

THE SECRETARIAT

"Giving Hope to People Living with HIV Through Dedicated Service"



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NATIONAL
Women and Girls
HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY
March 10

"The Best Defence is a Good Offense."

LION'S CLUB PARKING LOT FROM 9AM TO 2PM
FREE HIV TESTING * SEXUAL HEALTH INFORMATION

On March 10th, 2017 we commemorated *"National Women and Girls HIV Awareness Day under the theme: The Best Defence is a Good Offense."* This internationally celebrated day brings into focus the reality that HIV/AIDS affects everyone and must be addressed holistically in order to make the necessary change.

The National AIDS Commission (NAC) and its partners commemorated this day with a dynamic testing and information sharing day of activities. This activity was a collaboration between: the NAC, Ministry of Health and the Belize Family Life Association. It was also a partnership with the Kidney Association of Belize as they were celebrating National Kidney Day 2017. The testing garnered a total of 48 tests, 32 females and 16 males (a true reflection of the national testing ration of 2:1) with no reports of positive infections. This testing day sensitized the public on the issues of HIV/AIDS as it relates to women and girls as well as provided information sharing opportunities for everyone.



The NAC also engaged the Special Envoy for Women & Children by having them participate in an ad done by the First Lady of Belize, Mrs Kim Simplis-Barrow. This ad addressed the national data and the role each of us play in creating the change needed on this issue.

The NAC sees the need for HIV campaigns like this, as they bring timely awareness to the impact of HIV/AIDS on the affected communities and support the one-response concept that the nation has in address this issue.

As we move towards achieving our goal of a multi-sectorial approach to ending the epidemic by 2020 and realizing the 90-90-90

strategy, it is important to not forget all the populations we serve; and that meeting their needs now will affect the results of meeting the nation's goals in the future.



U-RAP NEWS

- **In December 2016, U-RAP co-founder and co-coordinator Arif Bulkan was named the recipient of the 2017 Anthony Sagba Award for Public and Civic Contributions. Notable among those achievements is his co-founding of and leadership in U-RAP and its litigation work in the Caribbean.**
- In January 2017, Jewel Amoah, Lecturer, Faculty of Law, St. Augustine, joined the U-RAP Team as the Legal and Public Education Coordinator. Her tasks will include coordination of the Student Research Assistantship Program and activities related to continuing legal and judicial education. She will also lead the Team on matters related to public education and communications. The U-RAP Team of six now includes coordinators Arif Bulkan (STA) and Tracy Robinson (Mona) and members Westmin James (CH), who serves as its litigant specialist, and Janeille Matthews (Mona) who is U-RAP's Research Coordinator. Douglas Mendes SC, a co-founder of U-RAP, functions as U-RAP's Advisor.
- Jewel is a Canadian-Trinidadian human rights lawyer and is a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada (Bar of Ontario). She joined St. Augustine in 2016-17 and acquired her PhD from the University of Cape Town by examining equality rights for girls subject to customary law in South Africa. She has worked with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone to build the capacity of NGOs and national institutions in the protection and

promotion of human rights and the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation in Malawi and the Centre for Applied Social Sciences in Namibia.

- Following a December 2016 meeting in Trinidad hosted by U-RAP, the Caribbean Pro Bono and Social Justice Lawyering Group was established, comprised of approximately 55 lawyers from around the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico. This is a network of regional attorneys with a shared commitment to undertaking pro bono legal work on behalf of those who have the least access to adequate legal services. The funding for this meeting came from the Robert Carr Civil Society Network Fund (RCNF) and its grant to the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC).

PANCAP ENHANCING CAPACITY OF NATIONAL AIDS PROGRAMME MANAGERS THROUGH ‘DATA FOR DECISION MAKING’ WORKSHOP



Emphasis placed on the importance of using data for programmes related to key populations

Thursday, March 16, 2017 (PANCAP Coordinating Unit, CARICOM Secretariat): The Pan-Caribbean Partnership Against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP) hosted a one-day workshop on ‘Data for Decision Making’ on Friday, March 10 in Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for fifteen (15) National AIDS Programme (NAP) Managers from Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Commonwealth of Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia.

