

# NEWS FLASH E-BULLETIN



**National AIDS Commission**  
*Responding to HIV/AIDS in Belize*

February 17, 2012

Women's Issues Network of Belize in partnership with the UWI Open Campus is hosting a high School Debate tournament under the theme, "Sensitizing Communities, Reducing HIV Related Stigma & Discrimination for MARPS." The topic of the first debate topic was centered on whom, including gender, the national HIV/AIDS programs should be focused on for greater impact of the response on the epidemic. The debate teams in the first debate came from High School students in Belize City; Pallotti High School and the Belize High School.

Palotti won the debate by arguing that greater strides would be achieved in advancing an effective response to HIV/AIDS by centering efforts in the engagement of male participation.. This debate took place on Monday, February 13, 2012 at the University of the West Indies Open Campus on Princess Margaret Drive. The debates will continue for the next three weeks on Mondays at 9 in the morning. For more information contact WIN Belize.



After several months of dormancy the NAC Monitoring and Evaluation Committee this week held its first meeting since summer of 2011. The meeting is a result of organizational work led by the Secretariat's new M&E Officer, Mrs. Patricia Smith-Cummings, to re-engage previous members and bring more members on board and the commitment of partners. For the first time, the Committee now has M&E Officers from most partner agencies in our national response. They are developing systems to lead the monitoring and evaluation functions necessary to increase transparency, efficiency and relevance of the national response. The Committee has made recommendations to the NAC for innovative ways of overcoming the challenges experienced by several sub-committees of the NAC in finding Chairpersons. We with Mrs. Smith-Cummings and the M&E Committee all the best in their endeavors. They now meet at 2pm on the second Tuesday of every month at the Secretariat Conference Room.

The Human Rights Commission of Belize (HRCB) yesterday wrote to all political parties and independent candidates in Belize requesting their formal position on human rights issues.

As municipal and general elections draw near, it is indeed very important that the elected government upholds the preservation of human rights for all people in

Belize as enshrined in our Constitution. It is acknowledged that without the protection of human dignity that comes with Human Rights, a country's development is stymied. Leaders of any country vow to uphold these fundamental principles for which the people of that nation must always hold them accountable. The below except is shared for further reflection on Human Rights submitted by HRCB:

"The Human Rights Commission of Belize (HRCB), a nongovernmental, non-partisan organization, respectfully requests that you and your party publicly commit to the principles of human rights which are embedded in our constitution, prior to, during and after the municipal and general elections next month.

We ask that you commit yourselves to the actions below as a demonstration of your earnest intention as leaders, to work for the development of a culture of human rights which is necessary in the pursuit of our country's development.

- 1) Ensure that Belize ratifies the remaining core human rights conventions, i.e., the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- 2) Prepare and submit all country reports required by human rights treaty bodies at the United Nations in a timely manner and ensure that complete, unaltered copies of these reports are readily available to the public.
- 3) Ensure the highest level of participation by civil society in the preparation of country reports; and inform the nation on the outcome of country reports submitted, including recommendations.

And most importantly,

- 4) Vow to respect, uphold, fulfill and protect the rights of all persons in Belize, as articulated internationally and in the Belize Constitution."

All of us working in the response to HIV should take note of this new advocacy initiative from the HRCB which has been dormant for a long time. We welcome a new voice in the struggle towards more Human Rights. On a related note the Human Rights Commission is launching an education campaign at the Radisson on Wednesday February 22.

BFLA, as sub-recipient of GF RD 9 entitled, "Accelerating the Pace: Reaching Marginalized and Vulnerable Populations with Critical Services" continues to provide clinical outreach services that include STI diagnosis and treatment for most at risk populations in remote areas throughout the districts. These target groups include young female sex workers and men who have sex with men. This

initiative is part of an effort to reduce the sexual transmission of HIV among young people which is one of their Global Fund Project Targets. On February 15, the mobile clinical team visited FSWs and MSMs in Cristo Rey (Cayo) and in Xaibe (Corozal) the following day. On Monday 20, they will be providing similar services in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye.

PASMO educators collaborate with the Mobile Clinic unit of the Ministry of Health at Belize Defense Force's Open Day on Saturday, February 11 2012. MOH's outreach team conducted HIV Test, STI diagnosis and treatment. The PASMO team played a key role in referring youths, males at risk, and MSM populations to access services at the Mobile Clinic.



I hope you have enjoyed this edition of News Flash E-bulletin and that you may all have a great weekend!

Cheers,

Elio Cabanas  
National AIDS Commission