

National Women's Commission

Part 2 The National Gender Policy (Updated Version 2009)

May, 2010

Credits:

This work was commissioned by the National Women's Commission, 2009 and funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Research, compilation and writing by Adele Catzim-Sanchez, Belize ISIS Enterprises Ltd.

Coordinated by Ann-Marie Williams, National Women's Commission.

Table of Contents

Foreword	4
List of Acronyms	5
1.0 Background	6
2.0 Preamble	7
3.0 Policy Vision	9
4.0 Guiding Principles	9
5.0 Policy Purpose	11
6.0 Policy Goal and Priorities	12
6.1 Overall Goal	12
6.2 Policy Priorities:	12
7.0 Cross-Cutting Strategies:	14
8.0 Objectives and Commitments	15
8.1 Health	15
The Situation Analysis (2009):	15
Objectives:	17
Commitments:	18
8.2 Education	20
The Situation Analysis (2009):	20
Objectives:	23
Commitments:	23
8.3 Wealth and Employment Generation	26
The Situation Analysis (2009):	27
Objectives:	29
Commitments:	30
8.4 Gender Based Violence	33
The Situation Analysis (2009):	34
Objectives:	37
Commitments:	37
8.5 Power and Decision-Making	39
The Situation Analysis (2009):	39
Objectives:	40
Commitments:	40
9.0 The Institutional Framework	41
9.1 Key Roles and Responsibilities:	41
10.0 Resource Mobilization	44
11.0 Monitoring and Evaluation	44
11. Glossary of Terms	46

Foreword

List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents
HIV	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MED	Ministry of Economic Development
MHD	Ministry of Human Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NAP	National AIDS Programme
NCFC	National Committee for Families and Children
NPESAP	National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan
NWC	National Women's Commission
PLWHAs	People Living with HIV/AIDS
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS

1.0 Background

Historically, women in Belize fought for greater rights in the political, social and economic arena. They brought greater attention to health issues in the 1920s and 1930s when they formed the Black Cross Nurses.¹ They also worked alongside their husbands and brothers during the labour movement of the 1930s. Numerous women took to the streets to advocate for higher wages from the 1930s to the 1960s.² Women also worked as educators who dedicated themselves to building this nation. Yet, little visibility was given to these women and their contributions to development in Belize. Women in Belize, like women worldwide, were effectively invisible.

Massive international outcry for women's empowerment prompted the United Nations to hold its First World Conference on Women (WCW) in 1975. The rights of women took centre stage on the international arena and this formed the springboard for a conscious women's movement in Belize.

In 1975 the United Nations dedicated a Decade to Women's Empowerment (1975-1985). This prompted a slow evolution of gender programming in Belize. In the public sector this evolution began with the establishment of a Women's Desk in 1978, followed by a Women's Bureau in 1981 and eventually a Women's Department in 1986. While its focus was initially on traditional economic activities for women, the Women's Department later transformed its agenda to respond to major gender issues. This includes gender-based violence and women's overall economic empowerment.

A National Women's Commission (NWC) was established in 1982 as Government's national advisory body on gender related issues. The NWC functioned mostly on a voluntary or part-time basis until 2008 when it recruited its first Executive Director. The NWC now champions Belize's National Gender Policy and reports on Belize's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In the 1970s and 1980s, parallel movements were taking place within the non-government sector. Young women pioneered the women's movement in this non-government arena. On the heels of the First World Conference on Women in 1975, they felt the time had come for breaking legal, cultural, economic and social barriers to their empowerment. Once an informal grouping, they later (in the 1980s) succeeded in establishing important non-government organizations dedicated to women's empowerment. These were the Belize Organization for Women and Development

¹ Shoman, Assad. (Reprinted, 2000). **Thirteen Chapters of a History of Belize**. The Angelus Press. Belize.

² Ibid.

(BOWAND), the Belize Rural Women's Association (BRWA), the Breast is Best League (BIB), the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) and Women Against Violence (WAV). These organizations created public awareness on gender related issues, advocated for legal reforms, and mobilized greater resources for women's empowerment programmes. They survived into the 1990s before a majority of them dissolved. However, the issues they promoted were kept alive by others and are now mainstreamed into existing policies, laws and action plans. A Women's Issues Network (WIN Belize) was established in 1993 to advance the agenda of gender equality in Belize.

In 1990, during the era of a strong women's movement, Belize became a states party to the CEDAW (1990). CEDAW is a legally binding International Convention. As a signatory, Belize reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on progress in meeting its CEDAW commitments. Belize's First and Second Periodic Reports were presented to this Committee in June, 1999 and its Third and Fourth Periodic Reports were presented in September, 2005. Reporting on CEDAW occurs every 5 years.

In 2002 Belize developed its first National Gender Policy. The Policy outlined five major policy priorities for gender empowerment in Belize. Gender issues presented in a Situation Analysis of Gender in Belize (2002) and concluding comments of the CEDAW Committee (1999) formed the basis for actions outlined in the National Gender Policy (2002). At the end of 2008, the NWC decided to review and validate this National Gender Policy to ensure its continued relevance in the Belizean context and ensure its responsiveness to the CEDAW comments of 2005.

Since 2002, when the last National Gender Policy was approved, Belize has benefited from improved programming, service delivery and legislation that support gender equality, equity and women's empowerment. A scaling up of these initiatives will accelerate the achievement of this national goal and ensure that they remain consistent with both national and international gender-related commitments.

This Updated National Gender Policy therefore builds on the achievements of the previous Policy. It is based on an updated "Situation Analysis of Gender Issues"³ in Belize and is aimed at continuing national efforts to achieve gender equality and gender equity.

2.0 Preamble

Recalling that the Preamble to the Constitution of Belize (1981) guarantees gender equality⁴ for all its citizens and provides them protection from discrimination on the grounds of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex ;⁵

³ Catzim, Adele. (2010). Situation Analysis of Gender Issues in Belize. National Women's Commission and supported by UNDP and UNICEF.

⁴ Stated in the Preamble to the Constitution.

⁵ In Chapter II, 3, 16 of the Constitution of Belize.

Recalling that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) sets out a charter of basic human rights to which everyone is entitled without distinction or discrimination of any kind, including race, colour, sex or other status;

Recalling that CEDAW (1979) is a legally binding International Agreement that gives legitimacy to “women’s human rights claims and promotes equality in all areas of life”⁶ and that this means that states parties to the Convention must introduce legal and policy changes that end discrimination against women and ensure women’s access to de jure and de facto equality;

Recalling that the Convention of Belem Do Para (1994), also known as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, is a legally binding instrument developed by Organization of American States (OAS). This Convention recognizes violence against women in both the public and private spheres, as a violation of their basic human rights. This Convention also reaffirms women’s basic human rights to the recognition, enjoyment, exercise and protection of all human rights and freedoms embodied in regional and international human right instruments;⁷

Recalling that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) is a legally binding international instrument that protects children below 18 years and that this Convention recognizes that children also have human rights. This includes their right to survival, to develop to the fullest, to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation, and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life;⁸

Recalling that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) reaffirms women’s rights as human rights; It declares that “women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace for women everywhere”. It reaffirms that these rights are in “the interest of all humanity”⁹ and calls on states parties to intensify efforts aimed at achieving gender equality;

Recalling that Belize has signed and ratified numerous ILO Conventions that guarantee women and men’s right to dignified employment and to non-discrimination in the world of work;

Recalling that the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) led to the Millennium Development Goals (2001) which set out specific development targets to be achieved by the year 2015, including specific targets for the achievement of gender equality and

⁶ See (2004). CEDAW Made Easy. Question and Answer Booklet, UNIFEM

⁷ See (1994). Convention of Belem Do Para. Articles 3 and 4. OAS

⁸ See (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. United Nations

⁹ See (1985). Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

women's empowerment, as well as gender equality in the advancement of all the MDGs.

Recognizing that together, these commitments are designed to advance national and international progress in the achievement of de jure and de facto gender equality and equity;

The Government of Belize undertakes this National Gender Policy as the framework through which these rights are translated into the achievement of de jure and de facto gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in Belize. The National Gender Policy is founded on principles outlined in the Belize Constitution and in International Conventions and Agreements signed and ratified by the Government of Belize.

3.0 Policy Vision

This National Gender Policy is based on a vision of:

"A society in which all men and women, boys and girls are able to achieve their full potential through the enjoyment of their human rights; live together in mutual respect, dignity and harmony; and are equal partners in as they participate in services and resources for realizing and sustaining their economic, social, political, and cultural development for equal enjoyment of all."

4.0 Guiding Principles

Recognizing Belize's international and national commitments to gender equality and equity, this National Gender Policy will be guided by the following key principles:

Human Rights: State policies, regulation, programmes and allocation of resources must be based on the realization of human rights for all. This includes the fact that women's rights are human rights and that women, men, boys and girls have a right to live free of discrimination and violence and enjoy full participation in, and benefits from, all aspects of social, economic and political life.

Gender Equality: State policies, regulations and programmes should explicitly aim to identify and eliminate gender-based discrimination in the allocation of resources, benefits, or access to services. This includes a women and men's right to equality of opportunity, of access, and/or of outcomes.

