



THE SECRETARIAT

APR – JUN 2018

“Giving Hope to People Living with HIV Through Dedicated Service”

The NAC Establishes the 1st Annual National HIV Testing Day



The National AIDS Commission (NAC), in collaboration with Atlantic Bank Ltd, the Ministry of Health (MOH), United Nations Development Program and DigiCell proudly commemorated the *1st Annual National HIV Testing Day (NTD) on*

Friday, June 29th, 2018 from 9am to 3pm; under the theme: “Achieving 9090-90 by 2020. This year the program included a total eight testing sites: San Pedro Town (Poly Clinic), Corozal Town (CCH Poly Clinic), Orange Walk Town (Central Park), Belmopan City (Police Station), San Ignacio Town (Welcome Center), Dangriga Town (Courts Parking Lot), Punta Gorda Town (Central Park) and Belize City (Battlefield Park).

National Testing Day promoted the scaling up of HIV testing efforts in keeping with the objectives of the National Strategic Plan. The goal of NTD was to reach a minimum 1200 people tested nationwide in an effort to meet the nation’s objective of fulfilling the 90-90-90 targets *(By 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status. By 2020, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy. By 2020, 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression).*

Besides targeting the eight above mentioned sites on June 29th for all day testing, the NAC and in collaboration with MOH, Belize Family Life Association, Our Circle and GoBelize engaged and test the key affected populations in the high disease burden areas (Belize City, Cayo and Dangriga) as a part of our regionally acknowledged award winning “On-site Testing Program”.

In what has become a standard in the programming of the NAC initiatives, we incorporated multiple layers to the HIV testing experience; with the success of the World AIDS Day 2017 live art display program, we also added a live art display to the NTD programming utilizing six local fine arts designers. As a result of these initiatives, Belize has been and continues to be a lead entity in the region in the promotion and implementation of testing initiatives. Nationwide over 36,000 HIV tests were done in 2017 and with the general scale up in services, we are on track to meet on national targets.

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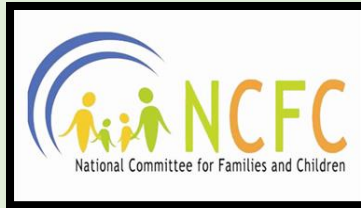
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NTD testing results:

TESTING SITE	TOTAL MALES TESTED	TOTAL FEMALES TESTED	TOTAL TESTS
COROZAL	116	111	227
ORANGE WALK	125	121	246
BELIZE	226	266	492
CAYO	316	242	558
STANN CREEK	69	73	142
TOLEDO	43	45	88
TOTAL	895	858	1753

- It is noteworthy that for the first time we have more males than females getting tested. This is a testament to our successful awareness campaigns and engaging the targeted areas. It also speaks to a potential behavior change that we hope to strengthen and continue to support without losing the strong health seeking behavior of women.



“Championing the Rights, Welfare and Development of Belizean Families and Children”

NCFC’s Informed Teen Reporters Report on how Crime and Violence are Affecting their Generation



The Informed Teen Reporters (ITRs) are a youth group of the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC). This group, in partnership with Channel 5 produces news reports on relevant topics affecting children and youths. In June’s edition, the Informed Teen Reporters focus on the topic of crime and violence and how it is affecting their generation. If you would like to get an insight into this story, please visit the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LtM-OoQagg>.

NCFC Produces Videos to Educate the Public about Laws Pertaining to Sexual Violence Against Children



In 2014 the Criminal Code was amended with respect to Rape, Child Prostitution and Consent of children in Belize. This is in direct correlation to Articles 19 and 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To demystify the legal jargon and simplify the amendments, four videos were produced by the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) with funding from UNICEF.

It is our hope that armed with this knowledge, adults and children will be more aware about the sexual abuse of children, be encouraged to report suspected cases, be less stigmatized and be aware of the consequences for perpetrators of these crimes.