The PANCAP workshop aimed to enhance the capabilities of NAP Managers to effectively interpret, analyse and present data to inform strategic HIV and AIDS programme implementation as well as to efficiently report on findings at every level.

According to Knowledge Coordinator, PANCAP Knowledge for Health Project, Dr Shanti Singh-Anthony, collecting and effectively analysing data on key populations is critical at this time of the HIV and AIDS response in the Caribbean. *‘With the reduction of donor funding, NAP managers have less resources but more to achieve’*, stated Dr Singh-Anthony, *‘this calls for a targeted*

approach to key populations and having the right data to inform these approaches has never been more integral to the goal of ending AIDS by 2030’.

The Knowledge Coordinator echoed the sentiments of Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh, Minister of Health, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, during his opening remarks at the Fifth NAP Managers and Key Partners Meeting on Monday, March 6, in which he called for a recalibration of the HIV and AIDS message to focus on behaviour change.

‘If we are going to effectively create behaviour change, we need accurate data on key populations,’ stated Dr Singh-Anthony, ‘retooled strategies require data on their sexual behaviour, preferred means of communication, degree of exposure to health messages and other critical aspects of their behaviour in order to strategically create public education initiatives which accurately target key populations and effectively alter their sexual behaviour to more responsible and safe habits’.

Dr Singh-Anthony further emphasized that NAP managers should advocate for more data collection and analysis within their programme implementation since a lack of data can result in inadequate resource allocation, ineffective public education strategies and an overall failure to reach key populations with the right tools and messages.

The workshop exposed NAP Managers to a series of activities on data analysis and interpretation using a range of software applications. The focus was on identifying key relationships revealed in data in order to inform policy implementation and strategy. Participants were also exposed to critical aspects of data visualization to build their capacity in effectively presenting data to a range of audiences including key populations, donor partners and policymakers.

The workshop forms part of the PANCAP Knowledge for Health Project with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

BFLA Back to School Mobile Clinic

On Saturday January 14th, 2017 the Belize Family Life Association held their semiannual Back to School Mobile Clinic on Albert Street in Belize City. The clinic targeted young people between the ages of 4 and 19 years old and aimed to provide head-to-toe examination, including dental screening, as well as deworming services, free of cost. BFLA also offered services for adults, mainly blood pressure, glucose and HIV testing. The Belize Kidney Association also assisted in the event by providing free kidney function testing. In total 50 children received their checkups, we also did 20 HIV Tests and 136 other services. BFLA would like to thank The Belize Kidney Association, Belize Cancer Society, Dr. Donair, Dr. Flores, Youth Advocacy Movement, Brodies, Belize City Council, Belize Traffic Dept., Love Foundation, Nurses and all who came by to access services.





BFLA NHI Kiddie's Corner Upgrade

In commemoration of Child Stimulation Month in March, The BFLA NHI Clinic unveiled their Kiddies' Corner for their young clients to enjoy, on Thursday March 23rd. Small picnic tables and a stuff animal zoo were installed in the waiting area and the children were treated to story time and coloring sessions by BFLA staff members. BFLA would like to thank Mr. Gentle and Ms. Sharmane Garbutt-Garcia for their hard work and The Love Foundation for their donation of stuffed animals.



BFLA After Dark – Ladies Night

The Belize Family Life Association is ending Women's Month with the launching of BFLA After Dark. The series targets a more mature audience with topics that includes sexuality, dating and relationship skills building. The first event to be launched is **Ladies Night: Owning Your Sexuality** it's a fun night for women to unwind and have fun. Other events will include **Singles Mingle Speed Dating & Mixer** and **Pillow Talk: Relationship Skills Building**.

For more information call 203-1018 and ask for Sharmane or Sheena.