Gender Equity: State policies, regulations, programmes and allocation of resources must ensure fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men, boys and girls. The concept of equity recognizes that women and men have different needs and power, and that these differences should be

identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes. This extends to men and women of all ages, geographic location and ethnicities.

Women's Empowerment: State policies, regulations, programmes and allocation of resources must include specific, deliberate actions that identify and give redress to power imbalances and gives women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Women's empowerment is a vital aspect of human centred, sustainable development and the realization of human rights for all.

Gender Mainstreaming: To ensure that development actors and practitioners do not assume that men and women are all the same, they must be an obligation to engage in evidence-based policy making that mainstreams a gender perspective into all stages of national policies, regulations and programmes.

Respect for Diversity: Men and women in Belize are not a homogeneous group. Rather, the population is comprised of persons of all ages who come from diverse races, cultures, ethnicities, faiths, sexual orientation, socio-economic situations and behavioural lifestyles. All policies and programmes must therefore reflect this reality of diversity among the Belizean populace and customary, religious and cultural practices must be subject to the right of equality.

Family Strengthening: Family life lies at the core of creating a healthy, productive and well functioning society. Family strengthening must be recognized as one of the most important strategies for addressing gender inequalities and inequities throughout the life cycle.

Best Interests of the Child: The best interests of the child must be a priority in the establishment of all policies, programmes and decisions that impact on development in Belize. This approach recognizes the fundamental role of gender socialization on the development of the child and on child's later gender role expectations and behaviours as an adult.

Full Participation of Women and Men: For citizens to successfully exercise their human rights they require access to multiple spaces for participation in the development process. Spaces must be designed to allow for the active, meaningful participation of men, women, boys and girls of diverse backgrounds in the policy development, planning, monitoring and evaluation cycle.

Good Governance: Good governance promotes development and the eradication of poverty.¹⁰ Good governance recognizes the rights of women and men to participation and legitimacy of voice as well as the right to benefit from strategic leadership, long-term visioning, performance measurements, accountability and equity and justice in the rule of law.

¹⁰ By Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations. Also reflected in the UN Millennium Declaration (2000).

Accountability of Outcomes: Rights entail corresponding duties and obligations. As a signatory to the Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and various ILO Conventions the Government of Belize is accountable for progress made in achieving gender equity, equality and women's empowerment among its citizens, who are the holders of these rights.

Coordination and Harmonization: Gender equality, equity and women's empowerment requires a multi-sectoral approach to development. This includes collaborative planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as the alignment of policies and programmes with national and international commitments.

Human Centred Development: Human centred development remains at the core of development planning that will benefit existing and future generations. A human centred development approach will ensure that people, regardless of their age, sex, race, ethnicity or creed, are allowed to participate fully in the development process. This approach ensures that advancements in gender equality, equity and women's empowerment set the stage and the pace for the further achievement of human rights for all.

5.0 Policy Purpose

This National Gender Policy sets out to achieve the following general objectives: To:

- protect the human rights of women and men as enshrined in the Belize Constitution and in relevant International Conventions which Belize has ratified;
- ensure national accountability for commitments made in national policies and programmes as well as relevant International Conventions, particularly CEDAW, which Belize has ratified;
- provide national policy-makers, civil society organizations and international development agencies with a reference point for recognizing and addressing gender issues and making gender responsive, human rights-oriented policy decisions.;
- address the fundamental causes of gender inequality and inequity and place the family and the community at the centre of this process of change;
- act as a basis for transforming gender relations within the family and the community, and across all levels of public and private institutions;
- enhance and support national efforts towards human-centred development in which women and men participate fully and from which they benefit equally;

- ensure the involvement of men in all aspects of productive and reproductive life and recognize their important role within the family and as agents of change in the wider society;
- ensure that development policies, programmes and related budgets are gender responsive, human rights-oriented and provide real spaces and opportunities for de jure and de facto gender equality and equity;
- act as a basis for establishing a legal framework that supports and facilitates the achievement of gender equality and equity;
- promote and facilitate women’s and men’s equal access to, and control over, productive resources, services and opportunities;
- act as a framework for recognizing and valuing women’s and men’s productive and reproductive roles and how this contributes to national development;
- redress imbalances that arise from existing gender inequalities which hinder the advancement of gender equality and equity;
- promote the collection and gender analysis of sex-disaggregated data so it can be used in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development plans and programmes; and
- clarify and establish an institutional framework for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of national policies and programmes from a gender perspective.

6.0 Policy Goal and Priorities

6.1 Overall Goal

The overarching goal of the National Gender Policy is:

“To advance the achievement of de jure and de facto gender equality and equity in Belize.”

6.2 Policy Priorities:

These five policy priorities reflect the updated strategic focus of the National Gender Policy (2002). They build on past achievements, are supportive of ongoing national efforts and recognize that further progress can be enhanced based on what has already been achieved.

The five policy priorities are:

Policy Priorities	Special Areas of Attention
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investing in primary health care programmes • integrating sexual and reproductive health as a national development priority • expanding injury prevention and treatment services geared to the special needs of women, men and children • creating a comprehensive mental health package of services delivered at the local level • expanding preventive health education services • increasing access to health care for rural communities • increasing male access to sexual and productive health and primary health care services
Education and Skills Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elimination of gender based discrimination at all levels of the education system • building opportunities for lifelong learning that is holistic, gender responsive, integrated and geared towards sustainable national development • increasing support for “second chance” programmes for boys and girls who drop out of school and developing incentives for them to stay in school • using formal and informal education to transform gender relations with the family, the community and in society
Wealth and Employment Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminating discrimination against women and men workers, including workers in the informal sectors • expanding social safety nets for vulnerable women, men and children • creating greater equity in child maintenance provisions • increasing women’s access to land, credit and business development • creating gender equity in labour force participation and employment • mainstreaming gender into disaster management programmes
Violence Producing Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing family support systems that transform gender relations • expanding and strengthening child protection programmes • creating psycho-social support mechanisms and resources for survivors of gender-based violence • building institutional capacity to address gender based violence, crime and guarantee access to justice
Power and Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing women’s participation in decision-making positions • build institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming of all relevant policies, strategies and plans of action • implement gender budgeting across the public sector and across civil society organizations

7.0 Cross-Cutting Strategies:

These overarching strategies cut across all policy areas. They are aimed at facilitating the achievement of the goals outlined above:

- Mainstream gender into all national policies, programmes and projects to facilitate the achievement of human centred and sustainable national development.
- Engage in legal reform to ensure de jure and de facto gender equality and equity.
- Build human resource capacity for active participation (at the policy, technical and administrative levels) in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the achievement of gender equality and equity.
- Conduct gender sensitive research (disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and geographic location) and gender analysis to provide evidence for policies and programmes that are gender responsive.
- Advocate for a supportive social, economic, political and cultural policy and programming environment for the achievement of the goals of this Policy.
- Foster social and community development through improvement of the quality of family life and the social transformation of discriminatory gender dynamics within families.
- Facilitate multi-sectoral and inter-sectoral coordination, collaboration and networking in the public and private sectors and among international cooperation agencies, to maximize human and financial resources and reduce inefficiency and ineffectiveness.
- Mobilize resources from both public and private sector sources, as well as from national and international development agencies and organizations, for the optimum achievement of the goals of this Policy.
- Monitor and evaluate identified national policies, programmes, projects and laws to ensure that they are gender sensitive and gender responsive.

8.0 Objectives and Commitments

8.1 Health

Links with International Commitments:	Links with National Commitments:
CEDAW Article 12 MDG Goals 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, UNGASS 2001 Universal Access ICPD + 10	National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (2009-2013) Strategic Thrust 3 the National Health Agenda (2007-2011) and Strategic Plan Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2002) and Strategic Plan (2006-2010) the National HIV Policy (2006), the HIV Policy for the World of Work (2006) and the National Strategic Plan for a Multi- sectoral Response to HIV (2006-2011), The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents 2004-2015 (Health Chapter) The Breastfeeding Policy Imagine the Possibilities: Keeping Belizeans Productive and Healthy (2008- 2013)

The Situation Analysis (2009):

The health workforce is comprised primarily of women workers, is highly unstable and is replete with medical professionals from foreign medical brigades who are hired to fill local human resource shortages. The doctor to population ratio is 18 per 100,000 population which is below the WHO recommended 25 per 100,000 population. The delivery of primary health care is especially challenged by this human resource situation.

The delivery of health services is decentralized to health regions but rural access to health care is still a major challenge for both men and women. Health care services are not integrated with different services delivered on different days within health facilities across the country.

The delivery of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services focuses primarily on maternal and child health (0 to 5 years). A well articulated family and community health programme that provides comprehensive SRH and other primary health services to both men and women across the life cycle does not exist. Special most-at-risk population (MARPS) or vulnerable groups are not targeted under the current health care system.

Although the SRH Policy recognizes adolescents' right to SRH services, public sector services are still not designed to meet the SRH needs of this population. The teenage pregnancy rate has reduced since the 1990s but remains high. Adolescents access the health system for repeat (more than one) pregnancies. Complications due to pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium are a major cause of hospitalization for children 15-19 years old. A significant number of girls ages 10-14 are also hospitalized for this reason. This demonstrates that teenage mothers are not receiving appropriate child protection (in cases of sexual abuse) and/or SRH services to prevent early second pregnancies.