To view these videos, visit the following links and also share with your family and friends:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LtM-OoQagg>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pCCeWxCfok>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKnet_s_gKs
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9D865JOod70>

NCFC's CRC Ambassadors Conduct Presentations to Primary School Children about the CRC

One vital role of the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) is to educate children and adults about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Through the CRC Ambassadors this continues to hold true in various parts of the country. Primary school children and their teachers are treated to exciting presentations about their rights and responsibilities! During the second quarter of this year, over 150 children have learnt about their rights and their responsibilities.



If you would like to request a CRC presentation, please visit our office at 62 Cleghorn Street, Belize City or contact us at 223-0059/1180 or nfc@bt.net. Also, visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/nfc/bz/ to get weekly updates about the CRC.



Hand In Hand Ministries Outreach Program

Hand In Hand Ministries is always in need of counsellors for our children in our Support Group, however, it's been a challenge for us and we often settle for what is offered to us. Our goal is to be able to assist our children in adherence, improve their quality of life, thus extending their life span.

Earlier this year, while making inquiries for counsellors, a young student pursuing her PhD was referred to us.

We took up the offer of the referral and Ms. McFadzen, who is pursuing her PHD in Counselling/School Psychology has been volunteering with us for two months.

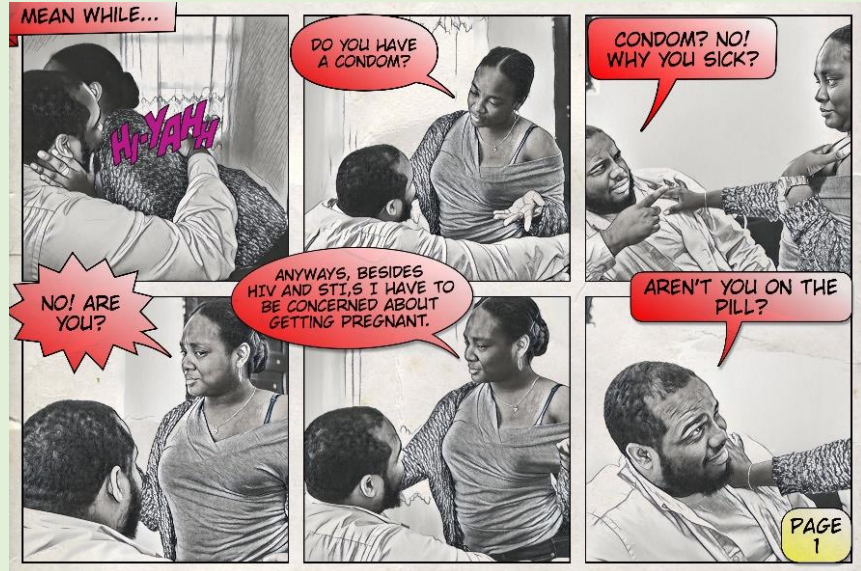
Ms. McFadzen is a US citizen, born of Belizean parents and lives in New York City. She will be completing her PhD studies in 2020 and plans on volunteering more with us, Ms. McFadzen has seen where she would be able to make an impact in the lives of these children. Her words of inspiration "*Open to process of changing*" is what feeds inner being and wanting to do more for others.

At this time her main purpose is to evaluate our children and to design a strategy and propose action plan for a counsellor who will be taking on our children after Ms. McFadzen leaves.

We have longed been searching for a counsellor for our children and we are very grateful for all those who have been instrumental in assisting us.



The Department of Youth Services presents: "Use A Condom" A Comic Strip Story.



HIV, YOUTH & the FUTURE: A YOUTH LEADERS' FORUM

On Friday May 25th, The National AIDS Commission (NAC) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Department of Youth Services, GoBelize, UNICEF, and the Gateway Youth Center hosted its second dynamic and innovative HIV Youth Leaders' Research Forum with 45 youth leaders at the Gateway Youth Center under the theme: *"HIV, Youth and the Future: A National Youth Leaders' Research Forum"*.



