National Youth Development Policy of Belize

Belizean Youth Taking The Lead

2012

Vision of the Belizean Youth

Belizean Youth, united and empowered and positively contributing to national, regional and international development through increased access to opportunities for leadership and self-development that promote their overall wellbeing and supports the realization of their dreams and aspirations.

Message from the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports

"We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can no longer be synonymous. We must prepare for the upcoming hour. The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Prosperity." Benjamin Disraelli

Belize's youth constitute the most dynamic human resource potential that will contribute positively to the development of our nation and as such they must be afforded the opportunity to participate in national development by government and other stakeholders. Youth development does not occur in a vacuum and the preparation for youths to be leaders starts now and not in the future. Young people must prepare and be prepared to take up leadership roles.

Being a young nation our goal must be to strengthen youth and our community by ensuring the development of internal and external assets that increases the resiliency of youths moving them from a system of being lead to a system where they lead. Government, Youth, Parents, Churches, Non-governmental organizations, Civil Society, Developmental Partners and the Media are charged to take up this responsibility and to perform it to the best of their ability.

This National Youth Policy is the outcome of countrywide consultations with both youth and youth stake-holders and was facilitated by the youths themselves. The policy is reflective of the vision and drive of our Belizean Youths and their ability to harness their abilities to achieve a common goal. The policy provides the

conceptual framework that will guide major stakeholders and the youth themselves through a model that will see us as a country investing purposefully in young people in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way, through an opportunity-focused rather than in a problem oriented approach.

It is my expectation that as the ultimate beneficiaries of this policy, that the youth will be challenged and driven to ensure that they are included in discussions concerning their well-being and development at all levels. And that through their own empowerment that they will hold policy makers and stakeholders to the task of making this document a living one.

Hon. Patrick Faber
Minister of Education, Youth and Sports

Message from the Minister of State for Education, Youth and Sports

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." Franklin D. Roosevelt

Belize has a population of 333,200 persons of that amount 232,700 are under the age of 35 this represents approximately 70% of the population. We are a young nation. The future of Belize rests on the shoulders of the youth: their vision, dedication, enthusiasm, skills and their ability to cope with and manage change and challenges as well as their ability to recognize and grasp opportunities for growth will enable them to reach their full potential which in turn translates to positive growth for the nation.

. In order for us to derive maximum benefit from our most important human resource (youth) we must provide youths with a supportive, participatory and informative environment that will enable them to transition from the dependency of childhood through to the challenges of adolescence and finally to the autonomy and responsibility of adulthood.

The National Youth Policy provides us with a frame-work that will ensure that all youth stakeholders are putting systems in place that allow youth to grow positively and that these systems are monitored and evaluated regularly as to their effectiveness. The National Youth Policy ensures that youth are given the opportunity to participate meaningfully in their own development and

empowerment by not only being recipients of programs but actual developers of the program. The National Youth Policy

I urge all the beneficiaries of this policy (youth stakeholders, youth and community) to continue to aggressively engage ourselves and our youth towards the sustainable development of Belize.

Hon. Herman Lonsgworth
Minister of State for Education, Youth and Sports

Foreword

Recognizing the fact that the majority of Belize's population is considered to be youth, it is essential for our country to place youth development at the forefront. The National Youth Development Policy brings a renewed hope for young people; it is our pathway to better opportunities because it is focused on inclusion and empowerment of young Belizeans. I speak to the stakeholders, because it is through their unwavering commitment to give service and to play an integral role that this policy can come to full fruition. To my peers, we must take a proactive approach towards our own development and that of the nation. Let us move onward to a youth centered Belize, one in which there is tolerance for diversity, inclusion and respect. It is my hope that the young people of this country will not allow the leaders and themselves to make this policy become dormant; it must survive for the future generations. When the goals and objectives of this policy are realized then we will have the best interest of children and young people at heart. Let us aspire to realize those dreams.

Kylah Ciego

Belizean Youth
(A Youth Facilitator for the National Youth Development Policy Consultations)

Dedication

This National Youth Policy is dedicated to the memory of Kanisha Hall, and the many voices that have been silenced, but whose spirit continues to guide us. Kanisha was involved in the Restorative Justice Project and as the coordinator/facilitator. Kanisha believed in the model of Restorative Justice and its ability for healing and peace.... Kanisha in her passion for young people and justice, worked tirelessly for the improvement of conditions for her country. She was one of our facilitators; a true leader like many of our young people. Kanisha was actively involved in her community and improving the condition of young people countrywide. For this, we are grateful. Let her passing be not in vain.

Acknowledgement

I want to sincerely acknowledge and thank the hundreds of young people who took the time out to support and participating in the shaping of this document. Your contribution to this process is as invaluable as you are to Belize.

I would also like to acknowledge and give many thanks to Ms. Sherlene Neil of UNICEF, whose tireless effort and dedication to the young people has not gone unrecognized. Thank you for the many hours of consultation and support. It will truly not be forgotten.

I would like to also thank all of the shareholders, international organizations, NGOs and Ministries that participated in making this document a success. I am also thankful to the Director of the Youth for the Future, Ms. Christine Smith for her moral support throughout the process. Special thanks to the many youth leaders and Youth for the Future facilitators who assisted in making discussions vibrant and constructively critical in the brainstorming of ideas during the consultation process leading to the development of the document and revision of the draft document in post-consultation.

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Executive Summary

Young people in Belize embody the spirit of the nation state. Like the land, they are rich in spirit and possibilities. From north to south, east to west, the country is abound in beauty and resources. Like its youth it is full of untapped potential and limitless resources. The diversity of its youth; Mayan, Creole, Mennonite, Garifuna, Chinese, Mestizos, Middle-Eastern, and East Indians, also contributes to the country's dynamic features and speaks to immense promise and potential.

This youth policy builds on the 2006 Draft National Youth Policy and seeks to harness the potential of youth, allowing them to become actors in shaping their own development. It draws on recommendations from a number of policies and strategies targeting or including young people. These include the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents, Horizon 2030 framework, Restore Belize's Strategic Plan, and the Millennium Declaration.

It conveys clear goals and a strong vision for the future. It takes into account existing policies that affect young people, utilizes an integrated, cross-sectorial and coherent approach in its development and design, creates opportunities for young people to participate in all stages of policy development and implementation and outlines concrete priority areas for policy intervention.

The policy proposes a shift in the paradigm for youth development in Belize by clearly articulating positive actions that policy and decision makers, stakeholders and young people themselves must take to change the situation of young people in Belize. It adopts a positive approach to youth development drawing on regional and global best practices as well as new thinking in youth development.

The youth policy reflects the aspirations of young people in Belize and provides a holistic and integrated approach targeting the needs, issues, and capacities of Belizean youth.

It forges strong partnerships with young people to ensure that the policy is dynamic, communicates their energy and passion and clearly articulates their needs.

The policy fosters an appreciation of young people as having rights and sets the foundation for a stronger appreciation for young people's role in society. The fact that young people continue to create their own opportunities and find ways to succeed

despite the many challenges faced often goes unnoticed. This policy ensures that stakeholders, community members, parents, policy and decision makers have a balanced view of young people; seeing not only the ones at risk but seeing the thousands of young people whose assets can be harnessed to contribute productively to society.

Vision for Belize: Horizon 2030

By the year 2030, Belize will be:

• an informed, highly educated, healthy and multi-cultural society;

• a place where citizens have a collective identity and are patriotic and proud to be Belizean;

• a place where children and adults value their multi-ethnic, multicultural identity and can showcase multiple cultural and sporting talents;

• technologically advanced with its people capable of using state of the art technology which will be incorporated into production;

• a competitive, debt free, full employment economy supportive of entrepreneurs, small farmers and private sector growth;

• a place where citizens and visitors feel safe and secure and have respect for the rule of law;

• respectful of people's human rights;

• highly democratic and people will fully participate in the development process. modern infrastructure supportive of economic growth

• a clean, sustainably developed environment

• strong rural communities with a vibrant agriculture base

• women performing at the highest levels of political leadership

• a fair, transparent and accountable governance system operating at all levels of development

• strong public sector and civil society organizations that collaborate, are effective and efficient and tailored their programmes to meet Belize's development goals and objectives

• the capacity to strategically engage regional and international partners in development

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BFLA- Belize Family Life Association

CPA – Country Poverty Assessment

CRC – Convention on the rights of the child

CRD – Community Rehabilitation Department

FACA- Families and Children Act

GOB – Government of Belize

ICT- Information Communication Technology

ITVET – Institute for Technical Vocational Education and Training

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

NCFC – National Committee for Families and Children

NGOs - Non-governmental organizations

NICH – National Institute of Culture and History

NPA – National Plan of Action for Children

NYCSC – National Youth Cadet Service Corps

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

UNIBAM- United Belize Advocacy Movement

UNICEF – United Nations Children Emergency Fund

Vo-Tech- Vocational and Technical Education

YES- Youth Enhancement Services

YFF- Youth For the Future

YWCA- Young Women's Christian Association

YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association

Youth Terminology

Adolescence refers to the transitional period between the ages of 10-18 marked by physiological, physical, emotional and intellectual development. It is a critical time for youth to acquire the skills to overcome adversities as they mature into adults.

Advocacy is the act in which individuals support a public cause and seek to gain support from others based on deep conviction on an issue or cause.

At-Risk-Youth (or Youth-At-Risk) refers to youth who are vulnerable to risks because of their socio-economic status and/or lifestyles.

Behavioral Change refers to the process of influencing positive attitudinal changes.

Childhood defined as the period from birth to seventeen years of age, inclusive adolescence. During these critical developmental years of intellectual, emotional, psychological and physical growth, prepare young persons for the next stage of adulthood. This age range is based on an international standard set out by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is enshrined in the more up to date laws such as the Families and Children's Act.

Containment refers to non-replacement of personnel (who had left the public service for reasons that were either voluntarily or for reasons of retrenchment, retirement) in government departments as part of the Government's austerity measures.

Deportees refer to persons incarcerated in prisons in the United States and who on release are deported to Belize. They usually do not have family support networks and engage in illegal activities including violent crimes to obtain money. They work in partnership with the street youth to carry out crimes

Empowerment refers to the process of expanding capacity as a way of influencing positively individuals through skills training, education, apprenticeships, mentoring, and any other vehicles of change.