Family planning services are not articulated as a clear strategy for poverty mitigation or for the reduction of teenage pregnancies. Rather it is promoted primarily as an HIV reduction strategy. Young women therefore report a high unmet need for contraceptives. Adolescent men report accessing condoms from supermarkets and other private sector agencies and not from the public sector.

Young women ages 15 to 24 continue to show approximately twice the HIV transmission rate as men of that same age group. This pattern is reversed for women in the older age groups (40 years and over) who have a much lower HIV rate than men of the older age groups. This epidemiological profile illustrates the impact of intergenerational sex between older men and young women.

Children's overall health and development is correlated with the education level of their mothers but no such correlation exists for the education level of their fathers. This shows that investments in women's education have a multiplier effect on the development of their children.

The under 5 mortality rate is higher for boys than for girls. The three leading causes of death for children less than 1 year were slow foetal growth, foetal malnutrition and immaturity, hypoxia, birth asphyxia and other respiratory conditions, and congenital anomalies. The main causes of death for children 1 to 4 years fluctuated greatly and were related mostly to child safety issues and communicable diseases. Links are made between these main causes of death, poverty and child neglect. Not much research takes place to understand the role of environmental teratogens on fetal alcohol syndrome, cancers, disabilities and learning disorders in Belize. Programmes to detect and respond to these issues are virtually non-existent.

Adolescent and older men die mostly from risk-taking behaviours such as transport accidents, injuries, whether accidentally or purposefully inflicted and HIV/AIDS. Women die mostly from chronic illness such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension and heart disease. The gender dimensions of these morbidity and mortality factors require greater study, analysis and intervention.

Women tend to be the primary caregivers of children, people living with HIV/AIDS, people with chronic illnesses, older persons and the mentally ill regardless of whether those needing care are male or female. Women with no economic or social support

systems have to balance this reproductive role with their productive role of economic provider". Women who are single parents are especially disadvantaged.

Men tend to report higher rates of alcohol use and abuse than women. Men and also report more symptoms associated with alcohol dependence. Substance abuse in Belize has been associated with risk taking and aggressive behaviours that result in STI/HIV transmission, gender based violence and transport accidents. Substance abuse is also a major cause of mental health conditions affecting men. A Draft Substance Abuse Policy has been developed and awaits submission to Cabinet for approval.

Women tend to seek health care services, including SRH and mental health services, earlier than men. By the time men seek services their condition is usually so advanced that it requires hospitalization. As a result more men are admitted to the mental health hospital and more men die from AIDS. Men report that they are not comfortable seeking health care services due to the current structure of the services and the fact that most nurses are women. Socialized concepts of masculinity also impact on men's low rate of access to preventive care services.

Mental health issues for men tend to be related to the use of substances (drugs and alcohol) and to behavioural issues more than women. Mental health diagnoses for women tend to be related to mood, anxiety, relationship and abuse issues. These diagnostic categories are consistent with the gender role expectations of men and women in the Belizean society. Mental healthcare is one of the greatest gaps in health services in Belize. A Draft Mental Health Policy has been drafted and a draft revised Mental Health Act has been developed. Both await approval by Cabinet. The Act will need to be passed in Parliament.

Objectives:

- To safeguard the rights of all persons to survival and the chance to maximize their full human potential, with special attention given to primary health care and the establishment of a Family and Community Health Programme.
- To ensure that healthcare services are delivered in an integrated and decentralized manner and focuses on the physical and mental health and well-being of women and men across the life cycle.
- To safeguard the rights of women, men, girls and boys to sexual and reproductive health information, education and quality health services that are affordable and accessible to them and that meet their gender specific needs across the life cycle.
- To open meaningful spaces for women and men in both urban and rural communities to participate in expressing their healthcare needs and in reporting on the quality of services provided.

Commitments:

The Government will:

- Strengthen the primary health care system, including access to more medical professionals, access to equipment and supplies and access to resources for the sustained delivery of community education and outreach programmes. Services should be designed based on the particular health needs of each community and on the gender-related need of women and men throughout the life cycle.
- Develop and deliver, in a decentralized manner, a comprehensive Family and Community Health Programme. This includes services for adolescents, people in their reproductive years and older persons. Services are also to be targeted at special groups such as men who have sex with men, male and female sex workers, victims of gender based violence, people with disabilities and people with mental illness.
- Prioritize the implementation of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2002) and Strategic Action Plans. Access to correct and appropriate use of commodities in relation to contraceptives shall be considered a “public good”. Take special legal and infrastructure measures to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups (sex workers, mobile workers, men who have sex with men, transgender populations, incarcerated populations, people with STIs and HIV, rural populations, people with disabilities and older persons) and adolescents to sexual and reproductive health information and services. A life cycle approach to sexual and reproductive health will be development and maintained.
- Develop policies and programmes targeting men’s (all ages) increased access to preventive and primary health care services, especially sexual and reproductive health and mental health services.
- Review and amend the Criminal Code to decriminalize the early termination of pregnancies.
- Conduct research to understand the health impacts of teratogens on the development of children during pregnancy and after childbirth. Areas of the country in which there are large-scale agriculture and aquaculture activities are to be prioritized for research. An action plan shall be developed to address public health issues that arise from such research.
- Take a decentralized, integrated and chronic disease approach in the provision of STI/HIV/TB care and treatment services within the health system across the country. Special attention should be given to the scaling up of comprehensive

STI prevention and health care services since this is a critical component of HIV reduction efforts.

- Provide adequate resources for the implementation of programmes, both within the healthcare setting, within urban and rural communities and within the world of work, for the prevention and management of chronic, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension and heart disease. Both women and men are to be targeted, with special attention given to women and men over 40 years. The gender dimensions of these chronic illnesses are to be highlighted and addressed in all related policies, strategies and action plans.
- Develop infrastructure and human resource capacity for addressing the health needs of older women and men. This includes the development of geriatric healthcare services across the country.
- Implement strategies aimed at increasing household and water safety for children of all ages, including the clear articulation of support for children in single parent households, children living in poverty and other vulnerable children.
- Implement legislation and related strategies aimed at increasing road safety. Preventive strategies are to focus primarily on men drivers since they are significantly involved in road traffic accidents. Infrastructure development and capacity building for the enforcement of legislation is to be prioritized.
- Develop gender responsive mental health programme that include diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation for women, men and children with mental health issues. An integrated, human rights, community based approach will be adopted with institutionalization being used as a last resort. The national mental health policy and legal framework will be amended to reflect this new approach. A code of practice for mental health workers, especially mental health counsellors, will be developed and enforced.
- Pass the draft Substance Abuse Policy and invest in prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes across the country. Ensure that the gender dimensions of substance abuse issues are addressed. Linkages between substance abuse and chronic illnesses, mental health, transport safety, HIV transmission and gender-based violence are to be clearly articulated in a national multi-sectoral response.
- Ensure that women, men and children living in poverty have access to social safety nets, including national health insurance schemes that guarantee their access to health care services.
- Provide financial support to civil society organizations that address critical health related issues affecting women and children, especially those that provide

access to protective environments for pregnant teenagers and young women who are vulnerable to, or are victims of, gender-based violence and/or HIV.

- Design a gender sensitive research agenda must also include a gender analysis of health data and of the outcomes of health related policies and programmes.
- Build institutional and human resource capacity for the gender responsive implementation of all health related policies and programmes that impact on the well-being of women and men across the life cycle.
- Establish a mechanism for redress of any violations of human rights, as stated in this Policy, regarding access to health care and the provision and treatment of health care services. This includes violations such as the promotion of stigma and discrimination in both public and private health related institutions.
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of health related policies and plans to ensure that they are gender responsive and meet the age specific needs of the population. This includes related existing policies and plans as well as any new policies and plans that are developed to address health related issues. Where needed, existing policies and plans will be updated to remain consistent with the provisions of this National Gender Policy.

8.2 Education

Links with International Commitments:	Links with National Commitments:
Universal Declaration of Human Rights UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education CEDAW Article 10 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29 Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 Commitments of Health and Education Ministers to HIV prevention through Education	National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (2009-2012) Strategic Thrust 1 and 3 The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (NPA) 2004-2015 (Education Chapter) The National Education Policy Direction 2008 - 2013 The National Health and Family Life (HFLE) Policy and Curriculum Imagine the Possibilities: Better Schools, Better Citizens, Better Belize (2008-2013) National Child Labour Policy (2009)

The Situation Analysis (2009):

Preschool education has expanded exponentially over the last five years and the Ministry of Education is taking a more integrated approach to early childhood

development. However, human resource challenges impact on the quality of pre-school education. A lack of coordination and collaboration with other social sector ministries is also a major challenge in providing holistic services to pre-school children. A draft Early Childhood Development Policy has been developed. It is to be updated and submitted to Cabinet for approval.

Children continue to perform poorly in primary and secondary school examinations. These results reflect a long-standing issue regarding the quality of primary education in Belize. The delivery of education is not standardized therefore children in rural communities are placed at a disadvantage.