The forum addressed some of the overarching issues that are affecting the youth population in relation to HIV and how these issues impact the national response to HIV/AIDS.



The day's agenda include pointed, dynamic and innovative presentations on the following topics: HIV 101, the Ministry of Health's Surveillance Report, the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 and the Knowledge, Attitudes & Practices in Sexual Behaviour & HIV in Belize Report. These documents all speak to the actions and psychology of youth in Belize and how that then affects the national data. The forum was a great opportunity for the youth population to actively engage in and directly affect in the national dialogue.



After these presentations the leaders were asked to then give some creative thought to the following question: *what is one problematic area within the HIV response as it relates to the youth demographic, and how would you approach fixing it?* The youth leaders designed very dynamic programs that would effectively change the way the HIV message has been received and targeted; including: peer-to-peer condom supply groups, peer counselling/support group, and group testing programs.

The forum was designed as a one-day activity to spark the conversation, interests and concerns of the youth population in an effort to engage them in meaningful change. The discussions and dynamic socialization that the leaders and facilitators experienced was refreshing and allowed both parties to have a glimpse into the true picture of the response. The participants were given an assessment to evaluate their knowledge gained. Because of the interactive nature of the presentations, the participants gained knowledge and reported a high level comfort with the information, willingness to participate again and very pleased with the program.



It is recommended that the program be done on a regular basis with different demographics and different communities throughout the country. By all accounts the program was a success and the NAC fully intends to develop some of the suggested ideas into a national programs and evaluate their success.



Belize Family Life Association: Updates

Youth Ambassadors Exchange Program

On April 12th 2018, nine Youth Ambassadors: *Cristian Verde and Mikhail Rosado of Ocean Academy, Alexis Guy of Edward P. Yorke High School, Shaylee Flowers, Jaminie Nah and Shanique Perez of Bishop Martin High School, Ryan Smith of Belize High School, Jeffery Coc of Belmopan Methodist High School, Jauquin Coc of Belmopan Comprehensive High School* along with their Mentor Dr. Golda Mejia – Teacher at Anglican Cathedral College returned to Belize after three weeks of exchange in the US.

The Youth Ambassadors Program is a U.S. Department of State Youth Exchange designed to strengthen the leadership skills of young people from Latin America and the United States. This multi-national exchange also builds bonds of friendship and understanding between people of the Caribbean, Central and South America and people of the United States. The official program goals of the Youth Ambassadors Program are:

- To develop a cadre of young adults who have a strong sense of civic responsibility, a commitment to community development, an awareness of current & global issues, and strong interpersonal leadership skills;
- To foster relationships among youth from different ethnic, religious, and national groups; and
- To promote mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between the United States and our Western Hemisphere counterparts.



ATTENTION

BIGG CHATZ

IS LOOKING FOR YOU TO JOIN THE CREW!

WHETHER YOU ARE EXPERIENCED IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA OR YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE, YOU'RE INVITED TO AUDITION TO BE A HOST ON BELIZE'S LONGEST RUNNING YOUTH TV SHOW.

Email programmeofficer@bflabelize.org
Inbox @biggchatz or call 203-1018 and ask for Ms. Gentle for more info

Bigg Chatz

Bigg Chatz is looking for dynamic new hosts for our upcoming season and we are opening a call for audition tapes to be submitted by **July 31st 2018**.

We are looking for youths 24 years and younger who are articulate, fun, energetic and are comfortable discussing the issues affecting young people in Belize.