BFLA AFTER DARK PRESENTS BFLA After Dark

LADIES NIGHT
Owning Your Sexuality
Leave your inhibitions at the door

FRIDAY
 MARCH 31
 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM
 BFLA HQ
 MERCY LANE

NO COVER CHARGE
 SEXY GAMES
 DRINKS ON SALE
 18+
LADIES ONLY!!



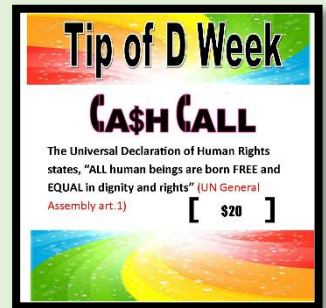
The National AIDS Commission, in collaboration with Hand in Hand Ministries collaborated on a major event *“Unite for the Children”* an HIV/AIDS fundraising event that featured musical entertainment by local popular steel bands; Pantempters and Pandemonium.

The event, which was held at the BFLA Headquarters’ compound in Belize City on Friday February 24th, 2017 from 7:00 pm to midnight, was designed to assist Hand-In-Hand Ministries with their ongoing programs to provide critical services to HIV infected and affected children of Belize.

The NAC and Hand-In-Hand Ministries would like to thank everyone who participated and assisted in the planning and development of the event and its success.



CASH CALL



Get hooked up with **FREE MONEY!** To play all you will need to do is:

1. Register to play by placing a missed call to the helpline (604-1911). You will receive a text with confirmation of your registration and further instructions on how to play.
2. Log on to Facebook and LIKE the CHITCHATBZ Facebook page. This will allow you to see the weekly tips posted along with the cash call amount.
3. Answer your phone when we call and tell us the correct cash call amount.

Like our FB page and check out the Tip of the Week to find out the Ca\$h Call amount. It will keep changing throughout the day so you have to check it often. When we call your number, you tell us the Cash Call amount and you win that cash! That’s it!

CHITCHAT Helpline is a text based helpline service so there is no need to fear that someone will answer and you will be charged for the call. Playing will be absolutely free of cost to you!

The minimum amount a player will win is \$10 and the maximum amount is \$100. This activity will be done at least two times monthly from April to November 2017.

“Empowering Women in a Changing World: Planet 50:50 by 2030!”



Women’s Month was observed this year under the theme, “*Empowering Women in a Changing World: Planet 50:50 by 2030!*” In commemoration of Women’s Month, several activities were implemented country wide by the Women’s Department and other partner agencies/ departments. Some activities were ongoing for the entire month of March namely:

- Special 15% discount that was offered to all Women
- Free Aerobics Classes
- Luk Ya 8, Women in Art Expo and Marketplace

Other activities held during the month included:

- Women’s Economic Empowerment Fair and Women in Art showcasing women artists
- Women’s Empowerment Seminar for Police Officers (country wide)
- “Plotting the Way forward: A critical look at the Women’s Movement and Gender Based Violence” organized by PETAL and POWA
- Women’s Month Girl’s Rally
- Women’s Health Care VIA Screening Services
- Collet Community Bike Rally
- Women’s Session for Ministry of Defense Female Staff



This year, there were several Women Awards held along with the Outstanding Awards that honors women contributing to their communities’ development. These were held in Benque, Punta Gorda and Dangriga organized by Benque House of Culture, Punta Gorda Town Council and Dangriga Town Council respectfully. Women’s Department and the Office of the Special Envoy for Women and Children coordinated the 12th Annual Outstanding Women’s Awards Ceremony which was held at Biltmore Plaza on March 29, 2017 to close this month’s activities. A total of twenty women were honored by the Women’s Department and other agencies. The Women’s department would like to thank all agencies and organizations who organized any activities to celebrate and honor women for their contribution.



OUTSTANDING WOMEN AWARD

The following women, who are also members of the HIV response, were honoured by the Women's Department for their outstanding contribution to their communities and for being role models to girls across the country. These women clearly demonstrate that they were willing to be the change they wanted to see in Belize. Each of them deserves our admiration and respect because they have served Belize well. They have opted to share their gifts and skills so that their communities could benefit. They have opened their hearts to those around them and have gifted them with their own lights.