Boys at the primary and secondary school levels have a higher retention and drop-out rate than girls. This illustrates the need to focus on the gender dimensions of education attainment at the primary and secondary school levels.

School retention and drop-out rates have been linked to the high cost of education, hunger, high poverty levels, low levels of teacher training, lack of social support systems for vulnerable children and their families and learning disabilities that go undiagnosed and untreated.

Teachers across the country report that children go to school hungry. Hunger affects their energy levels, their ability to concentrate and their learn potential. A 2007 study on child malnutrition in Belize states that, “programs need to target the critical periods of child development, when irreversible damage has not yet occurred.” To enhance the country’s human resource capacity requires that inter-linkages between health and education programs be clearly articulated and that social sector programming becomes more truly integrated and child centred.

Despite efforts to increase teacher training programmes, the percentage of trained teachers at the primary education level shows a decreasing trend. Differences in the percentage of trained teachers in urban and rural locations, though small, still reveal a greater need to improve the quality of education delivered within rural schools. Similarly, at the secondary school level a downward trend in the percentage of trained teachers is also evident. While this downward trend affects both urban and rural schools, rural schools are more disadvantaged than urban school. In rural areas, only one-quarter or 25% of teachers working within secondary schools are qualified to teach at that level.

Despite the high primary and secondary school drop-out rates, marginal investments have been made in “second chance” programmes that help young men and women to stay in school, go back to school or learn a marketable skill. Current “second chance” programmes are implemented primarily by non-government organizations. These programmes help early school leavers to become productive citizens and help them to stay away from criminal activities. It also provides them with an opportunity to re-think their lives and re-invent themselves to create a more positive future. Yet, these programmes have not been articulated nationally as contributors to crime reduction or to creating productive citizens. Rather, they are perceived as marginal to overall crime prevention programming, employment generation and national development.

The Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ITVET) has increased young men and women's access to technical and vocational education. Since 2006, the enrolment of young women shows an increasing trend. ITVET programmes are not designed to play the role of "second chance" programmes for young men and women. Rather they are designed to develop a cadre of highly qualified technicians who can meet Belize's technological needs and who have the capacity to advance to tertiary education in Belize or abroad.

A National Resource Centre for Inclusive Education (NRCIE) advocates for the mainstreaming of children who have special needs. Decisions regarding mainstreaming are made based on the child's type of disability and learning capacity. The Centre assists in diagnosing learning disabilities. NRCIE trains teachers to manage special needs children so that these children can maximize their learning potential. A Special Olympics Programme is organized to ensure greater integration of special needs children in recreation and sporting activities. An emerging issue for children with special needs is their access to SRH services. Because of a small pool of trained human resources, NRCIE is limited in the scope of services it can provide. Services are primarily urban based and focused on the Belize District.

The implementation of the HFLE Curriculum is affected by a reluctance (on the part of the catholic school authority) to fully implement the sexual and reproductive health component of the curriculum. Furthermore, teachers across denominational school authorities indicate their discomfort and lack of experience in discussing sexual and reproductive health issues with their students. They prefer to engage other agencies who they feel are better equipped to deliver this information. Many children are therefore not receiving the sexual and reproductive health information as outlined in the HFLE Curriculum. This situation persists even in the context of teenage pregnancy, commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, and high HIV transmission rates, especially among young women.

Historical inequities in the distribution of education resources exacerbate existing gender and social disparities in the education system.

There is an overwhelming consensus across the country that education in Belize needs to be completely transformed to respond to the development needs of the country. A National Education Summit (2006) and a Conference on the "Unspoken Gender Dimensions" of Education (2007) made comprehensive proposals for enhancing education in Belize. They proposed the need to not only focus on establishing more classrooms, increasing staff size and equipping schools. They recommended an increased focus on addressing the "environmental issues that stand in the way of attending school" and that hamper learning. The Education Summitⁱ conducted in 2004 called for social issues like crime, hunger, poverty and gender socialization and learning disabilities to have a more central place in the discussion on how to improve the education system.

More specific recommendations included the need to re-distribute education financing, address poverty in targeted communities, create incentives to attract and retain qualified teachers, reduce the student to teacher ratio, expand vocational education, re-introduce gardening, integrate the expressive arts, expand continuing education opportunities, build character education and civic pride, create an integrated student support system and align the curriculum with national development priorities.

Objectives:

- To develop the human resource capacity for achieving the national vision for human centred, sustainable development in which women and men work together as equal partners.
- To redefine education as a process of lifelong learning and to act as a primary vehicle for transforming gender relations across the life cycle.
- To recognize education as a determinant of health and citizen productivity.
- To protect the rights of women, men, boys and girls to accessible and affordable education at least to the secondary school level.
- To increase non-traditional training opportunities for young and adult women and men in both formal and continuing education programmes.
- To prioritize parenting education and gender socialization throughout all levels of society, including the family, community and national levels.

Commitments:

The Government will:

- Strengthen the legal framework to ensure greater financial and programme accountability from all educational institutions that receive public funds and mandate that they abide by all the provisions of this National Gender Policy.
- Mainstream gender issues in the implementation of existing and new education related policies, regulations and programmes, including the removal of gender stereotypes from textbooks used in primary and secondary schools.
- Implement strategies that address the gender dimensions of primary and secondary school enrolment, retention and completion rates across the country. Priority is to be given to the implementation of recommendations developed at the Education Summit (2004) and the Conference on the Unspoken Dimensions of Gender (UNICEF Belize, November, 2007).

- Expand mandatory free education to the secondary school level. Special measures are to be taken to ensure that children living in poverty can fulfil their aspirations for completion of at least these 12 years of education. This includes the provision of school feeding programmes, conditional cash-transfers and other measures as outlined in national poverty elimination strategies and action plans.
- Invest human and financial resources in programmes, whether in the public or non-government sector, that provide children, young women and men a “second chance” to complete their formal education training and/or learn a marketable skill.
- Invest human and financial resources in programmes aimed at inclusive education for children and adults with learning disabilities and physical impairments. This includes increasing resources for the diagnosis and treatment of children with disabilities and learning disorders across the country.
- Encourage the private and public sectors to support on-the-job training programs for men, women and adolescents and foster private sector grants, scholarships or other funding of tertiary level education.
- Expand courses at vocational and technical institutions, in partnership with the private sector, to develop a skilled labour force of men and women who can respond to the changing needs of current and new industries. Include strategies to de-stigmatize technical-vocational programmes.
- Develop special measures that encourage and support girls and women who wish to enrol in non-traditional subject areas at the secondary and tertiary education levels, including, but not limited to, those provided at the Institute of Technology and Vocational Education Training (ITVET).
- Incorporate technology and new audio-visual modes of learning into the classroom at all levels, to ensure that girls and boys are equipped to meet the demands of this global technological era.
- Strengthen support structures such as the national library system, so that it can be an active partner in promoting reading and language skills among girls and boys both within and outside the classroom setting.
- Strengthen the implementation and monitoring of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum across public, quasi-public and private schools in both urban and rural areas across the country. Special attention will be given to ensuring the full and effective institutionalization and delivery of a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health curriculum within the HFLE curriculum.

- Provide adequate incentives for the retention of qualified male and female teachers and ensure the more equitable distribution of human and financial resources in urban and rural schools across the country.
- Develop legislation that prohibits all forms of discrimination and violence within the education system, including legal provisions that ensure child protection, promote alternative forms of discipline and prohibit the dismissal of child and adolescent girls and boys from public, quasi-public and privately owned primary and secondary schools for HIV and pregnancy related reasons. Furthermore, all cases of STI/HIV transmission through sexual contact and pregnancy for children under 16 should be treated as the result of a criminal act (as per existing legislation) for which the child requires special protection instead of further victimization.
- Develop special programmes to increase the capacity of teachers, administrators and counsellors at the preschool, primary and secondary school levels, to identify and respond to the child protection needs of their students. Special emphasis is to be placed on child nutrition, all forms of child abuse, gender-based violence, other types of crimes and behaviours related to these. Also increase their capacity to make the links between the above-stated issues and gender relations at home and in society and help children to also make these links.
- Establish a mental health support mechanism for teachers. These mechanisms should allow them to address their mental health needs, build their capacity for implementing child-friendly strategies in the classroom and enable them with skills for managing child protection issues within the school environment.
- Develop and implement strategies that ensure school safety for both children and teachers. This includes support for the required infrastructure upgrades and staffing. Support is also to be provided for the expansion and strengthening of the “safe schools programme” in Belize. Formalize the collaboration with relevant public sector departments, civil society and international organizations for education on child protection and safety related issues.
- Create opportunities for life-long learning, with a focus on literacy training and formal and informal education in both urban and rural areas for adult women and men over 21 years. This training will be linked with the market demand for skilled labour and with Belize’s national human resource development needs. Develop safe child care programmes to ensure that women and men with reproductive responsibilities have equal access to these opportunities.
- Develop and implement strategies aimed at achieving equity in the allocation of financial resources to primary and secondary schools across the country.