Incarcerated Youth refers to young persons in remand centers or prison whose freedom is restricted.

Inner-city Youth are young persons who live in ghetto environments that are usually overcrowded with poor housing facilities and prone to gang activity.

In-school Youth refers to young persons enrolled in an institution of learning.

Institutionalized Youth refers to youth who are wards of the state and who are place in institutions for reasons of protection such as children's homes.

Lieutenants are the close, personal associates of the shot callers (leaders of the organized groups of youth involved in crime). They function as the shot callers' second in command, and assist in the planning and coordinating of group activities. Much like the shot caller, the lieutenants exert great influence with both in-school and unattached youth. They play significant roles in the perpetuation of organized violent crimes.

Out-of-school Youth refers to a young woman or man not registered in any institution of learning.

Parenting the process parents and/or guardians assume in taking complete responsibility for the development of offspring by providing appropriate and adequate guidance.

Participation as defined by the Belize National Youth Development Policy calls for *full* involvement in the planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring of programs.

Unattached Youth is a young person who does not belong to any organized club, organization (churches, service or youth groups), institution of learning and training or place of employment.

Urban/Rural Youth refers to youth who live in urban and rural areas respectively.

Youth as defined by the Belize National Youth Development Policy is a young woman or man who is between the ages of 15-29 who has passed through the dependent stage of childhood and transitioning from adolescence to adult maturity.

Youth-with-Disabilities refers to young persons who are either physically or mentally challenged.

Youth-with-demonstrated promise refers to all youth. It recognizes the potential, skills, talents, and gifts that youth possess and use to empower self.

Introduction and Background

Belize is a very youthful country with over 70% of its population under 30 years of age. Given this demographic it is necessary for policies and programs to be in place that responds to the dynamic development needs of this population.

In 2001 the first National Youth Policy was ratified by cabinet. This policy was updated in 2006 but remained in draft for a number of years. In 2011, the Ministry of Education and Youth partnered with UNICEF to revisit the Draft National Youth Development Policy with an aim to update the policy based on new approaches and thinking in youth development. The 2006 policy forms the backbone of the revised 2011 National Youth development Policy. However it deviates in a number of ways including the paradigm from which young people are positioned, the way the policy is organized to address the entire ecology in which young people thrive and the role of young people in the overall development and implementation of the policy.

The policy was drafted after an extensive youth–led consultation process which provided a platform for young people and stakeholders to articulate a common vision for young people in Belize identify priority issues and recommendations for moving the youth agenda forward and reaffirm their commitment to the youth agenda.

Goals:

The goal of the policy is to create an enabling and supportive environment that fosters improved well-being and quality of life for all Belizean Youth and enable a successful transition to adulthood.

The Policy seeks to:

- Establish Belize's vision for youth
- Establish a common framework for improved coordination and collaboration among stakeholders
- Outline a strategic framework to support the realization of Belizean Youth's dreams and aspirations

Objectives:

1. Create a shift in the paradigm from which youth and youth development is positioned to a more holistic strategy that encompasses a positive approach to youth development and well-being.

2. Build an integrated, comprehensive and sustainable approach to youth development and youth development initiatives based on multi-sectorial interventions

3. Identify priority areas and possible intervention based on existing programs and experiences as well as regional and international best practices.

4. Enable young men and women to initiate actions that promote their own development and that of their communities and broader society

5. Clarify roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in youth development [young people, government, civil society and independent institutions]

Guiding Principles

Holistic and Integrated

Youth development is an important focus area for all government agencies, non-government organizations and development institutions. Policies and programmatic interventions should reflect an integrated, cross-sectorial and holistic approach.

Non-Discriminatory

A non-discriminatory approach to youth development initiatives and programs, where the socializing influences of gender, race and disability and the impact of these are acknowledged and equal opportunities and treatment, based on fundamental human rights, for all is promoted.

Acknowledging Diversity

Recognition of cultural, spiritual and language diversity and the important role tradition, spirituality, culture and language can play in the development of young men and women.

Responsive

All stakeholders have to reconsider how they respond to, view and interact with young people and youth organizations. This means being influenced less by organizational boundaries and definitions and more by understanding and acting in the best interests of young people and integrated youth development in terms of the current realities.

Sustainable

Sustainability to ensure the needs of the present is met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is important to for new programs and interventions to be couched within or linked to existing frameworks, policies, strategies to ensure their long term sustainability.

Participatory and Inclusive

Creating opportunities to share information with and involving young people, acknowledging youth leadership and encouraging responsibility. Young people should become active participants in their development as opposed to passive recipients of services. This includes the creation of an environment that supports the continued life-long development of young men and women and their skills and capacities, their involvement in democratic processes, as well as in nation building initiatives.

Transparent and Accessible

Institutions and organizations involved in youth development and the implementation of youth development programs should operate in a transparent and accountable manner, accessible to young women and men.

Situational Analysis

According to recently released data from the 2010 Census young people 15-24 represent just over 20% of the population with no significant differences in the percentage of male and female youth 15-24 years old.
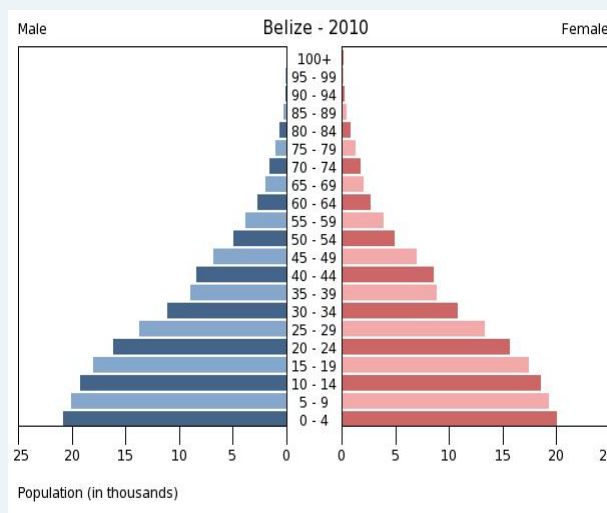
Source U.S. Census Bureau International Data

Although comprehensive data on youth 15-29 is not available in the preliminary findings of the 2010 Census, the population pyramid clearly indicates a very youthful population in Belize.

In general, this youthful population is doing well. Young people across the country continue to excel in education, entrepreneurship and sports, assume leadership roles in their communities and engage in productive employment. Young people continue to dream and aspire to take the lead in shaping the Belize that would allow them to realize their full potential.

However, there are several areas in which young people are not doing so well. They are facing many challenges that prevent them from achieving optimal well-being. There are many perspectives on why the situation of young people in Belize is so challenging. Young people indicated during the policy discussions that adults tend to perceive them as problems in society and blame them for the ills currently affecting society. Some stakeholders argued that the issue is one of lack of investment in young people which has led to young people being ill prepared to

positively contribute to society. Young people themselves have offered their viewpoint through many studies, consultation and forums. Many have expressed that they don't feel they have a voice in their own development

There are many agencies currently responding to the needs of young people at the local and national levels as evident in the draft directory of youth service providers produced by the Ministry of Education and Youth. However, at the national level there appears to be an absence of a common framework to support youth development. Even though sound strategies, plans and programs are being developed by sectors, NGO's and community based organizations these are not linked to any broader development goals for Belizean youth and therefore the impact is not largely felt.

There are many new schools of thought as it relates to youth development. However many of the approaches adopted in Belize have not kept up with current thinking and approaches in youth development and do not involve young people as valued partners in their own development.

In the 2009 CARICOM Commission on Youth Development study, young people in Belize and across the Caribbean repeatedly expressed a decreasing confidence that they will be able to assume a full and responsible adult life.

The following is a brief summary of the situation of young people in some of the key development areas:

Health

A review of available data on young people's health points to a situation of declining health among youth 15-29. Most negative health outcomes experienced by young people appear to be related to a high level of risk taking among young people.

According to the National Plan of Action and Well-being Indicators, the leading causes of death in 2008 were:

		15 – 19 years	20 – 29 years
1.	Unspecified Injury:	33.3%	29.7%
2.	Traffic Accidents :	14.3%	16.1%
3.	Accidental Drowning:	11.9%	3.4%
4.	Homicide:	7.1%	10.2%
5.	HIV/AIDS:	0.0%	13.6%

It is clear then that young people operate within a context of risk. However, the absence of protective factors to aid in minimizing these risks has resulted in young people experiencing a myriad of health challenges including poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes such as early and unwanted pregnancy and HIV and AIDS, high incidence of injuries and deaths by road traffic accidents and injuries and deaths resulting from violence.

The adolescent fertility rate for 2006 was 84.2 compared to the total fertility rate of 3.0. The fact that approximately 50% of all live births in Belize are to women 15-24 years is also a corroborating indicator of early unprotected sexual activity.

The Sexual Behaviour Study revealed that over 50% of young people (15-24 years) reportedly had already had a sexual experience. 18.4% reported the age of their first sexual intercourse as less than 15 years old.

In 2009, young people 15-24 years of age accounted for 18.6 % of new HIV infections. Persons 15-49 accounted for 82.2% of new infections. However, given the level of disaggregation, it is impossible to determine the exact percentage of young people 15-29 infected with HIV.

The Sexual Behaviour Survey (SBS) strongly confirms that there is a strong culture of risk taking among young people. For example, the SBS reports that young men (20-24) reported having multiple partners at higher rates than other age groups. In the total sampled population young men were three times as likely to have more than one sexual partner when compared to women. Of the men and women aged 15-49 who reported having sex with more than one partner in the last 12 months, 63.1% of them also reported using a condom the last time they had sex. Females aged 25-49 who had more than one partner were least likely to report the use of a condom the last time they had sex, while young men aged 15-19 were most likely to report the use of a condom the last time they had sex.

Yet the UNGASS 2010 reports speaks to weak sexual and reproductive health programs resulting from the lack of clear standards in the entitlement of delivery of services. The report calls for a rights based approach to service delivery especially for young people.

Legal requirements state that persons under 18 must have parental consent to access sexual and reproductive health services. Not only does this often prevent young people

from accessing preventative services, it also leads to a situation where those under 18 will often self-diagnose sexually transmitted infections because they cannot readily access medical care.