For over thirty years, Dr Abigail McKay has been professionally involved in human capital development through leadership in areas of economic empowerment, health and human services. Belize has benefited from her expertise in adult training for lower and higher literacy levels, administration, strategic planning, institutional and individual capacity building, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and process and impact evaluation.

While Dr Abigail McKay's credentials are impressive and merit recognition for choosing to use her professional skills for the benefit of Belize and Belizeans, her selection for this award is in acknowledgement and appreciation for her priceless contribution to community development through her voluntary support of numerous community based organizations and initiatives in Belize. She is currently actively involved as President of the Belize History Association, Executive Secretary of the Girl Guides Association, Technical Advisor of Promoting Empowerment Through Awareness for Les/Bi Women (PETAL), and current country representative of the regional consortium of higher educational institutions and universities in the United States of America, Latin America and the Caribbean, UNIPOP. PETAL recognizes with tremendous gratitude Dr McKay's work and contribution as a true advocate for gender justice in Belize.

Ms. Dominique Noralez was born in Belize City on January y 12th 1997, to Charlet Hauze and Albert Noralez.

Dominique attended St. Martin's Primary School and graduated as the Salutatorian with numerous awards and top honours. She went on to St. Catherine's Academy on a scholarship from the Belize Kids First Association. In May of 2014 she graduated with the Catherine's McCauley gold honours and the young writers' award. Presently, she is a Student Servant Leader of St. John's College Junior College majoring in Biology and Chemistry.

In 2012, Dominique became a Youth Ambassador under the US State Departments' Exchange programme and received leadership and advocacy training in United States. Dominique also joined the B.F.L. A's., youth arm (YAM). As President, she serves on the sub-committee of the National Aids Commission for information, education and communication as representative for Youth and Children. Dominique has a love for the arts. She plays the tenor pan with the Pandemonium Steel band. She expresses that the 'pan' for her does more than just make music; it reminds her that out of something that was once used for other things, grand things may be created. For these reasons, it is with great pleasure that she is being awarded as the 2017 Outstanding Young Woman.





Odali Elmita Mai was born on October 7th, 1986 to a Christian Family of Six. She attended San Francisco RC School and later went to Corozal Belize Adventist High School and Belize Adventist Junior College where she graduated with her Associates Degree in General Studies majoring in Arts and Science. She is a free spirit and enjoys doing things that are challenging. Her work experience throughout the country allowed her to forge many bonds of friendship with friends who appreciate her for her professionalism and friendly personality.

Odali became part of the BFLA family in June 2011 as a Sexual & Reproductive Health Field Educator doing Behaviour Change Communication for the prevention of HIV among Key populations in Belize. She took on this position with a passion that her peers and beneficiaries would seek advice from her as a counsellor even after hours. In her free time Odali dedicates her time to her loving son and daughter not to mention that she has a passion for sports and body fitness keeping a healthy life style. Presently Odali is a Christian member the Centro Evangelisco Belice in Orange Walk Town where she also plays a major role.

Saraley Magana was born in Belize City, and grew up in Ladyville. She attended The Ladyville Evangelical Primary School and furthered her studies at Kings College where she graduated in 2004 with a Diploma in Business. In 2007 her life changed when she became a mom to a wonderful son, whom she loves with every breath of her life!

Life to Sara means trusting in God, family and friends. She lives on the happy side of life and like everyone else sometimes with ups and down...sad and sometimes depressed days. She is surrounded by friends who are more in number than her Family.



In 2008 she became a Sexual & Reproductive Health Field Educator doing Behaviour Change Communication for the prevention of HIV among Key populations in Belize with the BFLA. To Sara BFLA is her second home as through her work she has learned so much and feels that this knowledge has allowed her to enrich her life and the life of others. She strives to do right all the time and her motto is "give your best always." Sara loves God, her son David and the beach! Her favourite hobbies are listening to music and hanging out with friends.