- At three-year intervals, review the quality of the primary, secondary and tertiary level school curricula, including the delivery of the curricula, to determine their relevance to achieving the country’s national vision of gender equality and equity.
- Integration of the expressive arts, sports, organic gardening, technology and environmental protection into the curricula at all levels of the education system to ensure that children benefit from holistic education that will allows them to build their multiple intelligences, value the natural environment and develop a healthy self-esteem and love of learning.
- Establish a mechanism for redress of all forms of gender based discrimination with the educational system. This includes a grievance process through the National Teachers Commission as well as legal assistance by the government for advancing cases of discrimination through the justice system.
- Provide adequate resources for the expansion and more effective roll out of the Parent and Community Empowerment Programme (COMPAR). Prioritize gender socialization education within the COMPAR curriculum. Link this programme with HECOPAB and other similar public sector and civil society community education initiatives to ensure a comprehensive approach to advancing gender equity and equality at the family and community levels.
- Develop non-traditional strategies to stimulate open dialogue by men, for men, regarding the gender role socialization process and how this impacts on their quality of life at home, in their communities and in society. Use these spaces to document and understand men’s perspective on gender role socialization and develop recommendations on how best to increase men’s involvement and participation in the family on an equal basis with women.
- Collaborate with faith-based organizations so that they can become active participants in the process of examining and transforming gendered patterns of thinking and behaviour that contribute to gender related discrimination and gender inequalities and inequities across society.

8.3 Wealth and Employment Generation

Links to International Commitments:	Links to National Commitments:
CEDAW, Article 11 ILO Conventions No. 58, 100, 103, 111, 138, 156, 182 and 183 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2005) Hyogo Framework for Action	National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (2009-2013), Strategic Thrust 1,4 and 5 Medium Term Macro-Economic Strategy (2010-2013) National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents: Investing in our Children 2004-2015 (Family Chapter)

	National HIV Policy for the World of Work (2006) National Occupation Health and Safety (OSH) Act Imagine the Possibilities: Social Sector Investment and Good Governance, Law and Order (2008-2013) National Disaster Preparedness Response Plan
--	---

[The Situation Analysis \(2009\):](#)

Issues related to poverty for women and men were illustrated in the 2006 public consultation report on poverty in Belize.ⁱⁱ That study outlined the multiple faces of poverty. In their accounts, poverty had not only an economic face, but also a social, psychological and spiritual face. Issues related to stress, low self-esteem, depression, hopelessness, cynicism and dependency were highlighted under the psychological face. Issues of crime and violence, absentee fathers, lack of education, lack of good governance, teenage pregnancy and increased discrimination against vulnerable populations comprised the social face of poverty. Many of these issues disproportionately affect women.

In Toledo, which has the largest share of the country’s poor population, a majority of households are headed by men. However, alcoholism and gender-based violence remain rampant within Mayan households in that District. Poverty for Maya women, therefore, extends beyond a lack of finance; it encompasses domestic violence, high fertility rates and low levels of access to quality health and education services.

The 2009 Poverty Study revealed that poverty has increased from 33.5% to approximately 43% across the population. Household poverty increased from approximately one out of every four households in 2002 to approximately one out of every three by 2009. The level of indigence also increased from 11% in 2002 to 16% in 2009. This increase in poverty levels across districts was linked with Belize’s economic vulnerability as well as its vulnerability to natural disasters, including hurricanes and floods.

The report recognizes poverty as being “more wide-ranging than those based on income alone” and states that “general concept of well being was used to bracket these non-income aspects of poverty”. The 2009 assessment also posits that poverty in Belize tends to be chronic rather than transitional and that poverty reduction efforts must consider issues of income distribution and economic growth if poverty is to be reduced.

Child and spousal maintenance provisions are provided for in legislation. The child maintenance legislation creates disparities in favour of children born out of wedlock.

Spousal maintenance provisions remain gender biased, do not consider the current cost of living and hinges on belief that women are the property and responsibility of men. Limited human and financial resources for dealing with family matters in the judicial system create challenges for the adequate and efficient enforcement of these laws. The related issues of absentee fathers and weak enforcement of child maintenance legislation place single mothers at a distinct economic disadvantage.

Maternity leave provision have been extended from 12 to 14 weeks. However, the labour department reported an increasing number of complaints regarding employers firing pregnant women or refusing to pay the difference in maternity payment provided by the Social Security Board (SSB). Consequently, it is at the time when women are most in need of economic support that they fall victims to employment related discrimination.

With the support of the National Women's Commission (NWC), one case pregnancy related employment discrimination was tried in court. The Catholic Church was legally mandated to compensate the fired teacher. In focus groups, teachers continue to report the ongoing practice of firing unwed pregnant women who work within the Catholic school system.

Legislation for the economic valuing of women's domestic labour in marriage dissolution exists. However, no action has been taken to ensure equity in women's access to justice so that men do not continue to have an unfair advantage over them during court hearings on this matter. Formulas for the economic valuing of domestic work beyond marriage dissolution have not been developed.

Labour force data reveals that although there are slight increases in women's labour force participation rate since 2002, less than half of women over 14 years old participate in the labour force. Approximately three-fourths of men over 14 years participate in the labour force. Even though women's labour force participation rate is much lower than men's, their unemployment rate is consistently more than twice the rate of men's.

A majority of women are employed in basic occupations. Men tend to be represented primarily in agriculture activities, in the forest and fisheries sectors and in the defence force. Even in sectors in which women comprise a majority of the work force, they still experience more unemployment than men.

Recognizing the need to reduce poverty and to create equity in employment, the Government of Belize equalized the minimum wage for female and male dominated jobs. More effective strategies for the enforcement of the minimum wage, particularly among construction, domestic and piece-rate workers, remain outstanding. Linked to this is the fact that social security legislation does not legally consider a household to be a place of employment. Consequently, neither the Labour Department nor the Belize Social Security Board monitor homes for compliance with labour and social security legislation, thus limiting benefits to those employed therein.

Because less than 50% of women participate in the labour force, only this group qualifies for SSB benefits. Furthermore, women's high unemployment rate and their tendency to be unemployed for longer periods than men place women at a disadvantage in qualifying for some social security benefits.

The passage of legislation on Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value also requires special strategies to ensure its effective implementation in Belize. Thus far, no precedents have been established as no cases have been legally challenged.

Private sector and quasi-government lending institutions have not established any special measures for targeting an increase in loan disbursement to women borrowers. In fact, banking institutions continue to arbitrarily practice outdated protocols in requiring husbands to sign onto their wives loans.

BEST also reports that men tend to be in a much better position to offer land as collateral compared to women. However, women still have a higher loan repayment rate than men.

Women carry the extra burden of family care in planning and preparing for disasters. Their responsibilities begin prior to a disaster, and extend through to the post-disaster period. Furthermore, many responders such as nurses, social workers and police officers are women. This presents an added gender related dimension to disaster mitigation programming. Women responders, more than men, have the dual responsibilities of family and child care at home as well as responding to their community in times of disaster. Men, usually don't have this dual responsibility. Instead they play a different role in times of disasters.

During times of disaster, women's ability to earn an income is further compromised. Women engaged in small scale informal economic activities are especially vulnerable. They have no access to employment benefits or social safety net programmes. Heightened tensions during and after disasters also create increased vulnerabilities for domestic abuse and sexual violence. This situation disproportionately affects women and children.

The National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) has developed a multi-sectoral emergency response plan which operates at the community, district and national levels. The Ministry of Health and PAHO have developed a disaster mitigation plan focused on psycho-social intervention for the most vulnerable populations.

Objectives:

- To safeguard women and men's right to work regardless of their childbearing status and support women and men in their reproductive roles so that they can remain productive citizens.
- To expand social safety nets to women, men and children living in poverty.

- To safeguard women's right to equal opportunities for employment, remuneration, benefits, treatment and work evaluation, on an equal basis with men
- To enforce the obligation of women and men to maintain their children.
- To eliminate discrimination in the workplace, particularly gender based discrimination.
- To allocate and manage public sector resources in a manner that allows for the development, implementation and monitoring of gender responsive policies and programmes across sectors.
- To address the gender dimensions of disaster preparedness and mitigation processes and response adequately to the gender related vulnerabilities of women and men in times of disasters.

