurred between January and April 1999. The court has prosecuted 50% of the reported cases. There are several reasons why the other cases have not been concluded by the court, including withdrawal of charges, reconciliation between couples, requests for counseling, and failure to appear at the hearing among others.

In 1996 the Government of Belize passed legislation protecting persons from sexual harassment, after which the Women's Department embarked on an extensive sensitization campaign. As a result of this campaign the Department has been saddled with an increasing amount of sexual harassment cases, however the law does not provide an effective protocol for reporting these matters. In conjunction with several women's

issues NGO's, the Women's Department also conducts the annual Zero Tolerance Campaign on Domestic Violence in commemoration of International Day to End Violence against Women. This is another example of Belize's efforts to raise public awareness about violence against women, a subject that has long been considered taboo in Belizean culture.

Gender Mainstreaming

Since the Beijing Conference, the relationship between women and development in Belize has shifted from a Women In Development (WID) approach, which focused on getting women more practically involved in the development process, to a Gender and Development (GAD) approach, which emphasizes the need for gender analysis and planning in the overall structure of government and civil society. As such, in 1998 the Belize Equity and Equality Strategic Plan was drafted to facilitate the implementation of a National Gender Management System. This plan is spearheaded by a taskforce of both government and non-government agencies. The goal of the plan is to integrate a coordinated, gender-sensitive approach into government and civil policies and programmes. The date of implementation for this plan has not yet been determined.

Women in Power and Decision-Making

Although there have been many active women's groups in Belize over the past two decades, there are still very few women involved in politics and leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. The National Women's Commission recently conducted a survey of two thousand women age eighteen and older from selected households to assess the political participation of women in Belize. The data collected from this survey is currently being analyzed, however feedback was extremely limited. In response to this dearth of involvement, an advocacy campaign is being planned to promote the appointment of more women to leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. A part of this campaign will target the current Government of Belize, as in its electoral Manifesto the People's United Party promised to include more women in key leadership positions within the public service, the initial target being thirty percent of

appointments going to women. As of August 1998, Belize had achieved a 100% increase in women's representation in the House of Representatives, and for the first time the Speaker of the House is a woman. The current President of the Senate is a woman as well.

(B) Obstacles encountered

(5) Overall, lack of human and financial resources are the most significant constraints encountered by government and non-government agencies in Belize. In the area of Poverty and Unemployment, many programmes and projects are limited by these factors as well as by traditional beliefs regarding the role of women in Belizean society. In an effort to promote the expansion of these roles, the theme of Belize Women's Week 1998 was, "Women Breaking Through Traditional Barriers." Activities for the week included a countrywide public awareness campaign as well as an educational forum on non-traditional employment opportunities for women. Some programmes in this area have also suffered from a lack of formal monitoring mechanisms, thus their effectiveness cannot be evaluated and the need for modifications cannot be determined. This greatly hinders the sustainability of these efforts.

Funding difficulties on both the national and local levels have impeded programmes to ensure equal and proper care in the health sector as well. Lack of human and financial resources encumber the delivery of adequate, gender-sensitive services by the appropriate agencies, creating a disparity in the quality and availability of health care. Belize also does not have sufficient policies regarding sexual and reproductive health, an area in which women are especially vulnerable. Relevant agencies are advocating that this issue is addressed in the health sector reform process.

The most significant concern regarding women and education in Belize is the expulsion of pregnant girls from primary and secondary schools. These policies are a result of the Church-State education system in which schools operated by religious institutions receive annual subventions from the government, but retain the right to form their own policies as determined by a Board of Directors. These girls are then forced to

limits her access to the political arena. Cultural attitudes regarding women in politics reflect a belief that women only belong in certain areas of government, such as social services, but women still do not occupy key decision-making positions even in these areas. One of the reasons women in Belize have been so active in non-governmental organizations is because these groups gave them the opportunity to organize around issues that affected women directly, and were adaptable to their other responsibilities as caregivers.

The plan to implement a national gender management system is still in draft, thus it is too early to determine any obstacles which may be encountered.

(6) Steps already discussed in overall report.

(7)

Poverty/Unemployment

In its electoral Manifesto, the People's United Party committed to increasing Social Security benefits for widows and domestic workers as well as taking steps to ensure that all economic policies are gender-sensitive in order to provide women equitable access to all of Belize's resources and economic opportunities. These commitments should be completely realized by August 2003, when the next national elections will occur. To expedite the implementation of such policies, Women's Issues Network-Belize, which is an umbrella organization of several women's groups and agencies, is developing a campaign to advocate for the economic empowerment of women in Belize. Issues in this campaign include the establishment of an equal minimum wage across all employment sectors, ensuring Social Security benefits for domestic workers, and a review of policies regarding maternity leave. This campaign is currently in the early stages of development, thus no time frame has yet been established.

The Women's Department, as part of its Action Plan for 1998-2003, will be developing a formal referral system with relevant government and non-government credit and employment agencies so that women who complete any of the Department's training programmes, or who come to the Department for job counseling are able to quickly

access employment opportunities. In addition to this the Department will be expanding its training programmes in all six districts.

Health

In early 1999, the Government through the Ministries of Health; Human Development, Women and Youth; and Education and sports, launched formally its SHAPES Programme (School Health and Physical Education Services), which advocates concretely for the design of curricula to include sexuality and other much debated themes, in the primary school setting.

A Breast-feeding Policy was drafted and approved by the Ministry of Health in 1998. It aims to help eliminate bottle-feeding practices in the country's major hospitals. Seven of six district hospitals are at least five of the ten steps for successful breast-feeding practices.

Education

The Women's Department in conjunction with COMPAR will be developing a curriculum on civic education for women. To design, develop and implement a civic education skills training program and to increase the pool of women in Belize who know their rights as Belizean Citizens. The development phase should be completed by June 1999, after which the curriculum will be implemented through workshops in each district until November 1999. A final evaluation of the programme will be completed the following month.

Violence against Women

The Women's Department will be conducting training sessions on counseling and support group techniques in the four remaining districts (Belize, Cayo, Stann Creek, Toledo). This effort is designed to increase the services available to victims of domestic violence. The Department will also be mobilizing a lobbying effort to establish a Domestic Violence hotline in Belize.

Women in Power and Decision-Making

The Government of Belize is committed through its manifesto to include more women in key leadership position in the public service and other public bodies with an initial target of 30% of appointees being women.

Gender Equality

The Equity and Equality Strategic Plan aims at implementing a National Gender Management System is a commitment by Government to create a enabling environment of equity and equality for men and women.