This points to an inconsistency in legal frameworks since the age of sexual consent is 16 years. This means that at 16 years of age it is legal to have sex but not to access sexual and reproductive health services.

Another area identified as directly affecting young people is the uneven application of the school curriculum dealing with sexual and reproductive health issues. The Ministry of Education has a Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum with a sexual education component. However, the church-state system of education means that it is difficult to achieve a consistent approach in the implementation of the curriculum, since implementation is in the hands of different school managements.

Noteworthy, is the absence of strong programs for young people out of school. While young people in school are exposed to varying degrees of Sexual and Reproductive Health programs, programs targeting young people out of school are extremely limited. Furthermore, where they do exist they are not guided by any comprehensive strategy to ensure that the methodologies being utilized and the messages targeting young people are appropriate and can have an impact on youth behavior.

Accidents and injuries

Although accidents and injuries were among the leading causes of death among young people in 2008, there is little emphasis on road traffic accidents and the prevention of deaths due to accidents among young people. PAHO, 2007 demonstrate that young males are generally more affected by transport and traffic accidents. This situation points to the risk taking behaviours that are prominent among young people of this age group and generally underscores the need to focus on programs and messages that seeks to reduce risk taking among young people.

General Well Being

Gayle's report on Male Social Participation and Violence in Urban Belize also provides a glimpse into young people's well-being. However the picture appears daunting as young people continuously express a sense of not doing well. According to Gayle, the

research indicated that there is an entrenched perception among young people that they are 'on their own' even while they are surrounded by an entire society that is supposed to have a support system for them. Young people reported that the system that has the responsibility to see them through that transition from child (6-9) to adolescents (10-19) to successful and integrated youth (15-34) has turned a prejudicial eye saying "we don't want no trouble."

Equally disconcerting is Gayle discussion on depression and suicide among young people in the study. He describes youth depression as part of the Belizean landscape indicating that young people had either of two options ; leaving Belize or commiting suicide. While this situation is certianly not true of all young people in Belize, it definitely merits some attentions especially when data indicates that suicide among young people is on the increase.

> *Alarmingly, approximately 30 percent of the youth reported that they have at some time contemplated committed suicide for various reasons. These include depression, lonliness, failure in school, dropping out of school or not being able to continue secondary school, relationship problems, lack of love and motivation, and frustration from everyday failings and hopelessness. When me make the rethorical statement "youth are the future" then it raises urgent questions pertaining to the present situation that exists for Belizean youth. The dreams, hopes and aspirations of Belizean youth are wrapped up in how they view their reality, their environment and the resources available to makes these dreams come to fruition. Without policy, plans and frameworks for youth their stress over the uncertainity of the future will kill them. Gayle, 2010*

Another issue that appears to be significantly impacting young people's well-being is that of crime and violence. According to Chambers, 2009 in a regional study which included Belize, almost all adolescents seem affected by and/or remain terrified of crime, violence and its potential impact on their lives, current and future well-being. Her findings revealed that crime and violence emerged as possibly the single most pervasive as well as important concern amongst the respondents, although considered and described in different ways.

> *The main theme was its general impact on the respective societies: creating fear amongst all, influencing living conditions, social, community, household, and*

> *virtually all other personal relationships. Physical manifestations were mostly mentioned, situations also having been incorporated into perceptions and life "functioning". It is an undercurrent permeating their thinking, desires, attitudes, and extents to which they view the world. (Chambers, 2009)*

She further purports that the well-being of young people out of school was even more affected by crime and violence: they had become isolated, from the safe confines that school provided others of their age, were often more hardened, and more street-smart. They were the ones articulating linkages between e.g. money, drugs, criminal activity, hatred, and their respective impacts on people's negative perceptions and actions. There was a subdued anger in their living and brevity to their outlooks on lifespan.

Other factors that appear to affect young people's well-being include: abuse and neglect, lack of employment, limited positive outlets such as sports and recreation, connectedness to family and the community at large, and limited access to support services and strong role models.

All these findings are affirmed by Barnett et. al. who stated in the Horizon's 2030 report on nationwide consultations. "The nationwide consultation process elucidated the situation of youth in crisis". The report goes on to conclude "Their experiences with crime in their homes, their schools and their communities portray a grim picture of their everyday realities. They passionately give account of their hurts and their aspirations for a society in which many see no positive future."

They point out that family and community level dysfunction lies at the heart of Belize's social ills. They illustrate examples of feeling invisible within their homes where their need for love is largely unmet. They give account of how their parents, teachers, politicians and other adults model violence and criminal activities. They wonder why they are being told to put the guns down, walk away from drugs and alcohol and be truthful when everyone around them are alcoholics, abusers, thieves, liars, and corrupt officials. In their view, young people merely mirror the society in which they live. Yet, in spite their severe hardships, many young men and women struggle to stay in school and stay away from delinquent or criminal activities. They report that this is the case even though society provides them no incentives for doing so." Horizon, 2030, 2010.

Identity and Equity

As indicated clearly by the 2010 Census findings, Belize is a rich multi-cultural society comprising of diverse ethnic groups. However, culture and identity is not an area well researched in Belize. While there is no empirical evidence that young people are denied the right to an identity and to practice their culture, there is little evidence that this right is being strongly promoted across the country.

The National Institute of History and Culture (NICH) was established to encourage Belizeans and persons interested in Belize to better understand Belize's historical and ethnic roots and instill pride in Belizeans about their country's unique cultural heritage and shared national identity. NICH's strategic plan envisions "A Belize that embraces its diverse cultural heritage, promotes understanding and appreciation of its people, and ensures their growth and development in a global community" and in so doing articulated a critical role for NICH to play as Belize's premier cultural institution in "creating an enabling environment for the development, conservation, promotion, expression and accessibility of culture in all its diversity."

One of the strategic actions outlined in NICH's Strategic Plan is the development of a specific focus on youth and culture. NICH is hoping to achieve this through partnership with the various cultural and ethnic councils such as the Garifuna Council, Kekchi Council, Kriol and East Indian Council. One positive finding is that each of these cultural councils has a youth arm which provides a sound opportunity for young people to participate in the development of culture and identity. The Garifuna Council, for example, has a youth arm in each district, while the Kriol Council has a youth arm in the Belize District.

Within the Maya culture there appears to be more structured opportunities for young people's participation in culture. The Toledo Maya Women's Council, for example has a vibrant youth arm. Additionally, the Julian Cho Society has an arm, Maya Youth Coalition, which provides an opportunity for indigenous Maya youth to participate in various programmes to promote culture and identity. Tumul Kin Centre of Learning stands out as an excellent example of the integration of culture and education.

Gender Identity and expression among young people is an area not largely discussed in Belize although there is much global attention to this issue. In March, 2011, the UN

issued a joint statement on sexual orientation and gender identity. The statement called upon countries to end discrimination, in law and policy, against persons because of their sexual orientation and gender identity based on human rights principles.

In 2009, a Ministerial Declaration emerged from the first Meeting of Ministers of Health and Education to Stop HIV and STIs in Latin America and the Caribbean and highlighted the following:

Section 1.1 Affirm our commitment to the right to the highest possible level of health, education, non-discrimination and well-being of current and future generations.

3.11 Ensure the existence of a formal mechanism for reporting discrimination in public and private education and health services, and work proactively to identify and correct discriminatory actions in government institutions and in society, in collaboration with national bodies for the defense of human rights and civil society.

Protection

The National Plan of Action and Core Well-Being Indicators report that of the total number of prisoners convicted in 2008, 57% were between the ages of 16 and 30 years. Percentages of prisoners charged but not convicted in 2008:

1.   26.3% ages 16 – 20 years

2.   25.1% ages 21 – 25 years

3.   15.4% ages 26 – 30 years

The National Plan of Action Monitoring Report also indicates that juvenile crime rates are rising with a high of 4.1% in 2008, as juveniles are charged in ever larger proportions. According to the NCFC, these provisional figures signal a very disturbing upward rise in juvenile crime rates.

The crime situation in Belize merits special attention in this situation analysis within the context of protection for young people. While the data shows that many young people are perpetrators of crime and the nation is focused on implementing measures to reduce crime, limited attention is being paid to the impact of crime and violence on young people themselves and the increased need for protection of young people.

 Data from Gayle's 2010 study indicates an increasing number of young victims of crime. Public outcry to stop crime and violence such as those reflected below in the

Horizon 2030 report has prompted national authorities to enforce heightened measures to reduce crime.

Across the country, citizens expressed widespread and deep-seated fears and concerns for their safety. The crime situation was reported to be eroding confidence in the law enforcement and justice system and contributing to feelings of hopelessness, mistrust of authority and delinquency. (Horizon 2030)

While undoubtedly, there is an urgent need to increase efforts to reduce crime; such efforts need to consider the ecology that is currently contributing to criminal activities among young people. Roseberg aptly points out that young people who are deprived of adequate mental/emotional, financial and/or physical security, that is, who are exposed to a strategy of punitive rather than supportive nurturing, are those most likely to take matters into their own hands. He therefore suggests that attempting to reduce crime and violence by punishing apparent moral deficiencies of behaviour with harsh measures is counter-productive. Young people acting out in anti-social ways are already reacting to security deficits. Harsh punitive measures that attempt to contain inappropriate security-seeking behaviours fail to deal with the problem already created by earlier harsh punitive measures. While they may temporarily halt socially undesirable activity, they do so by increasing the offender's need to intensify anti-social behaviours. Over time, they worsen, rather than reduce the problem.

Current actions do not support holistic responses to address the situation of young people involved in criminal activities. The UN Minimum Standards for the Administration of Juvenile Justice clearly states that member states should ensure that juveniles have a meaningful life in the community. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Committee recommends that Belize establish a system of juvenile justice that fully integrates into its legislation, policies and practice the provisions and principles of the Convention. These measures will serve to ensure that the rights of young people in conflict with the law are protected. However, as previously mentioned, the increasing crime rate and the growing intolerance to crime among the general public will make it increasingly difficult to increase sensitivity towards the protection of the rights of young people who come in conflict with the law.

Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation

According to the US State Department Trafficking in Persons report 2010, Belize is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution, and forced labor. The most common form of trafficking in Belize is the forced prostitution of children and youth particularly situations where poor families push their school-aged daughters to provide sexual favors to wealthy older men in exchange for school fees, money, and gifts. This "sugar daddy" phenomenon occurs in Belize and other Caribbean countries, but often is not recognized as a form of human trafficking by local communities or law enforcement personnel. Men, women, and children, particularly from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico, migrate voluntarily to Belize in search of work; some may fall victim to forced prostitution in bars or to forced labor. In recent years, migrants from India and Nepal have been subjected to conditions of forced labor in Belize. Sex tourism has been identified as an emerging trend in Belize (US State Department of Trafficking in Persons, 2010).

The Government of Belize is making significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Sexual abuse of young girls is seen as a problem, and new legislation has been adopted to penalize this activity. Several measures have been taken by protection agencies through a National Action Plan against child trafficking pushed forward by a coalition of both governmental and non-governmental organizations. The legal system is implementing a series of changes to provide more protection for victims of trafficking, especially female children and young girls, from sexual abuse and exploitation, but some forms of exploitation including the "sugar daddy" system are becoming more common.

Protection of young persons with disabilities

The Statistical Institute of Belize has not yet released any findings on disability from the 2010 Census. However, the 2000 population census estimated 6% (13,774 persons) of the Belizean population to have some form of disability. Impairments by type were reported as: 27.3% sight; 10.3% hearing; 6.7% speech; 16.6% moving; 13.2% body

movement; 6.6% grip/hold; 5.8% slow learning; 3.9% behavior; 5.8% personal care; and 3.8% other.

There are challenges in respect of persons with disabilities in Belize, as no specific legislation governs their treatment; also, very few people with disabilities are employed in the private and public sector, public buildings are not designed to allow access to persons with certain physical disabilities, and public transportation is not friendly for persons with disabilities.

Services aimed at persons with special needs had deteriorated resulting from closure in early 2001 of the Disability Services Division (DSD) within the Ministry of Human Development.

There are no specific legislation in Belize that addresses the status of disabled young people and their rights (to support, health, education, development, training, rehabilitation, recreation and care).

The NCFC notes "a fleeting reference to disabled children and young people in Families and Children Act (FACA) and the Education Rules and the Unsoundness of Mind Act" These deal mainly with the administration of the estate of the disabled person. A number of concerns are raised about the protection of persons with disabilities including the Acts that are meant to protect persons with disabilities. The NCFC identifies the Act as outdated and needing to be revised to reflect modern day realities.

Education

MOE's administrative data shows that almost complete enrollment has been reported, i.e. a gross enrollment rate of 95.1% (number of children enrolled in primary schools institutions as a proportion of the total 5-12 year old population) and a net enrollment rate of 83.7% (proportion of primary school aged children 5-12 years old who are actually enrolled in the primary school system). However, there is a substantial decline in levels of enrolment and sustained attendance through secondary school. With a net enrolment rate of 40.7% (percentage of secondary school aged children 13-16 years old who are enrolled in the secondary education system), and gross enrolment rate of 53.0%, (total number of students enrolled in secondary schools as a proportion of the total 13-16 year old population), there is a clear indication of an important

decline in young people's representation within the formal educational system. Further, girls are more likely to be amongst those remaining within the system (net enrolment: males = 37.4%, and females = 44.1%; gross enrolment: males = 49.8% and females = 56.4%). This is the case in all districts except Toledo where cultural practices result in more girls being out of schools than boys. (UNICEF Situation Analysis, 2011)

The National Plan of Action and Well Being Indicator Report indicate the following figures:

Percentage youth enrollment in Secondary, Tertiary and VOTEC schools in 2008/2009: 26%

That figure is disaggregated as follows:

  18% Secondary

  6.8% Tertiary

  0.8% VOTEC

Female - male school enrollment ratios in 2008/2009

  1.1 Secondary schools

  1.6 Junior College

  1.8 University of Belize

  0.5 VOTEC

Significant disparities exist between young people from the poorest quintiles and those from the wealthier quintiles. Only 4.7% of young people from the first quintile are completing secondary education as compared to 40.4% from the 5th quintile (IDB, 2010). Net Secondary enrolment is 34.6 % among the poorest quintile compared with 75.2% in the wealthiest children. Disparities also exist between young people from urban and rural setting with net enrolment rate in urban areas being 1.3 times higher than rural areas.

One reason for the challenges faced by young people at the secondary level is the low percentage of trained teachers at the secondary level. Only 29.7% of teachers at secondary level are trained with as low as 17.5% and 23.6% in rural Stann Creek and Toledo respectively.

Another factor significantly impacting young people's access to education is cost. The IDB reports that despite subsidization by government, parents spend as much as the government in fees.

In recent years, the GOB invested heavily in establishment of institutes for technical and vocational training (ITVET) within each district. Yet, there has been relatively low enrolment, that figure being 797 for 2008-9, and 760 in 2007-8, but without any clear trend since the start of decade.

Preliminary data indicates that even with significant investments by government in vocational education the figure for 2009/2010 is only 300. Belize District has consistently had highest student enrollment levels; so too, males have consistently dominated enrollment, outnumbering females in all except one District (Corozal) during the last school year for which figures are available. The institutes were intended to provide demand driven vocational and technical programmes for high school graduates, out-of-school youth and others. The current proposal is that technical and vocational education and training options in the secondary curriculum might be delivered through partnerships between high schools and institutes where feasible, making it unnecessary for students to wait until they exit the system through graduation or drop out, to access options – thereby hopefully enhancing retention and relevance.

Second chance programs have been limited in Belize. This is unfortunate given the negative impact on individuals, their functioning and development from being out-of-school from an early age, especially if such status was not of their choice. Gayle (2010) suggested such programs should cater to two (2) sets of young people: (i) those not doing well in the formal education system due to social problems other than a learning disability, and (ii) those who had been out of school for too long -- e.g. for financial or other reasons, had passed the age of 18 and/or were functioning too far below age level to survive in a competitive formal school environment. That study reported an estimated 2 to 3 % of students within secondary schools being aged 19-23 years. Opportunities suggested therein for supporting the National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) Program's efforts to address the problem included: paid apprenticeship programs; skills and craft centers; and structured evening classes.

Outside the formal education system there are limited spaces for learning. This is an area that needs to be addressed. There is need for an increase in libraries, after school programs and youth friendly spaces to promote learning among young people. When

considering the inadequacies in the formal education system outlined above, the creation of spaces for learning at the community level that supports remedial education, literacy and life skills, access to technology, books and mentoring is a critical investment that should be made. There are currently 16 large libraries and 23 community libraries in Belize. However accesses to libraries for young people in rural communities remain a challenge.

Access to support services and relationships

While it is recognized that there are many agencies that have established programs and services to meet the needs of youth, young people lack access to comprehensive support services to improve their well-being. Rural youth are at a particular disadvantage with limited access to comprehensive services. There is also no formal network for referral of services among providers although some informal arrangements exist among many providers.

Issues of sustainability appear to affect the ability of many service providers to scale their programs to improve scope and coverage. In the area of health, besides the Ministry of Health which has national presence, the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) is the only organization offering services to young people in all geographic areas. The Ministry of Health provides a wide range of services. However, no special provisions are made for youth friendly services and young people are provided with services in the same manner as the general public. BFLA provides youth friendly services and has established a center in its main office in Belize City that caters exclusively for young people.

Organizations like Youth Enhancement Services (YES), and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), also provide some level of sexual and reproductive health information for young people who participate in their programs. YES has established a teen mother's center which provides youth friendly services to young mothers. YWCA's Helping Early Leavers Program particularly targets young women who were unable to complete primary school.

It is important to note that there are some conflicts with some young people accessing services provided through these agencies. The law states that no child below the age of 18 is allowed to pursue legal and medical counseling without parental consent. The

NCFC's legal review pointed out that this causes difficulties in cases in which the child's views/interests are distinct from those of the parents, for example, in cases of violence and abuse and access to family planning. It is also impractical, in view of the age for sexual consent in Belize – 16 years (females only) (Criminal Code s.47). The age for obtaining such counseling should be lowered to 16 at the very least, or younger if the child is deemed sufficiently mature to understand the consequences of their actions. It is recommended by the NCFC that this be expressly catered for in FACA.

Social Services including Psychosocial Services

The Ministry of Human Development provides social services to young people and responds to protection issues involving young people up to age 18. These include cases of abuse, violence, neglect, deviant behavior and young people in conflict with the law. Young people are provided with support in criminal cases, rehabilitative services and psychosocial support.

Psychosocial support is an area that requires much attention. Currently there are only two trained and active psychiatrists for the entire country and one counseling center with no psychiatrist. The counseling centre is located in Belize City and staffed with trained counselors. The Counseling Centre is managed by the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation. There are no such facilities in the other districts. BFLA also provides counseling services to young people but this service is also offered primarily in Belize City.

Most high schools also have counselors available to youth who are in school. However, many of them are not trained counselors and are capable of providing only basic counseling and guidance to students. Young people who are out of school do not have access to such services.

Other Services

In addition to a wide range of health and social services that young people require to advance their physical and mental well-being, it is important for service providers to increase emphasis on those services that address others areas of young people's well-being. In responding to these more obvious and immediate needs, service providers tend to minimize the importance of services that provide opportunities for young

people to increase their sense of connectedness and belonging. Young people's connectedness with their families, community and school is a strong, often overlooked factor in improving their well-being.

There is evidence of several programs available at the community level which targets young people. These include current efforts by RESTORE Belize to create a Safe Zone, the YMCA after school programs in the South Side of Belize City, Go Joven's youth leadership programs, Community Rehabilitation Department, Conscious Youth Development Program, The Belize Red Cross youth programs and Youth Voices. However, a quick review of these programs indicates that they do not explicitly incorporate objectives targeting connectedness in their programs. Additionally, there are no mechanisms in place to measure the impact of these programs on young people's well-being. This would provide an opportunity to include some indicators to measure how such programs are improving young people's connectedness to their families, communities and schools.

Socio- Economic Opportunity

The economic future of youth in Belize is closely linked to the country's economic situation and the ability of the country to continue to develop opportunities for young people's to participate in a wide range of economic activity.