Commitments:

The Government will:

- Mainstream gender in the planning, implementation and monitoring of National Poverty Elimination Strategies and Action Plans, the National Medium Term Macro-economic Strategies, the National Security Strategy and the National Disaster Preparedness Response Plan. Gender issues will be made more visible within these strategies which will then be scaled up to respond to the specific gender related vulnerabilities that contribute to, and/or are a consequence of poverty, economic development and natural disasters.
- Create an anti-discrimination law that includes the elimination of all forms of gender related discrimination across society, including in the world of work.
- Give greater opportunities for women's and youth employment and job creation, especially in marginalized communities identified in poverty assessment reports.
- Create a robust and efficient National Employment Agency and Small Business Development Programme to assist women, men and youth job-seekers as well as employers seeking workers.
- Implement and monitor labour legislation that protects women's rights in the world of work. This includes existing and new labour legislation. New legislation will focus on:

- Eliminating all forms of employment-related discrimination based on sex, age and ethnicity
 - Eliminating all forms of child labour, particularly the worst forms of labour
 - Increased maternity protection for women and providing paternity leave provisions for men
 - Increased protection from sexual harassment in the world of work
 - Providing increased labour protection for women and men in the informal workforce
- In the case of maternity related employment discrimination against teachers:
 - The chief education officer shall formulate and promulgate, across the national education system, conditions and terms of teacher employment which provide that suspension or termination or disciplinary action in instances of pregnancy (regardless of marital status) shall not be automatic responses and which ensure retention of entitlements to maternity leave provisions;
 - provisions in the Education Rules (ss.92. 1g and 139 f) for disciplinary action on the basis of moral turpitude need to be clarified to the extent that they appear in their application to subjectively penalize the personal actions of female staff and to reflect the moral judgments of school authorities rather than the employment rights of teachers;
 - the triennial inspection of schools, Educations Rules s 51 shall include specific reference to the school's practice in the handling of staff - and student – pregnancies in preparing its reports and an annual compilation of the gender issues within school-based reports subsection g, will be forwarded to the Women's Department for its information;
 - in instances in which a school authority penalizes a teacher either during her pregnancy or following delivery, and her desire to teaching duties, GOB shall levy such school the equivalent of a full year's contribution to her salary in recognition of the economic cost to GOB of its investment in that teacher and need to reinvest in additional teacher training;
 - in the event that a teacher penalized by a school authority, due to pregnancy, decides to pursue judicial review, GOB shall offer to meet 50% of her costs in that legal process in order to try to establish a precedent applicable across the education sector”.
 - GOB will support women's groups in better informing women of their labor rights – especially when they become pregnant – and of their right to pursue a formal complaint for discriminatory or unjust treatment.
 - “The Ministry of Labour will rigorously pursue complaints of women's employment being terminated due to them becoming pregnant.
 - Amend the Married Persons (Protection) Act to guarantee equity and non-discrimination in child and spousal maintenance provisions and enforce the principle of the best interest of the child in property and inheritance provisions. Consideration should be given to examining how the courts resolve applications

for child support, the amount of the awards, and the capacity for enforcement across the country.

- Immediately establish a mechanism that provides both urban and rural women and men equal access to family court services. Strengthen the capacity of the magistrate courts to manage the type and volume of family cases
- Develop and enforce legislation aimed at protecting older persons' right to employment and to non-discrimination in the world of work; also develop additional social protection measures aimed at mitigating poverty among this population.
- Amend the Pensions Act, the Widow's and Children's Pensions Act and the Social Security Act to eliminate any form of gender biases or gender related discrimination in access to pensions for women and men.
- Amend existing legislation to legalize and regulate the sex work industry. Develop and implement alternative economic skills training programmes and other support services for men and women who wish to retire from sex work activities.
- Expand programmes that increase women's access to land and affordable credit and link this with national poverty reduction initiatives as well as with strategies for economic growth; establish clear national gender-related targets for the provision of land, credit and business support.
- Provide small farmers and fishermen access to investment capital at low interest rates so that they can meet the growing economic demands of raising a family while ensuring that their wages are consistent with the current cost of living.
- Mandate all public and private lending institutions to bring all lending policies and practices in line with existing legislation. This includes halting all outdated banking practices that discriminate against women based on sex.
- Provide women and men with support services that allow them to exercise their right to work. This includes support for the establishment of child care centres that are appropriately regulated and meet the demands of urban and rural communities. These are to be established strategic locations, including in the workplace, to facilitate both parents' access to employment. Special incentives are to be provided to private sector employment agencies that establish childcare centres for their employees.
- Within the National Disaster Management Strategy, ensure that:
 - data is disaggregated by sex and that gender analysis of the data is completed as soon as the data is collected and consolidated.

- keeping families together and the evacuation of women and children are prioritized
 - the restoration of family life takes place as soon as possible.
 - social impact assessments are immediately conducted and action taken to address the need outlined
 - mental health assessments are conducted as part of the wider social impact assessments and that these services are available immediately
 - the psycho-social response includes access to food, shelter, clothing and recreation (especially for children)
 - special attention is to be placed on the needs of pregnant women in the risk planning and mitigation and in the post-disaster period.
 - special protection measures are instituted for men who engage in high risk rescue missions during times of disasters.
 - special family support measures are provided to women who are first line responders in times of disasters.
- Build human resource capacity among both public and civil society organizations to engage in, and report on the results of, a gender analysis of annual public sector budgets. Reporting shall include the impact of the budget on the achievement of gender equality, equity and women’s empowerment in Belize.
 - Provide adequate human and financial resources for the enforcement of the above stated laws, policies and action plans. This includes capacity building on gender issues for legal professionals working in the justice system and strengthening legal aid centres to ensure access to justice for women, men and youth whose labour rights have been violated.

8.4 Gender Based Violence

Links to International Commitments:	Links to National Commitments:
CEDAW, Articles 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. The United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action The Convention of Belem Do Para	National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (2009-2013). Strategic Thrust The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (NPA): Investing in Our Children- 2004-2015 (Child Protection Chapter) The Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2002) and Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategic Action Plan (2006-2010) The National Plan of Action for Gender-Based Violence in Belize (2007-2009) Imagine the Possibilities: Social Sector Investment (2008-2013) National Security Strategy (2009)

The Situation Analysis (2009):

Gender based violence encompasses child abuse, domestic violence, commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, commercial sex work, human trafficking, rape and sexual assault. It also includes the gender related aspects of crime and violence on the streets of Belize.

Data from the Department of Human Services demonstrate that children ages 5 to 9 years and 10 to 14 years comprise the majority of children referred for child protective services. This is followed by children ages 1 to 4 years. Girls (approximately 58%) have a higher referral rate than boys (approximately 43%). Children ages 5 to 9 are most vulnerable to neglect, abandonment, physical and emotional abuse while children ages 10-14 are most vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Mothers are the main perpetrators of neglect while both mothers and fathers perpetrate physical and emotional abuse. Alleged perpetrators for physical and emotional abuse also included teachers and babysitters. Non-familial persons (not related to the family) are the main alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse, followed by stepfathers and fathers. The lack of human resources, both human and financial, within the Human Services Department, limits the number of cases to which the Department can respond.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (CSEC) is an emerging issue in Belize. Poverty was identified as a major cause of CSEC. The lack of family cohesion and stability and an increased appetite for consumer products (bling bling) were also noted as contributing factors. Young women and men are victims of CSEC. Men are the main perpetrators of CSEC although the reverse is also evident. This form of sexual abuse is not explicitly a crime. A draft Bill has been developed to criminalize CSEC.

In carnal knowledge cases regarding sexual contact with underage persons between the ages of 14 and 16, the victim's character is explored in the court and is used to determine whether the sexual act was illegal and, therefore, constitutes a crime. The law is therefore extremely hostile towards children. This approach violates the fundamental rights of victims and even more so, of the children whose lives are affected by CSEC. Furthermore, the present wording of legislation used to deal with the sexual exploitation of children is gender biased and does not afford adequate protection to boys and males who are raped or prostituted. It also does not consider that women can be perpetrators of CSEC.

Sexual offence cases are lodged at the Magistrate Court for a preliminary inquiry before proceeding to trial in the Supreme Court. Many cases are dropped before they are heard in the Supreme Court. Even when cases ascend to the Supreme Court, there is a low rate of convictions as most cases are dropped either before the trial begins or while the trial is in progress. Because forensic evidence gathering (which is one of the most critical aspects of ensuring access to justice) remains grossly inadequate, and because

of all the related issues of stigma, double victimization, gender biases and delays in going to trial, the prosecution is usually rendered helpless in presenting a solid sexual offence case to the Supreme Court.

A majority of victims of domestic violence are in the 20 to 49 age range. They are mostly women and are either in married or in common-law unions, followed by single women, women who are separated and women in visiting relationships. Since 2004, between 6% and 8% of domestic violence reports were of pregnant women. Although a majority of the cases were reported by women, there was a visible increase in the percentage of cases reported by men. Both women and men reported psychological violence and physical violence. Mostly women reported sexual violence. A majority of reported cases were repeated incidents of domestic violence. The reported aggressors were mostly common-law spouses, followed by spouses and ex-spouses. Violence against women constitutes a barrier to access to services.

As was the case with victims of CSEC, domestic violence victims experience all types of violence which tends to permeate their lives. This reveals the need to address the problem of violence, in all its forms, during women's life cycle rather than as isolated events. Because men tend to constitute the majority of perpetrators of violence, violence by men must also be addressed across the life cycle.

A study on the links between domestic violence and HIV revealed that there was a significant level of acceptance of gender norms related to "women's obedience to their partners/husband, the obligation of women to have sex with their partners and the reasons under which it is acceptable that a man can physically abuse a woman".

A new Domestic Violence Act and increased national awareness of gender-based violence has served as the catalyst for an improved response.

Sexual harassment legislation exists. While there are many anecdotal reports of sexual harassment within the world of work, no cases have been tried in court. In two stakeholder interviews, women reported a need for more public education on this issue as well as amending the law to simplify the sexual harassment reporting procedures.