Leticia Velasquez affectionately known as Mel has a passion for working with women and girls who are infected or affected directly or indirectly by HIV/AIDS and other infections. Her passion has driven her to be a leader to create change and be a voice for others who find themselves voiceless. "I want to embrace every opportunity that comes my way that will help me to be of support and courage for other young women". Mel became a member of Production Organization for Women in Action-POWA in 2007, as she is a firm believer of its vision and mission and the collaborative efforts it has with other organizations in building a network that helps to create changes for all women in Belize. Mel also believes that as women we are vulnerable in many situations and if we do not empower our women and girls we will crumble quickly.

As a volunteer educator with POWA and BFLA, Mel has educated thousands of women, girls, men and boys. Mel always give of herself without expecting anything in return. She has 14 children, 4 of which she has given birth to the others are her nieces, nephews or those who drop by her house and refuse to leave.

It is for all these reason that BFLA has chosen Leticia Velasquez to be one of its Outstanding Woman of 2017.

Ms. Derricia Castillo-Salazar (Jael) was born to Patricia Sebastian and Derrick Castillo Sr. in the beautiful town of Punta Gorda on January 28, 1988.

She is a military officer (Belize Defence Force Captain), a certified Aircraft Technician, an activist, and a proud lesbian mother of two-year-old CeeJay Zidan Castillo Cee and partner to Cynthia Castillo-Salazar of six years. She is the Co-Founder and current President of Our Circle, a non-governmental organization dedicated to the active inclusion of the LGBT community in Belize. Introduced to the community in 2014, Derricia never thought Our Circle would have created milestones as quickly as it did, already engaging approximately 200 members.



She is also a founding member of the military’s HIV committee that drafted implemented the HIV policy for the BDF to address HIV prevalence and prevent the disease among BDF soldiers. The HIV committee ensures that proper support and care is given to any BDF member infected with HIV or any other STI. She is also very active in offering counselling to BDF living with the virus and identifies other colleagues who can become peer advocates.

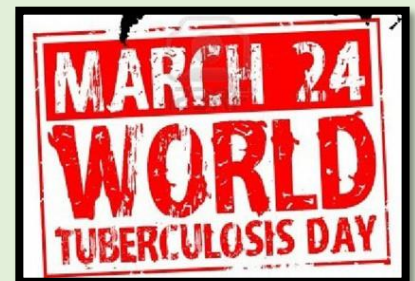
Her motivation stems from the need to create inclusion for the LGBT community. The limitations posed by society due to her sexuality amplify her determination to create visibility and inclusion as she tirelessly works to ensure that safe spaces are created for LGBT members, their families and their allies.

“It has been a struggle, career-wise, family-wise and advocacy-wise; however, with a promising career, a beautiful family, and outreach to almost 200 LGBT Belizeans, the hurdles seem so small and insignificant. With all I do and all I am, I believe that change is imminent and although a slow and tedious journey, in the end Belize will become a true paradise for all.” -Derricia Castillo-Salazar. The US Embassy Belize is proud to select her as the U.S. Department of State “International Women of Courage” Award Nominee.

WORLD TB DAY – MARCH 24TH

World Tuberculosis Day was designed to build public awareness on the issue that tuberculosis remains an epidemic in much of the world, causing the deaths to over one point five million people each year, mostly in developing countries. So, this year countries globally raised awareness through the slogan **“Unite to End TB: Leave no one Behind,”** which seeks to promote access to quality health care for people with TB.

TB is an illness caused by bacteria – first it is latent or ‘asleep’ – where just the presence of the bacteria is in the system, but then it later becomes an active disease for different reasons. So, when this happens it is important to pay attention to symptoms, get tested and take the treatment. In Belize, testing and treatment are available at just about every health facility – and it is free of cost.