This is a great challenge for Belize in the midst of the economic downturn and increasing poverty rates. UNDP's MDG Score Card released in 2010 indicates that poverty is on the increase. The poverty rate increased from 33% in 1995 to 41.3% in 2009 and is not on track to meet the 2015 target of 16.8%. Over a seven year period, the indigence rate increased from 10.8% in 2002 to 15.8% in 2009 and the GINI coefficient of inequality increased significantly from 0.4, rounded up in 2002, to 0.42 in 2009. None of the poverty indicators are on track to support the targeted reduction of the poverty rate to 16.8% by 2015.

This situation is further complicated by preliminary data from the 2010 Census which demonstrates an increase in unemployment in general and more specifically among young people 15 to 29 years old. Data indicates that 49.7% of young people 14-19 are unemployed, 28.4% 15-24 years old and 20% of 25-29 year olds. These findings indicate

that the highest levels of unemployment are among young people 15-25 in Cayo and Belize Districts.

The Country Poverty Assessment identified poor and unemployed youth and young adults as facing particularly difficult situations of stigmatization, inability to afford school fees, lack of personal, technical and social skills needed to gain employment.

The report points to a significant variation in unemployment by age. The difference in unemployment rate is particularly high in the age group 14 to 19 years of age. Women in this age group had an unemployment rate of 43% in 2009, while 26% of men of this age were unemployed. In general, females appear to bear the greater burden of unemployment.

There is also a direct correlation between unemployment and education with one-third of young people not in education and aged under 20 being unemployed. This situation presents a cause for great concern given the reported high percentage of youth who have not completed secondary school. The unemployment rate for young adults (20-24 years) is also high at over 20% - well above the overall average.

As government continues to increase its efforts towards improving educational opportunities for youth, there is need to also consider how to improve opportunities for those young people to participate in the productive sector. One option that is currently being explored is the area of entrepreneurship. The CPA cautions that in light of the economic situation government has little potential to directly increase employment. One recommendation it makes is for government to instill a greater sense of self-reliance, ingenuity and entrepreneurship amongst its population.

The Youth Business Trust is one program that is attempting to build entrepreneurial skills among youth by providing training and grants for young people to establish businesses in a variety of sector. Preliminary evaluations indicate that this program has increased the number of young entrepreneurs. The government is also offering loans for young people to establish businesses through the Development Finance Corporation. However, programs such as these need to be strongly promoted and must be broader in scope in order to ensure that a larger number of young people are involved.

There is evidence of increasing opportunities for young people's participation in arts, music, sports, culture and governance. However, this is one area that requires some attention to ensure that opportunities for participation are structured and well promoted as well as monitored.

While individual agencies appear to collect data on the number of young people participating in the programs they offer, there is no systematic data collection on indicators of participation that will allow policy and decision makers to understand better what opportunities exist for participation and what areas require strengthening. The 2010 Census provides some information on young people's participation in information communication technology as it relates to access to information.

Young people have increasing access to mobile phones which provide an ideal yet untapped way to promote young people's participation. Data from the census indicate that approximately 76.5% of households in Belize own at least one cell phone with the Belize District having the highest cell phone ownership (87.8%) followed by Cayo (85.2%), Corozal (77.8%), Orange Walk (76.7%), Stann Creek (75.8%) and the Toledo District with the lowest (55.7%). Noteworthy, is the low access to mobile phone in Toledo, a largely rural district. Again this points to significant exclusion of rural youth that requires special attention in policy interventions.

26.5% of households own a computer with Toledo having the lowest percentage of 15.2% of households owning a computer. However, despite the presence of computers in 26.5% of homes, just over 13% have access to internet in their homes.

Two figures presented in the draft ICT report for Belize that are encouraging is that despite the low number of households with internet connection, young people are accessing the internet through other means such as schools, internet cafes, friend's homes and facilities in the community.

More than 53% of households have access to cable television with Toledo once again recording the lowest rate of cable TV penetration (18.5%).

The NPA monitoring report demonstrates that there is no data being systematically collected in the area of young people's participation in arts and culture. The NPA cites the Ministry of Education and NICH as being responsible for tracking this data. Information from both sources indicates that programs to promote arts and culture

are being offered for young people in and out of school. These include the annual Festival of Arts, various training in media offered by NICH and the House of Culture, various programs offered by cultural councils.

One document that explicitly expresses young people's right to participation is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC only captures a small percentage of youth 15-18. However, the CRC sets the precedence for young people's participation and if a culture of participation is nurtured in these early years it will set the stage for young people's participation in later years. The CRC guarantees participation rights to children and adolescents up to 18 in matters that will affect their development and attainment of rights. Article 12 requires that a child (up to 18 years) who is capable of forming his/her views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child and the child's views are to be given due weight depending on his/her age or maturity.

The Constitution of Belize also guarantees all citizens the right to participate in government with no legal restrictions by way of ethnicity or cultural group. However, no specific actions have been taken by government to advance this right, especially among young people.

There are no formal spaces for young people to express their voices and opinions in matters affecting them as guaranteed by the CRC and the Constitution. Media houses have indicated an interest in supporting the development of such platforms for youth voices but have cited budgetary constraints as one reason why this space has not been provided.

Participation in Government and Civil Society

Young people currently play a very minimal role in government and civil society. Both political parties have a youth arm. However, these groups are mostly active around elections and are largely loyal to the political party that they are affiliated with. The Constitution of Belize restricts the right to vote in Parliamentary Elections to persons who are age 18 and citizens of Belize. To stand for a seat in the national assembly, the candidate must be at least 21 years old and a citizen of Belize. For local government elections, persons who are 18 years and older who can prove that they have been resident in the town or village of the elections and who possess a valid national ID

may vote. To run as a candidate of a village or town council, the candidate must be at least 21 years old and have an established residence in the village for at least 2 years before the elections.

National Development Context

Belize is a small country, historically part of the Caribbean but geographically part of Central America. It is bordered by Mexico in the north and Guatemala in the west and south.   Belize has a population of just under 300,000 people. Approximately half of Belizeans live in rural areas. It is a young population, with 70% under 20 years of age. Belize's people are both ethnically and linguistically diverse. While traditionally the Creole were the predominant ethnic group, both immigration and emigration patterns have changed the cultural mix. The largest ethnic group is now Mestizo (50%), followed by Creole (21%), Maya (10%) and Garifuna (4.6%). Belize is also home to significant East Indian, Mennonite, Lebanese and Chinese communities.

While this diversity contributes greatly to the richness of Belizean life, it also creates challenges for the country's development. Changing demographic patterns have led to an increase in demand for services in rural areas as well as a "brain-drain" and staff shortages in critical areas such as nursing. Furthermore, rural isolation coupled with linguistic and cultural differences create particular difficulties in implementing national development strategies.

Given the current demographics youth development must take a center stage in national development in order to ensure that young people are prepared to contribute to Belize's productivity. Currently youth development falls under the purview of the Ministry of Youth, with Youth for the Future having specific responsibility for implementation of programs.

 A 2002, meeting of the Caribbean Heads of Government (CHOG) mandated specifically, that young people be targeted by a Pan-Commonwealth initiative called, "Youth for the Future". The initiative, the CHOG proposed, should encapsulate "youth leadership and governance, youth enterprise development, youth mentoring and

youth volunteering". Youth should also be targeted with initiatives that intervene to reduce crime and violence and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Government of Belize launched the Youth for the Future Initiative in 2002. YFF is aimed at coordinating service delivery for youth in a timely manner and with a rights-based approach. The initiative envisions collaboration and cooperation with the private sector, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, civil society and the international community – to ensure that Belizean young people are provided the opportunities which they need today to be the leaders and responsible adults of tomorrow.

The program seeks to establish a network of service providers for youth that have previously been offered in a scattered manner. This ought to have a significant impact in catering to the needs of youth with special needs, especially to youth who are at risk. An important component to this strategy is youth governance and participation. This component is oriented towards having youth issues become part of the national governmental agenda through youth participation, in such a way that through social mobilization there is a nationwide focus on youth and youth issues.

Youth for the Future is geared toward the promotion of the ideals deemed most appropriate for the positive and full development of Belize's young people. This initiative is comprehensive and is dedicated to guiding, supporting and uplifting Belize's young people; recognizing and respecting them as nation builders of tomorrow as well as some of today's community and national leaders.

In addition, the initiative forms a part of the macro-strategy for poverty elimination with special focus on youth in the urban areas and seeks to aid in the reduction of at-risk factors such as poverty and violence within the youth population.

The Youth For The Future Initiative aims to more coherently link the range of existing efforts – complemented by a number of new measures to address gaps in existing services – to ensure that those endeavors are better coordinated, better targeted, better understood, better used and that they provide more access, more relevance, more opportunities, and more hope to our youth.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW (Main program objectives)

There are four (4) thematic areas to this initiative:

1. Youth Governance and Participation - To enhance the capacity of youth to participate in various levels of governance and to realize their responsibility as active citizens in the development of Belize; to encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility for Belize.

2. Fostering Entrepreneurship and Job Creation- To promote the capacity of youth to participate in economic life in Belize through access to business training, mentorship and small business credit through the Youth Enterprise Fund.

3. To Break the Cycle of Violence and fight against HIV/AIDS– To provide youth with access to alternative ways of resolving conflict at individual and group level; to promote a culture of peace and healthy alternatives to the negative influences affecting our youth. To promote and create an awareness of the fight against HIV/AIDS among youth in especially difficult circumstances.

4. Providing Positive Pathways - To build the capacity of programs and organizations that have and/or cater services to youth; to build partnership among organizations for joint projects in youth development.

Although the above described structure exists to support youth development, the challenge remains to reposition youth for the future to assume a leadership role in national youth development. There isa need to make stronger linkages with national and local level policies and programs that support young people's development. There is also a need for increased coordination and planning to ensure that youth development efforts are comprehensive.

Towards a Dynamic Youth Policy: Belize's Priorities

Throughout the youth policy consultation, young people continually expressed their desire to grow up in a Belize that placed young people at the centre of its development, provided opportunities for them to excel and to realize their dreams and aspirations. Young people had great visions of where they could be with the right support, services and investments. They expressed a desire to be an integral part of the growth and development of Belize and many felt that they were ready to assume a

leadership role in shaping their own development and that of other young people. However, one theme that resonated throughout the consultation was the need for stakeholders to mount dynamic responses to the emerging needs of young people. Young people felt that the systems and structures that exist contained many impediments to their success and needed to be strengthened. They also felt that current responses needed to be sustained, more widely available to young people (especially rural youth) and more widely promoted.