For more information and to submit your audition tapes contact Sheena Gentle at 203-1018 or email programmeofficer@bflabelize.org



YOUTHS CHALLENGED TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGES TO DISSONANCE BETWEEN THE AGE OF CONSENT FOR SEX AND THE AGE FOR INDEPENDENT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AT OPENING OF SECOND REGIONAL YOUTH MEETING

The Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP), *the mechanism that provides a structured and unified approach to the Caribbean's response to the HIV epidemic*, commenced the Second Regional Meeting of Youth Leaders on Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV and AIDS on 18 May 2018 in Port-of-Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

In his opening remarks, **Director of PANCAP, Mr. Dereck Springer**, lauded the PANCAP Youth Steering Committee for developing and executing the agenda and methodology for the Second Youth Meeting. *“This is clear indication of your growth since the First Meeting of Youth”*, stated the Director, *“I wish to commend the entire Youth Network for taking definitive steps in advocating for the priority areas identified at the previous meeting”*.

The priority areas included: (1) the dissonance between the age of sexual consent (16 years), and the age for independent access to health care (18 years), (2) the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in all schools in the Caribbean and (3) Gender inclusive laws that protect victims of sexual exploitation.

The PANCAP Director highlighted the additional progress since the first meeting, which included the establishment of the PANCAP Youth Advocacy Steering Committee and a specialized training workshop held in January 2018 designed to equip participants with skills to develop an advocacy strategy. He shared his expectations that the meeting would reach agreements on innovative and practical actions for advancing the key priority areas identified in the Caribbean Regional Youth Advocacy Framework (CRYAF) on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, as well as on key issues for advocacy within their respective countries. He urged the youth advocates to collaborate with the PANCAP Coordinating Unit, other stakeholders and each other to implement those actions. Mr. Springer indicated that PANCAP would facilitate their participation in high-level fora.

The Chair, PANCAP Youth Advocacy Steering Committee, Mr. Kevin Mendez stated that he has experienced significant positive change in his life since as a gay man, he is able to openly share his story and experience in the Caribbean, which has legislation that “impede on the rights of LGBT persons”. The Chair thanked PANCAP for creating a safe space for youth to have discourse and create a plan of action for regional advocacy.

He further stated that the meeting would focus on creating effective methods to advocate for the aforementioned key issues, which he believes, have a direct impact on the quality of life of young people, especially young key populations: young gay men, Men who have sex with men (MSM), and Transgender-persons, who have the highest HIV prevalence in the region. Mr Mendez further explained that in “the last year, with the support of PANCAP and the Youth Advocacy Steering Committee, we have received the mentorship to improve our advocacy skills to address our priority areas in our country context”.

He challenged participants to actively participate in discussions, invited them to be open and comfortable to share their challenges and opportunities in advocating for change. He also explained that the forum will be important for formalizing initiatives and effective communication among the youth network.

“One country cannot move ahead of another. Our issues, our needs are the same and you are all brilliant and passionate key players from whom we can learn and share a wealth of knowledge”, stated Mr Mendez, “we are one young Caribbean family and as such we have the responsibility to work together at the country level and as a region”. In addition, he reminded participants that in 2017 there was a 1% increase of HIV infections among young men. “This HIV epidemic is killing our youth, our friends and families and our society”, implored Mr. Mendez, “we have been told we are the future but with HIV and HIV-related discrimination, our tomorrow is not certain. This is our time to take action, work together, stay informed and be real!”

During remarks, Mr. André Browne, Dean, CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Programme (CYAP), stated that the CYAP can function as a key resource for reaching youth and gathering youth voices at a decision-making level for all matters regarding CARICOM. He highlighted that PANCAP has understood the need for Caribbean Youth Ambassadors (CYAs) to have opportunities to get together to share experiences, plan activities and receive the training they need to ensure their efforts are effective in their communities.

Mr. Browne explained that PANCAP has been a key support for the programme, bringing together CYAs with other youth to discuss ending AIDS since 2017. He revealed that for most of the CYAs present at the inaugural meeting, it was the first time they were able to meet in person. “Deans before me have effusively sang the praises of PANCAP and rightly so, the PANCAP leadership’s dedication to youth involvement is remarkable and must be applauded” stated the CYAP Dean, “from carving out a space for us in the form of these youth meetings to ensuring we have a voice at high-level decision making meetings such as the PANCAP Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) and Executive Board, and building our capacity through the recently concluded Local Capacity Initiative (LCI), even allowing us the use of their online platform for meetings”.