Poverty, malnutrition, poor housing and sanitation, compounded by other risk factors such as HIV, tobacco, alcohol use and diabetes, can put people at heightened risk of TB. According to the Ministry of the Health, groups most vulnerable to TB also include children and the elderly due

to a weaker immune system – but in the most recent screenings, a large number were men. The Ministry’s records show that two hundred and sixteen new TB cases were diagnosed in 2016 and thirty-six of those were diagnosed in HIV positive persons. Last year also recorded twenty deaths from those newly diagnosed.

As Belize takes on a holistic national approach to HIV/TB, we recognize the correlation between both illnesses. We encourage everyone to live a healthy and productive life and lifestyle. A healthy Belize is a strong Belize.

“Creating an Enabling Environment for key populations affected by HIV/TB”... A SERIES OF TRAININGS

The Global Fund Project in collaboration with the National AIDS Commission of Belize, hosted a series of trainings under the theme: ***“Creating an Enabling Environment for key populations affected by HIV/TB”*** with key sectors in three Districts in Belize. The training was adapted from the PANCAP Anti-Stigma Toolkits for the Caribbean, which seeks to sensitizing and training key sectors in the response to HIV with the aim of creating an enabling environment for key populations affected by HIV in Belize. The training was implemented with the following key sectors: media, health care administrators/educators, health care providers and judiciary.



Figure 1 Health Care Administrators and Educators from the Belize District who participated in the S&D training

Two round of trainings were held with media personel from Belize, Cayo and Stann Creek District. Several media organizations were present at the two day training including: *Jerimiah Radio*(Central Prison), *Morning Matters T.V Show* the *San Pedro Sun News Paper*, the *Guardain News Paper* and *Wamadali Radio*. The sessions were interactive and informative as the group evaluated the current HIV and Tuberculosis situation in Belize, understanding the causes and effects of stigma and discrimination and HIV and the media’s impact on stigma and discrimination.

The training were well received, so much so that one of the media representative recently hosted a member of the key affected populations and was able to utilize the skills aquired at the training.



Figure 2 Media from the Belize District who participated in the S&D training



Figure 3 Cayo District Administrators and Educators Partaking in a Simulation Activity

Four other trainings were held with health care administrators and Providers from the Belize and Cayo districts. A total of 68 combined representatives from our National Health Insurance Clinics, Belize Family Life Association, The Health Education and Community Participation Bureau, HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing Clinic, Belmopan Hospital and the San Ignacio Hospital were present at these trainings. The invitees benefitted from similar presentations that were presented in the first training however emphasis was placed on the administrators' and providers' role in providing their organizations with the necessary education for a more inclusive service provision for key affected population.

In the second round of workshops, the NAC hosted members from the Judiciary and Law Enforcers in Cayo District". The Police department and representatives from the Office of the Ombudsman attended the workshop where they benefited from several presentations and activities; aimed not only identifying key affected populations as it pertains to HIV, but assessing what can be done to improve the quality of life for all as members of law enforcement.

As a part of the ongoing program, members of the cohort will be invited to a special follow-up training where they will be trained to implement similar trainings with the respective organizations.



SECOND QUARTER UP COMING EVENTS....

The NAC, as a part of this Public Private Partnership; in collaboration with Scotiabank, the Ministry of Health (MOH), BFLA and BTL will once more proudly join PANCAP and twenty other countries in our region to celebrate **Regional Testing Day (RTD) on Friday, June 30th, 2016; under the theme:**

#knowurstatus! This year we intend to expand the reach of the program by utilizing the following eight testing sites: *San Pedro Town (Central Park), Corozal Town (Central Park), Orange Walk Town (Central Park), Belmopan City (Scotiabank Parking), San Ignacio Town (Welcome Center), Dangriga Town (Courts parking Lot), Punta Gorda Town (Central Park) and Belize City (Scotiabank Regent St. Parking Lot).* While we have designated prime locations within the targeted districts to conduct the tests on June 30th, the RTD team has chosen to embark on six weeks (May 15th to June 28th) of On-site testing with the discipline organizations nationwide.