For this reason, the strategic framework for this policy is built around 3 key pillars: (1) the individual (2) the institutions and infrastructure that supports those individuals and (3) the society in which the individual thrives and develops.

Pillar 1: The Individual - will examine the needs of young people in many different areas that were highlighted during the policy consultations as well as the draft policy and other documents such as Horizon 2030.

Pillar 2: The institutions and infrastructure that supports young people - will examine policy recommendations to strengthen institutional structures that respond to young people's needs

Pillar 3: The Society- will examine policy recommendations that address the environments where young people interact on a daily basis

This allows the policy to adopt an ecological approach to ensure that young people are reached at all levels and the entire system that supports their development is ready for them. The policy will also be based on the Life Cycle approach, UNICEF's well-being framework and positive youth development approaches.

The Ecological Model

This theory looks at a young person's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex "layers" of environment, each having an effect on a young person's development. The interaction between factors in the young person's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. To address a young person's development then, we must look not only at

the youth and his immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well.

Life Cycle approach

The Life Cycle approach is an approach that adopts a holistic view of child, adolescent and youth development. It focuses on cumulative effect of priority outcomes across the entire life span of a child and identifies key areas for priority attention which when effectively implemented increased the chances of a successful transition to adulthood. The life cycle provides a powerful framework for understanding the vulnerabilities and opportunities for investing in children and youth. Human development during childhood and youth is not a uniform process; critical periods exist during the life cycle. Any significant harm that occurs during these critical periods is likely to produce particularly severe, often irreversible, and intergenerational effects. These sensitive periods also represent windows of opportunity through interventions in a range of sectors. The advantages of a life cycle approach are several. It recognizes that:

- Interventions are cumulative;
- Maximum benefit in one age group can be derived from interventions in an earlier age group;
- Intervening at one point or a few points is not enough for sustainable improvement of outcomes among the poor;
- Interventions in one generation will bring benefits to successive generations.

Sample of Key Factors by Ecological Domain and Developmental Stage
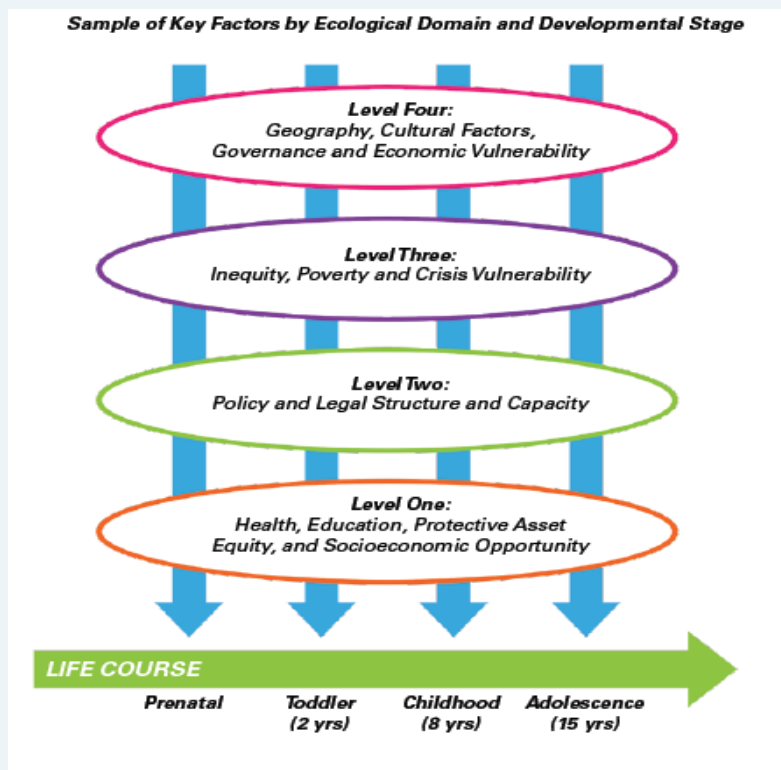
(UNICEF SITAN 2011)

Positive Youth Development Approach

Positive youth development is asset-based rather than a focus on finding solutions for problems that young people pose. It is also right-based.Positive youth development (PYD) is a comprehensive framework outlining the supports young people need in order to be successful. PYD emphasizes the importance of focusing on youth' strengths instead of their risk factors to ensure that all youth grow up to become contributing adults.

Positive youth development focuses on building the positive attributes young people need in order to be successful. It emphasizes the supports and services necessary to help youth transition through various stages of their development. States and policymakers are beginning to use this framework to develop policies and programs that will ensure that all youth are ready for college, work and life.
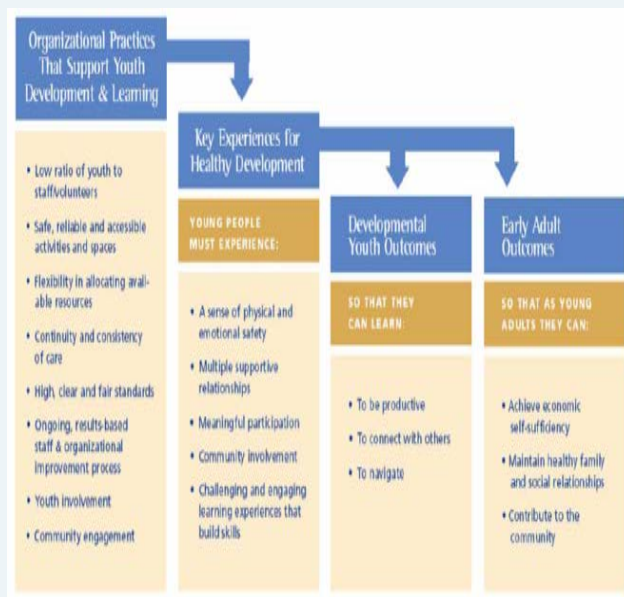
Well-being Framework

According to UNICEF, well-being includes the ability to acquire knowledge, skills, experience, values, and social relationships, as well as access to basic services and supplies, that will enable an individual to negotiate multiple life domains, participate in community and civic affairs, avoid harmful and risky behavior, and be able to thrive in a variety of circumstances, free from preventable illness, exploitation, abuse, conflict and discrimination. It also refers to the ability of the surrounding society (e.g., family, peers, community, social institutions) to support those aspects of well-being."

The well-being framework positions young people in a different perspective as holders of rights. It contains eight domains which reflect a positive youth orientation, as opposed to an emphasis on risk behavior or negative consequences (e.g., violence, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy, school dropout, drug selling). It is grounded in the idea of positive youth development (PYD) which emphasize support for the factors/situations that promote healthy or positive behaviors

Strategic Framework

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Goal 1: Government is committed to ensuring that young people are empowered and will achieve optimal well-being in a supportive environment through exposure and participation in positive interventions that will:

Develop their assets

Promote positive values

Strengthen character

Build Leadership and social competence

Foster an appreciation for identity, culture and the environment

Five priority areas under Goal 1 are:

1: Participation

Young people equipped with skills and have access to platforms for participation in governance, local and national development and positive self-expression.

Strategies:

Institutionalization of young people's participation in civic affairs, in the form of youth committees, youth groups, youth councils and student councils

Support for youth-led organizations and activities in schools and communities and networking.

Skill building in leadership, advocacy and exposure to various forms of media and technology as platforms for positive expression

Integration of education on civic affairs into school curriculum and community based programs

Development of accredited, recognized, experience based capacity building training projects and programs for leadership

Provision of opportunities for adolescent to build capacity to access information and increase knowledge on issues affecting their well-being

Create opportunities for young people's participation in media

Integrate education of young people's rights into curriculum in formal and non-formal settings

Create opportunities for young people to engage in service learning

Build capacity of young people to design, implement and monitor programs

Increased participation and support for parents involved in youth initiatives

Target Groups: Young people 15-29 in and out of school

Young people from rural communities

Links to existing policies/strategies: Horizon 2030, UNICEF's well-being framework, National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents, Convention on the Rights of the Child

2: Lifelong learning

Young people completing formal education, have access to opportunities for lifelong learning and possess life and livelihood skills

Strategies:

Review the structure and functioning of the education system to assess its effectiveness (adopted from Horizon 2030)

Develop a national human resource development strategy to respond to Belize's development goals and guide the development of the education system over the next 20 years (Horizon 2030)

Reform the system for the allocation of financial resources to primary and secondary schools tofacilitate greater access to school for young people across the country(Horizon 2030)

Implement a system for accountability in education to ensure that all students receive a quality and relevant education free from abuse and discrimination

Expand the number of secondary school places, especially in rural communities (Horizon 2030)

Promote internet access across the country and provide access to online education for both children and adults (Horizon 2030)

Develop alternate mechanisms for delivery of education - TV, Radio, internet, modules delivered at alternative, non-traditional spaces (Adapted from Horizon 2030)

Expand access to adult and "second chance" educational opportunities, including vocational education for young people out of school

Promote Vocational education, agriculture education and other non-traditional education as viable education options

Provide scholarships opportunities linked to service learning and volunteer programs for young people

Develop and implement strategies to increase retention of boys at secondary level

Expand, especially to rural communities, programs for young people with disabilities and develop and implement programs to support gifted youth

Train teachers in the utilization of participatory methodologies and place greater emphasis on the integration of life skills education in the curriculum at all levels

Development and implementation of programs that support the development of identity and culture among young people

Target Groups: Young People 14-24 years old in and out of school

Links to existing policies and strategies: Horizon 2030, Restore Belize Strategic Plan, Education Sector Strategy, NICH Strategic Plan, Care Belize Strategic Plan, National HFLE Policy

3: Health and well being

 Young people are physically and mentally healthy and have access to information, infrastructure and services to support the adoption of a healthy lifestyle

Strategies:

Expand youth friendly centers and develop them into community hubs where young people can access information, skills and services to practice a healthy life style

Advocate for the integration of youth friendly health services into the health system

Advocate for a change in legislation that prevent young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services

Implement Health and Family Life Education in formal and non-formal settings

Create community spaces for young people to engage in sports and recreation

Improve national capacity for counseling and provide spaces in school and community settings where young people can readily access psycho-social support

Utilize mass media and technology to promote healthy lifestyles among young people

Develop evidence based programs to support behavior change and the adoption of healthy lifestyles among young people