He informed the meeting that his goal is to renew the charge to the youth participating in the meeting, particularly the CYAs. Mr. Browne stated “the meeting comes at a time when 15 to 24-year-olds account for one-third of new HIV infections in the Caribbean, and at a time when almost half (46.2%) of Caribbean young people ages 15 - 24 did not have adequate knowledge about HIV, and at a time when two of five (38.6%) young people ages 15 - 24 did not use a condom the last time they had sex. It is time we act”. He challenged participants to utilize the forum to formalize an actionable plan based on the CRYAF particularly on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, access to care for youth and creation of gender inclusive laws. He emphasized that the forum is another positive step to achieving the 2030 goal of zero AIDS among adolescents and the 90-90-90 Targets.

In her keynote address, Youth Advocate, Ms. Terry-Ann Roy, Alliance for Justice and Diversity, advocated for the removal of laws, which discriminate against sexual, gender minorities, and prevent them from accessing proper health care and information through fear of stigma and discrimination.

“We have to join forces in all areas of our activism because these issues intersect with each other”, stated Ms. Roy “when LGBT persons are discriminated within the law, this affects how they navigate the health-care system and how they access the necessary information to prevent contracting HIV as well as treatment if they need it. These laws do not only affect gay people but also those who are also listed as key populations in PANCAP’s own initiatives to end HIV and AIDS”.

She explained that these persons include sex workers, Trans women, People living with HIV (PLHIV), MSM, young women, girls and neglected persons who do not have access to these services. She stated, “We must recognize how these issues interconnect and work together, unite to combat these discriminatory laws and demand better policies and modified legislation. This is why we are here today and this why we will continue to return to get the necessary information to arm ourselves and approach these policy makers and parliamentarians with our demands. I stress on demands because we are entitled to these rights. It is written in all our constitutions. The right to freedom of expression, liberty, equality before the law, family life and dignity. Simply echoing that some laws are not enforced do not grant us the dignity we deserve”.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Ms. Alexis D’Marco, Vice Chair of the PANCAP Youth Steering Committee. The meeting comes approximately one year after the First Meeting of Youth Leaders and two years ahead of the 2020 deadline for reaching the 90-90-90 Targets. It is expected to culminate with the development of advocacy supporting tools and materials for youths to advocate at the highest-level for the end of AIDS by 2030.

BELIZE NATIONAL FAITH LEADERS CONSULTATION

PANCAP has been involved in discussions with Faith Leaders from its inception in 2001, recognising their importance and the role of religion in the lives of the people of the Caribbean. The PANCAP Champions for Change Programme introduced in 2004 formalised the importance of inter-religious component in reducing stigma and discrimination as an essential aspect of Human Rights. The Partnership with the Caribbean Council of Churches acted as a catalyst for incorporating a cross section of religious organisation in the accelerated response to HIV and AIDS. The PANCAP special Conference of Faith Leaders in Guyana on November 2005 set the stage for institutionalizing FBOs in the PANCAP structure and fostering their voices in shaping the various iterations of the Caribbean Regional Strategic Frameworks, the latest being 2014-2018, that form the guidelines of the PANCAP network for action and resource mobilization especially in the areas of treatment, prevent, stigma and discrimination.



This Consultation is a follow-up to a series of engagements involving faith leaders in Belize and elsewhere in the Caribbean under the PANCAP Justice for All programme.