This wide range of sex work categories in Belize calls for a targeted response to the overall needs of these populations. Women who live in poverty revealed that sex work activity is their only alternative for survival. Because of the relationship between sex work, poverty, human trafficking and the increased cost of living, addressing this issue will require a complete re-thinking of how best to either legally recognize and regulate sex work and/or create viable economic alternatives for men and women sex workers.

The Ministry of Health is also attempting to enhance its outreach to these vulnerable populations. The Ministry is in the process of developing guidelines for the provision of SRH services in a way that will respond to the special SRH needs of these groups.

Currently, there is no protocol for the provision of psycho-social care and support services in Belize. The provision of national psycho-social care services remains in limbo with no Ministry taking full responsibility. The social welfare component has been relegated to the Ministry of Human Development. However, this Ministry is overburdened with addressing child protection issues and with implementing women's empowerment programmes. The social welfare system, not just in this Ministry, but across sectors, therefore needs a major overhaul.

The National Security Strategy of Belize (2009) recognizes that Belize is a drug transshipment point and that drug trafficking is Belize's greatest criminal threat. Additionally, the United States' practice of deporting Belizeans who come in conflict with the law impacts on crime in Belize. The murder rate has not abated despite efforts to curb criminal activity. Motives for the murders, as reported in the study, included robbery, altercations/ disputes and feuds, drug dealings and domestic disputes. Many of the murders were gang-related and boys below 15 years being deliberately recruited into this type of criminal activity. A major concern for young men over 15 years was their high unemployment rate and their related vulnerability to engaging in criminal activity as a means of survival.

A Study on crime and violence reported that violence begins in the home and continues across society. During the consultations, young people also indicated that they experienced child abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, harsh treatment at school and crime in the streets and that a poverty plan must address all these issues in an integrated manner.

Child care institutions for children who are relinquished from their parents or who have been legally remanded have not proven effective. These institutions lack the human resource capacity and the requisite infrastructure to offer adequate rehabilitation programmes. One example of a community-oriented approach to crime prevention is the Community Policing Unit located in the Yarrowborough Area in Southside Belize City. A National Youth Development Policy was developed in 2006. It outlines strategic interventions for addressing the above stated issues. However, implementation has been slow. Meanwhile, the critical situation of adolescents and youth continues to worsen.

Laws related to gender based violence are fragmented. Different types of gender-based crimes, particularly sex crimes, are considered under separate legislation. A former Director of Legal AID Services (LASC)ⁱⁱⁱ reported inequities in women and children's access to justice. She indicated that while the LASC was established to reduce these inequities, it does not have the human or financial resources to effectively respond to all cases.

Gender equity in access to justice is impeded by issues far beyond the scope of gender issues. A complete reform of the justice system and the strengthening of institutions mandated to promote citizen security are national imperatives that will, along the way, result in greater equity for women, men, girls and boys.

Objectives:

- To protect the right of girls, boys, women and men to live a life in which their physical, mental and moral integrity are respected and in which they can exercise their right to personal liberty and citizen security.
- To create a supportive family and community environment in which girls, boys, women and men can transcend gender prescribed roles which not only limit women but also limit men's opportunities to fully enjoy family life.
- To eliminate gender-based violence perpetrated on girls boys and women and men across the life cycle as well as gender based violence against people with disabilities and mental illness.

Commitments:

The Government will:

- Develop and implement a massive, sustained multi-media public education campaign aimed at helping girls, boys, women and men to recognize the negative impacts of gender role socialization patterns that are harmful and counterproductive. Promote positive women and men role models throughout this campaign.
- Invest in community level parent education and support programmes that aim to redefine the prescribed gender roles of women and men and foster a culture of family unity, mutual respect and freedom from gender-based violence. Provide additional community based social and psychological support for children who live in homes where violence is present.
- Increase human and financial resources to upgrade and sustain national programmes aimed at child protection and the elimination of gender based violence. These programmes must respond to the prevention of gender based violence, the protection and rehabilitation of victims of gender based violence as well as their access to justice.
- Implement a community based approach to child protective services and use institutionalization as a last resort for orphaned and other vulnerable children and adolescents.
- During disasters, ensure that special measures are instituted for the prevention mitigation and monitoring of gender based violence and other forms of exploitation of children, women, people with disabilities and the elderly.

- Establish alternative sport, recreation and expressive arts programmes in and out of the formal education system. Promote these programmes as an investment in building the self-esteem and self-worth of vulnerable children and adolescents and deterring them from engaging in, or continuing, a life of crime and violence.
- Develop special intervention programmes for young men under 15 years who are living in situations that make them vulnerable to criminal activity. Ensure that these young men stay in school and have access to opportunities for continuing education and/or employment generation so that they will not easily be recruited into gangs and criminal activity.
- Develop a strategy for addressing the integration and economic security needs of men and women deportees to ensure that they become productive citizens rather than contribute to the escalation of criminal activity in Belize.
- Upgrade the surveillance and analysis of national data on gender-based violence to ensure a more effective response. This requires an expansion of the current database to include all forms of child abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, rape, sexual harassment and sexual assault in addition to domestic violence.
- Develop and strengthen coordination mechanisms across government ministries, and between government and civil society organizations, to ensure an effective multi-sectoral response to gender-based violence in Belize. Linkages between gender-based violence, gender socialization, poverty, STI/HIV transmission, alcoholism, mortality of women and other related issues are to be clearly articulated in this multi-sectoral response.
- Establish a cohesive, human rights oriented legal framework to include protection from, and redress for, all forms of gender-based violence, with special emphasis on sexual offences. Gender biases shall be removed so that girls, boys, women and men can benefit equally for this provisions outlined in the new legislative framework and gender. All laws that address sex crimes will be consolidated and/or made consistent and stiffer penalties will be imposed for sex crimes. The legislative framework will also create opportunities for the rehabilitation of both victims and perpetrators. Some specific laws to be reviewed are:
 - Criminal Code
 - Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act
 - Evidence Act
 - Sexual Harassment Act
- Ensure that the amended legislation protects the rights of the child during evidence gathering and in the presentation of evidence during court hearings.

- Establish a strong psycho-social support mechanism for victims of gender-based violence and other social issues that create vulnerabilities for gender-based violence. This includes clearly defining what psycho-social support encompasses, mapping out the public and civil society agencies that form a part of this psycho-social support mechanism and implementing an effective referral and counter-referral system for those who require these services.
- Upgrade the Office of Inspector of Social Services to enable the more effective monitoring of all social service institutions to ensure the protection of children’s human rights. Minimum standards of care are to be developed and enforced for relevant child and adolescent substitute care institutions.
- Restructure and upgrade the Police Department to be more respectful of the rule of law and to take a more human rights approach to crime prevention. Also increase its capacity for forensic investigation and reporting and its overall capacity for greater gender responsiveness in handling criminal matters.
- Upgrade the Office of the Department of Public Prosecution to guarantee each citizen, whether female or male, the right to quality representation in criminal matters. Also increase their capacity for greater gender responsiveness in handling criminal matters.
- Expand and upgrade legal aid support services to provide free legal advice to victims and alleged perpetrators of crimes. Also increase their capacity for greater gender responsiveness in providing legal services to women and men.
- Provide continuous training for magistrates and judges on issues related to gender based violence so that they can understand the gender dynamics of these types of criminal activities.

8.5 Power and Decision-Making

Links to International Commitments:	Links to National Commitments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEDAW Articles 4, 7 and 8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Policy on Local Governance (2009) • Imagine the Possibilities: Social Sector Investments (2008-2013)

The Situation Analysis (2009):

A Study on opportunities for women’s political participation concluded that women’s reproductive role within the family and society, lack of support from political parties and gender socialization patterns create barriers for political participation. Since 1984 only

14 women have offered themselves as candidates in national general elections. Of these women, 4 have won seats in the National Assembly. Of those who won, only 2 were appointed as Cabinet Ministers with full Ministerial powers.

Women have been appointed to senior government positions, including as CEOs and Directors of Quasi-Government Bodies. While this situation shows an increase in women's access to leadership positions, political power, which is concentrated in the hands of the Cabinet, remains male dominated.

In nationwide consultations with young women and men, there was overwhelming support for increasing women's political participation at the highest levels of government. This scenario demonstrates the need for employing special temporary measures to increase women's political participation in Belize.

The National Women's Commission and the Toledo Maya Women's Council have developed programmes aimed at increasing women's political participation. Some women enrolled in these programmes will offer themselves as candidates for the 2010 village council elections. A recently approved National Policy on Local Government makes provision for continuing support for gender equity at the level of local government.

Belize has also begun to break ground on major macro level issues that impact on women's empowerment nationwide. This includes preliminary work on the promotion of gender budgeting in Belize. Gender budgeting will require a move toward a more program oriented budgeting process that allows for greater transparency and accountability of national outcomes. Since 2008, the budget development process has become more participatory. In 2010, a new three-year budgeting cycle was introduced.

Objectives:

- To protect women's right to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policies and programmes.
- To protect women's right to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

Commitments:

The Government will:

- Develop a national strategy for increasing women's political participation at all levels, including their participation as candidates in national and municipal elections and appointment to leadership positions within public and private institutions. This national strategy should consider women's productive and reproductive roles. Special temporary measures are to be implemented to meet

specific targets for increased women's political participation on an equal basis with men.