Target Groups: Young people in and out of school 14-29

Links to existing policies and strategies: Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, National ICT strategy,

4: Socio-economic opportunity

To expand socio-economic opportunities, increase involvement of young people in industry creation and provide young people with the support and skills necessary to engage in the productive sector

Strategies:

Assist in expand programs such as the Youth Business Trust and developing the Youth Apprenticeship Programs to reach a wider group of young people

Provide opportunities for and support youth innovation in entrepreneurship including in fields such as agriculture, culture and technological industries

Expand schemes that provide support for micro enterprises

Provide low interest loans and grants to support the development of innovative businesses by young people

Expand programs that provide entrepreneurial skills

Develop a support system for small business that goes beyond financing to include market information, management support, planning advice etc. (Horizon 2030)

Integrate themes such as financial literacy and entrepreneurship into curriculum in formal and non-formal settings

Establish a structure for efficient and effective dissemination of information to enable familiarizing youth with agencies that support young entrepreneurs (draft youth policy 2006)

Establish a decentralized land tenure mechanism to ensure that youth can access land titling and housing opportunities as part of the push for economic advancement and poverty reduction(draft youth policy 2006)

Provide more support/resources for secondary schools and alternative programs that focus on skills building

Target Groups: young persons in vocational education

Young people out of school

Young people 15-24

<u>**5: Protection**</u>

Young people are growing up in a safe environment free from abuse, exploitation and violence

Strategies:

Establish Safe Zones in high risk communities

Strengthen the juvenile justice system to provide improved support and services to young people who come in conflict with the law

Removal of corporal punishment in all settings (home, school, community)

Improve police-community relations

Social Integration programs to reach out to gang members and those at risk of joining gangs

Establish early detection system for young people at risk (in and out of school)

Train teachers, community workers etc. in the mandatory reporting of abuse to relevant authorities

Strengthen referral system for young people who are victims of abuse

Use mass media and technology to promote peace and violent free solutions to conflict

Incorporate life skills and conflict resolution skills into training programs for young people

Target Groups: youth exposed to violence or at risk of engaging in violence, youth in urban settings, young people out of school, and young people in conflict with the law

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Goal 2: Government will ensure that comprehensive policies and institutional frameworks that support young citizens throughout the life cycle are multi-sectoral, coordinated, cohesive, and resourced to ensure a seamless transition to adulthood.

Objective 1: Build Strong human resource base with the capacity to plan, design, implement and monitor evidence-based, positive youth development programs

Strategies:

Professionalize the field of youth development with relevant accreditation

Establish professional association for youth development personnel

Provide mechanism for clients (young people, NGO's, communities etc.) to provide ongoing input in program planning and design and feedbackon services and programs provided

Provide adequate staffing for Youth For the Future Offices country-wide

Objective 2: Effective governance and institutional framework for youth development established and well resourced

Strategies:

Improve structure and function of the youth department based on the proposed organogram in annex 1

Provide more autonomy to the Youth Department

3: Improved multi-sectoral coordination

Strategies:

Create shared planning spaces to establish priorities in youth development and foster joint programming

Establish an autonomous body for monitoring and evaluating policy and program implementation

Establish platforms for improved communication and information sharing among stakeholders (web-based, quarterly meetings, annual reviews)

Create greater linkages with academia and other professional organizations to share innovations in youth development and keep stakeholders updated on emerging trends and best practices

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Goal 3: An optimal ecology (home, school, community) that's nurturing, supportive and provides a positive climate for young people to grow up healthy, caring and responsible.

Objective 1: Home environments are ready to support young people's developmental needs

Strategies:

Families have access to support services (support groups, psychosocial services etc.)

Mass media to promote positive family values

Establish innovative schemes where families are able to participate in community activities/volunteer programs and receive incentives for scholarship etc.

Develop comprehensive parenting programs targeting parents in rural and urban settings

Provide conditional cash transfers and other social support for vulnerable families

Promote spaces for intergenerational dialogue

Objective 2: School environments are ready to support young people's developmental needs

Strategies:

Expand the concept of schools to provide services and support after school hours including after school programs, arts, music, culture, tutoring etc.

Incorporate rights education into curriculum at all levels

Promote alternative methods of discipline

Provide spaces for students to express their voices and for other forms of positive expression

Incorporate training on rights into teacher training programs

Establish support systems for teachers including counseling services, access to sessions on well-being and utilization of parents, community members and student volunteers to support classroom instruction

Objective 3: Community environments are ready to support young people's developmental needs

Strategies:

Community participation- communities are provided with spaces/opportunities to input in development of programs

Portrayal of positive images/messages to young people through mass media, community spaces, schools etc.

Institutionalize partnerships between schools and community organizations

Establish Community safe spaces

Recognize of communities for their work

Provide support for innovative community renewal programs

Build capacity for village and community leaders

Establish Community centers with one stop services for families

Establish community IT points to support access to technology for young people and their families

Mechanism for Implementing and Coordination of the Policy

The implementation of the policy requires the involvement of a broad range of sectors. At the national level, it is necessary to identify who is responsible for what, establish clear timelines and reporting responsibilities and identify resources for the implementation of the policy.

At the local level there needs to be clear alignment with the policy and programs being implemented. There needs to be a mechanism at this level to consult and agree on what priority programs will be collectively implemented, clear roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and a mechanism for monitoring and tracking results.

The mechanism proposed to assume this role is a National Youth Commission autonomous body described in Goal 2 of the section on policy priorities. This body will be responsible for working closely with the Ministry of Youth to enhance coordination between the different national ministries and departments of government, between district-based organizations, NGO's, civil society, private sector and youth.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The Ministry of Youth has developed a document entitled National Plan of Action and core well-being indicator framework. Based on this preliminary work, it is proposed

that a set of indicators be agreed upon to accompany the policy but more generally to monitor youth development in Belize. Preliminary review of a few documents indicate that there is no nationally, agreed upon standards and indicators for youth development. In order for this policy to yield the desired results, a key component of the process will need to be the development of this framework.

This will pose some challenges in the first instance since nationally there does not appear to be baselines in a number of areas to assess youth development interventions. However, if the policy is to be measurable then stakeholders at all levels must establish a clear mechanism for coordinating their work within the context of the youth policy.

These efforts should include a clear role for young people in monitoring their own situation and using the relevant platform to demand action on priority issues.

For a Policy's success, there is need for a clear and specific Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Action Plan to be in place. This Policy is no different and proposes to adhere to the following to achieve overall set objectives.

a) All concerned stakeholders: youth groups, G.O.B and the relevant Ministries, non-governmental, donors, business entities, civic society and Belizeans in the diaspora involved in youth programs, will each be given a copy of the Policy to ensure and enhance smooth and effective Implementation, co-ordination and collaboration of all national Youth activities.

b) Enhance a holistic and dynamic Youth-based Policy, open and accessible to all concerned stakeholders availing equal and meaningful youth development, youth leadership, entrepreneurship opportunities and programs especially to underprivileged and youth at risk.

c) Submission of quarter annual Reports on progress and on-going activities by all Youth activities running programs to the National Youth Commission to monitor and evaluate success.

e) Submission of Annual National Reports by the National Youth Commission leadership to relevant G. O. B Ministries to evaluate implementation and success.

f) Reviewing of the National Youth Policy every five years to address the ever changing youth program's development needs.

Even though this document provides the practical details of the collaborative actions to be taken by all stakeholders to ensure the speedy and successful implementation of the National Youth Policy. An action plan should be should be the next step moving forward. The Action plan and implementation of the action plan should include:

1. Specific policy objectives
2. Programs, projects and strategies
3. Action steps
4. Target group(s)
5. Expected outcomes
6. Lead agency
7. Support agencies
8. Timeframe
9. Resource implications
10. Performance indicators

National Youth Policy Development: Methodological Approach

The methodology that guided the consultations used a series of approaches that sought to secure views and opinions of a wide cross section of young people in all six districts. Stakeholders at the district level who design, implement and support programs for young people and community leaders from town councils, city councils, village councils, alcaldes, representatives from religious organizations, representative from education, youth, human development and all the other departments within the districts that work directly or indirectly with young people were also consulted in the process of drafting of the National Youth Development Policy.

In order to ensure a fully youth led process, 85 young people from a variety of background were trained in participatory methodologies and facilitation skills. These

young people led the consultations with their peers and complemented the consultant and the Ministry of Youth's team in consulting with the stakeholders.

There were three sets of consultation per district. This included: (a) in-depth interviews, one on one interviews, or small group discussions, with individual stakeholders such as community leaders, principals, teachers and parents, (b) consultation with a wide cross section of young people from diverse groupings (c) consultation with stakeholders with a particular emphasis on stakeholders working in the various sectors on programs targeting young people.

Three sets of tools were designed and utilized to guide each of the consultations: (a) questionnaire for in-depth interviews (b) tools for consultation with young people (c) tools for consultations with stakeholders. These tools were useful in eliciting young people's opinions on the issues presented. They also allowed young people to creatively present their inputs into priority action areas for youth and share in creating the vision for youth.

All inputs were then analyzed which formed priority policy recommendations in the National Youth Development Policy.