The aims of the consultation are to:



- * Establish the main goals for an inter-religious faith leaders’ network in Belize with emphasis on contributing toward the end of AIDS. These may include:
- * Endorsing the 2016 UN High Level Political Declaration for fast tracking the end of AIDS;
- * Accepting the implementation, the PANCAP Justice For All Roadmap in short, medium and long-term stages;
- * Working toward a joint consultation of Faith Leaders and

representatives of the Key populations with a view to discussing the way forward on reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination;

- * Consolidating the structure and functions of the Belize National Faith Leaders Network.
- * Identify the lessons learned for ending AIDS from faith leaders' engagements with people living with HIV and with other groups such as parliamentarians, youth leaders, civil society and members of your church communities.
- * Highlight challenges for developing a viable Faith Leaders Network and proposals for overcoming them.
- * Make specific recommendations to the PANCAP Coordinating Unit for collaboration and support to achieve the goals of the Belize inter-religious/faith leaders Network.
- * Establish priorities and timelines for achieving the goals of the Network.



The PANCAP Justice for All Roadmap and Groups Contributions to Ending AIDS

The Justice For All (JFA) Programme was introduced by PANCAP in September 2013 as a regional response to the UN High Level Political Declaration (June 2011) designed to reduce AIDS related stigma and discrimination. Hence the JFA Roadmap revolved around 5 principles:

- Enhancing family life and focusing on those in need
- Increasing access to treatment and affordable medicines
- Reducing gender inequality including violence against women, girls and adolescents
- Promoting prevention with special reference to sexual and reproductive health and rights including age appropriate sexual education
- Implementing legislative reforms for modifying AIDS-related stigma and discrimination

Following a series of national consultations since its inauguration, a regional consultation in April 2014 in Jamaica and the recommendations of the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development the PANCAP in October 2014, the Justice For All Roadmap was adopted with 15 actionable recommendations for implementation in short, medium and long term deliverables (See Annex III).



Based on the lessons learned from operations on the ground, special attention in 2016 was given to working with stakeholder groups -- parliamentarians, Faith Leaders, Youth, National AIDS Programme Coordinators, Civil Society - individually, to identify what each could contribute to ending AIDS in the Caribbean. The results have been heartening.

They have been demonstrated in the recommendations from Regional Consultations coordinated by PANCAP in partnership principally with UNAIDS, UNDP and PAHO/WHO and in which the UN Secretary General Special Envoy for HIV in the Caribbean and the Director of the PANCAP Coordinating Unit played lead advocacy roles. The outcomes from these stakeholder fora identified a series of recommendations whereby their respective collectives may contribute to ending AIDS.

Collaborative Network for Persons Living with HIV – Candle Light Vigil



On June 1st, C-NET+ in collaboration with REDCA+ held a Candle Light Vigil to commemorate the lives of those that are still living with HIV in our community. It was held at the Belize Institute for Management from 6:00pm to 11:00pm.

The agenda included opening remarks from the Executive Director of C-NET+ as well as from the REDCA Regional Secretariat; Mr. Otoniel Ramirez Hernandez.

This continued with statements from the community in regards to their success stories, trials and recommendations to fellow persons living with HIV and advocates.



Following this, was a guided meditation which was to reflecting on the lives of those that have departed and giving thanks to a bright prosperous future. After this session was completed, there was moment of Loudness/Celebration which was accompanied by a song “*Vivir la Vida*”

At the ending, a red ribbon was formed with the candles to commemorate all those within the community who are giving there all to the response in Belize

NAC 3-Day Training on Guidelines for the Comprehensive Care of Gay Men and Other MSM



From April 11-13 2018, The National AIDS Commission and Ministry of Health through the United Nations Development Programme hosted a three day training entitled “*Guidelines for the Comprehensive Care of*

Gay Men and Other Men who have Sex with Men” The overall objective focused on improving the health services offered to this key population; in order to meet the UNAIDS 90-90-90 treatment target by 2020. This sensitization workshop trained a total of 25 Health Care Providers representing a variety of medical practitioners countrywide. Dra. Lydia Guerra was the lead facilitator of the three day training along with the following invited

facilitators: Ms. Martha Carrillo (MC Consultancy), Mr. Kevin Mendez (Ministry of Health), Mr. Karl Wade (Empower Yourself, Belize Movement) and Mr. Aston Chavarria (Belize Youth Empowerment for Change).