Appendices

Annex 1: The Well-Being Framework

| Domain	Content of Domain	Outcomes and Impacts
1. Health Status	Domain 1 focuses on several key areas related to health, including basic health status, behavior, knowledge and environmental quality. All issues are not covered, but the selection is intended to include key health issues for adolescents and youth.	*Health status (selected)*: 2. Reduced morbidity and mortality from infectious disease 3. Reduced morbidity and mortality from lack of nutrition 4. Reduced morbidity and mortality from intentional violence 5. Reduced morbidity and mortality from accidents and unintentional injuries *Health risk behavior*: 1. Reduction of tobacco use 2. Reduction in drug/alcohol use 3. Reduction in HIV/AIDS and STI risk behaviors 4. Reduction of involvement in intentional violence, interpersonal violence and gangs 5. Reduction in unintentional injuries, such as from car accidents 6. Increase in exercise/physical activity 7. Increase in healthy food intake 8. Reduction of early pregnancy *Health knowledge/skills*: 9. Increased knowledge of HIV risk and prevention 10. Increased knowledge about tobacco risk and prevention 11. Increased knowledge about substance abuse risk and prevention 12. Increased knowledge about family planning 13. Increased knowledge about the role of diet and exercise in health 14. Increased knowledge about hygiene and prevention of infectious disease 15. Adequate skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about health *Environmental Quality*: 16. Availability of clean water 17. Availability of sanitation systems 18. Living conditions free from toxic pollutants
2: General Well-Being	This is the domain reserved for broader perceptions of well-being, including general life-satisfaction and spirituality.	1. Increased satisfaction with oneself (the individual is satisfied with who he/she is and their situation). 2. Increased satisfaction with life in general. 3. Increase in sense of purpose, connection with spiritual beliefs (however defined).
3: Identity and Equity	Domain 3 refers to both rights-based and developmental concepts related to identity and equity, around the general theme that adolescents and youth should be able to enact the identity of their choosing, without persecution, sanctions, social exclusion or	4. Existence of legal rights, protections and processes related to national identity, indigenous culture, spiritual belief, others. 5. Increased evidence showing social recognition of ethnic/indigenous identity including language, cultural practices, and religion 6. Increased recognition of, and social practices promoting equality of individual identity regardless of

Domain	Content of Domain	Outcomes and Impacts
	discrimination. This may include gender identity, ethnic identity, religious identity, cultural identity, or any other.	gender. 7. Increase in the freedom of adolescents to affiliate with social, educational, political, family and civic groups of their choosing (connectedness). 8. Positive treatment of adolescents in the media, opportunities for adolescent voices in the media.
4: Protection	Domain 4 addresses the degree to which adolescents and youth are protected – through laws and policies as well as social practices – from exploitation and harm.	1. The enactment of legal frameworks and policies for protection from exploitation, violence and abuse, social exclusion, harmful traditional practices, juvenile justice abuses, discrimination (e.g., based on race, gender, culture, disabled status). 2. Institutional enforcement of those protections. 3. Protections in place for young people in emergencies such as war, civil conflict, and natural disasters. 4. Education and information provided to the public with respect to legal protections and sanctions regarding abuse 5. Increased awareness among young people and all others about the protective frameworks and policies, and their enforcement.
5: Education	Domain 5 includes the important issues of educational access, success and gender equity, at the primary and secondary and tertiary level as well as "second chance" education for those returning to school.	1. Elimination of barriers to primary and secondary education, regardless of gender 2. Increased access to adult and "second chance" educational opportunities, including vocational school 3. Increased attendance at school 4. Increases in literacy and academic performance 5. Increase in adolescent belief in the utility of school completion (bonding to school) 6. Increased resources, staff allocated for schools 7. Increased access to higher education
6: Access to Supportive Services (Health, Social) and Relationships	Supportive services and relationships in this domain are intended to encompass the multiple social supports that provide a base for healthy adolescent and youth development – both agency and social/health services as well as positive family and community relationships.	8. Designated national government agency or unit focusing on adolescents and youth 9. Designated local agency/unit focusing on adolescents and youth 10. Regularized data collected on the well-being of adolescents and youth 11. Increased access to basic health services, including treatment, preventive services, and family planning. 12. Increased access to social services and emergency services and staff at such services trained to work with adolescent psycho-emotional needs. 13. Increase in the practice of equitable and humane treatment in the justice system, availability of alternatives to confinement, and increased access to services (e.g., legal representation) that help insure this. 14. Increased use of media and communications to disseminate health information for adolescents 15. Increase in the prevalence of caring and supportive family, peer, school and community environments 16. Increase in access to positive peer activities (including recreation, social, civic, work) 17. Resources and finances budgeted for adolescent supportive services and policies.

Domain	Content of Domain	Outcomes and Impacts
7: Socio-Economic Opportunity	Socioeconomic opportunity does not just refer to the mitigation of poverty, but to the kind of economic future that a young person can envision, and the support and training available to enable young people to take advantage of available opportunities.	1. Reduction in family poverty level. 2. Reduction in adolescent and youth poverty level. 3. Increase in employment rate for adolescents/youth (all gender categories). 4. Access to productive employment (among family members) at a level that can sustain families and individuals. 5. Access to training and skills development for employment. 6. Adequate skills and knowledge to secure employment. 7. Opportunities to develop and engage in (legal) economic activity. 8. Belief in a social place – a young person's expectation that there is a viable future for him/her, socially, culturally and economically.
8: Participation	Participation is a complex domain, in part because it includes access to information, some level of participation in the governing or political process, and involvement in civic groups or activities. The kind of participation possible is, however, significantly impacted by cultural patterns (e.g., the kinds of social or civic institutions that exist).	1. Increase in percentage of youth (at voting age) who vote. 2. Increase in knowledge among young people about civic affairs. 3. Increase in adolescent and youth knowledge and capabilities to access information. 4. Increase in youth-led organizations and activities in schools and communities and networking. 5. Increase in the number of social action activities involving adolescents and youth, and/or for adolescents and youth. 6. The institutionalization of young people's participation in civic affairs, in the form of youth committees, councils, representation, and other forms. 7. Increased access to information (libraries, the Internet, etc.).

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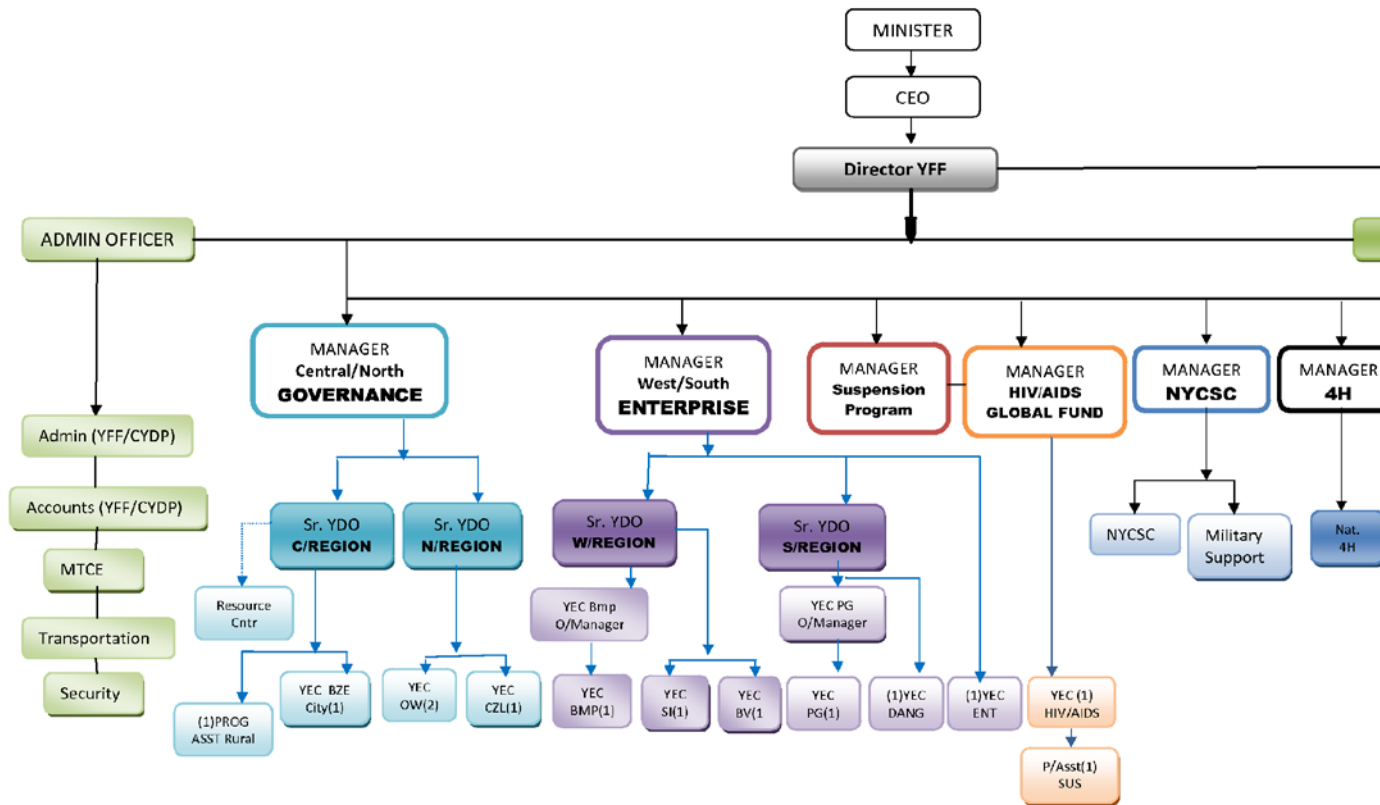
Annex 3: Youth Responsibilities & Roles

Become proactive and involved in constructive decision-making in matters/issues affecting them: at individual, community and national levels.
Take the initiative to create, expand and increase opportunities to improve their overall well-being and surrounding/immediate environment.
Fully utilize and effectively benefit from currently available education and training facilities
Identify/establish new learning and training needs in education and technological advances and global

Annex 4: Government Responsibilities

Should put legislation in place to support the work and activities of youth under the ministries of youth, education, public services and sports, culture(NICH)
Support the establishing of a national youth commission
Advocate, support and coordinate e the inter depend and working of all youth program, activities being run by GOB, non-governmental and civic society organization
Support curriculum changes in education, training, sports and culture sectors in order to develop youth's full potential in areas of academic and non-academic talent, skills and creativity.

Annex 5: Non- Governmental Organizations

Should support the work of the ministries of youth, education, public services and sports and culture
Advocate for legislation that established youth commission that will run and govern all youth activities within the country
Consult and collaborate with each other and ensure all youth activities are   coordinated in line with GOB set objectives and standards
Ensure transparent and accountable handling of finances and other resources intended to benefit youth in Belize
Provide spiritual, social and moral guidance to enhance youth's transition into adulthood.

Annex 7: Business Community and Development Agencies

Provide more opportunities for relevant training and apprenticeship locally, regionally and internationally.
Support youth entrepreneurship ventures locally, regionally and internationally.
Advocate for youth leadership training in key national areas of industry, commerce and governance

Annex 8: Belizeans in the Diaspora

Provide international; networking that will open international business, educational and social opportunities for youths living in Belize and abroad to enhance their social political and economic development
Advocate for legislation that promotes inter-countries educational, cultural and youth development exchange programs.
Collaborate with local youth talent.

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