- Provide adequate human and financial resources for the effective gender responsive implementation of the National Policy on Local Governance. Special focus will be placed on strategies that aim to achieve the goal of greater parity with men in elected and appointed positions.
- Develop and monitor the implementation of a legal framework and support structure that promotes the more equitable sharing of parental duties among women and men as a strategy for enhancing women's participation in political life and leadership positions in private and public institutions.
- Strengthen national institutions charged with responsibility for the implementation of gender programming so that they can efficiently and effectively coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of this National Gender Policy. This includes the National Women's Commission, the Women's Department and any related Ministry or Department that may be deemed critical to the successful implementation of this Policy.
- Develop a clear multi-sectoral strategy for implementing gender budgeting within the new public sector three-year budgeting cycle.

9.0 The Institutional Framework

9.1 Key Roles and Responsibilities:

The Role of Parliament

The members of Parliament (House of Representatives and the Senate) will adopt gender sensitive and gender responsive legislation that guarantees women and men, girls and boys their rights as expressed in national and international commitments and in this National Gender Policy.

The Role of the National Women's Commission

In relation to this National Gender Policy, the NWC will be responsible for advising Government Ministers on policy actions needed for the advancement of the goal and objectives of the National Gender Policy. The NWC will also be responsible for national education and awareness campaigns, advocacy actions and monitoring and evaluation of the overall goal, objectives and commitments outlined in this Policy. The National Women's Commission will also promote and support resource mobilization for the achievement of this Policy's goals and objectives.

Government and civil society organizations charged with the implementation of specific provisions in the National Gender Policy and related Action Plans will be mandated to report annually to the NWC on progress achieved, challenges faced and lessons learned. From these reports, the National Women's Commission will, every two years, develop a consolidated report that will be disseminated to Cabinet and to the public.

The NWC will use the results of the progress report and supplement it with other data, if necessary, to develop the Belize CEDAW monitoring reports. The NWC and key partner agencies will present the CEDAW report to Cabinet and to the CEDAW Committee every 5 years.

The NWC will be legally incorporated and further strengthened with human and financial resource to facilitate its effective uptake of its role in relation to this National Gender Policy and CEDAW. The composition of the NWC and the process of appointment for members of the NWC will be outlined in the NWC legislation.

The Role of the Ministry of Human Development

The Ministry of Human Development will function as a key link between the NWC, members of Cabinet, senior government officials and other policy-makers. The commitment of these policy stakeholders is necessary to advance the goal and objectives of the National Gender Policy.

The Women's Department will function as the key link between the NWC and government, quasi-government and non-government implementers of the National Gender Policy Action Plan. In particular, the Women's Department will coordinate the implementation process through its Gender Integration Committee and its Gender Focal Points across the public sector.

Similar to the NWC, the Women's Department will be further strengthened with human and financial resources to facilitate its more effective uptake of its role in relation to this National Gender Policy. In the case of the Women's Department, an institutional audit will be conducted (in the first year of the implementation of the National Gender Policy) to determine the areas for further strengthening.

The Role of Government Ministries

The Ministry of Finance

The Ministry of Finance will be responsible for providing adequate financial resources aimed at ensuring the gender responsive implementation of existing and new policies, programmes and plans of action across government ministries and departments. The Ministry of finance will engage in gender budgeting to facilitate this process across the public sector.

The Ministry of the Public Service

The Ministry of the Public Service will be responsible for building the human resource capacity for gender mainstreaming across government ministries, departments and within quasi-government bodies. This Ministry has the added responsibility of ensuring that human resources are adequately recruited, deployed and monitored to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the priorities outlined in this National Gender Policy.

Other Ministries

The other Ministries of Government will be responsible for maximizing existing spaces for cross-sectoral dialogue. They will also be responsible for creating new mechanisms for cross-sectoral planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and plans. This will require a complete revamping to the current public sector financial and programme planning process to ensure that it support gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting.

The Role of Civil Society

Civil society organizations perform critical functions in relation to the National Gender Policy. They fill gaps in programming and advocate for reforms that advance the National Gender Policy agenda. Civil society organizations are therefore recognized as partners in development. They will be responsible for ensuring that their programmes remain consistent with the goal and objectives of the National Gender Policy and that these are reflected in their resource mobilization initiatives.

The Role of the Statistics Institute of Belize

The Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) will collaborate with the National Women's Commission and the implementing partners of the National Gender Policy. The SIB will promote and support the collection of sectoral data disaggregated by sex and provide sex-disaggregated data on key gender and social indicators selected to monitor the achievement of the goal and objectives of the National Gender Policy. The SIB will also provide technical support in the monitoring of the Policy and in the use of relevant data for gender analysis of specific policy and programmatic outcomes.

Where possible, the SIB will provide advice for the consolidation of the M&E framework for this Gender Policy with other M&E frameworks being implemented by other relevant organizations. This includes the M&E frameworks for the MDGs, the Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (NPESAP), the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (NPA), the Strategic Plan for a Multi-Sectoral Response to HIV/AIDS and the Strategic Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), among others.

The Role of International Development Partners

This National Gender Policy sets the national direction for policies, laws, programmes and projects aimed at achieving gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in Belize. As such, international development partners are to be guided by this Policy in making resource allocation commitments for Belize. Therefore, resource allocations to and technical cooperation with, implementers in government, quasi-government and non-government agencies must be consistent with the achievement of the goal and objectives of this National Gender Policy.

10.0 Resource Mobilization

This National Gender Policy determines gender-related policy and programmatic priorities that are to be used to guide resource mobilization initiatives across government, quasi-government and non-government organizations.

The costing of the accompanying National Gender Policy Action Plan should not be developed in isolation from other existing and emerging national initiatives. Rather, human and financial resources are to be maximized by taking an integrated approach. By creating synergies with other existing national policies and plans, this Policy promotes integrated planning, implementation, monitoring and resource mobilization. This approach ensures that gender mainstreaming occurs and that gender-related policies and programmes become a part of the national agenda for development, rather than being marginalized within the social sector.

11.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

Within six months of Government's adoption of this National Gender Policy, an implementation plan along with a human resource plan and a monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed.

The National Women's Commission will take action to:

- Establish a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee or Unit that will:
- Establish specific targets and related indicators, including a description of the metadata
- Establish baseline data to ensure the measurement of progress over time.
- Define the process for documenting good practice cases as well as cases of discrimination against women to demonstrate examples of the de facto status of women in Belize.
- Establish a mandatory process for implementation agencies to engage in data collection, recording, analysis and reporting on progress in achieving the specified targets, as well as reporting on challenges and lessons learned.

- On an annual basis, report on progress in the achievement of the targets, objectives and goals outlined in the National Gender Policy.
- Establish a formal mechanism that creates synergies between the National Gender Policy implementation and M&E framework and other existing implementation plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The use of the DevInfo software as a central M&E database and information clearinghouse will be explored.

11. Glossary of Terms

De Jure: This is a Latin expression used to refer to what is officially established in laws, policies, standards or regulations. This is what a situation should be.

De Facto: This is a Latin expression used to refer to what occurs in practice but not necessarily ordained by law or being officially established. It refers to the factual situation rather than the established law, policy, standard or regulation.

Discrimination: “according different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by sex, race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded of another such description”¹¹

Discrimination against women: “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”¹²

Gender: The social constructed roles allocated respectively to women and men in particular societies and in particular historical and cultural contexts. Such roles, and the differences between them, are conditioned by a variety of political, economic, ideological and cultural factors and are characterized in most societies by unequal power relations.

Gender Analysis: Quantitative gender analysis is the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data which reveals the differential impact of development activities on women and men and the effect gender roles and responsibilities have on development efforts. Qualitative gender analysis is the tracing of historical, political, economic and social and cultural forces in order to clarify how and why these differential impacts, roles and responsibilities have come about.

Gender Development Index (GDI): The standard of living index which uses some of the same variables as the HDI (such as life expectancy, educational attainment and real GDP), but which goes further to take into account inequality in achievement between women and men.¹³

Gender Empowerment: A process of personal and societal transformation in gender relations. It addresses the structural and underlying causes of gender related

¹¹ See the **Constitution of Belize**. Chapter II, 3, 16.

¹² See **CEDAW**, Article 1: Definition of Discrimination Against Women

¹³ United Nations Definition

subordination and discrimination within families, in communities, in the world of work and across public organizations.

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM): A measure of inequalities between women and men's opportunities in a country. It combines inequalities in three main areas: political participation and decision-making, economic participation and decision-making and power over economic resources. It is one of five indicators used by the United Nations in its annual Human Development Report.¹⁴

Gender Equality: This refers to non-discrimination on the grounds of a person's sex.

Gender Equity: This refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of resources, benefits and/or access to services between women and men. This approach recognizes that women and men have different needs across the life span.

Gender Mainstreaming: This refers to bringing in the perceptions, knowledge, contributions, priorities and needs of both women and men to enrich development. The process includes assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It makes men and women's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equality and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.¹⁵

Gender Perspective: This is an approach in which the ultimate goal is to create equity and equality between women and men. Such an approach has a set of tools for analysis and guidelines on how to identify the impact on development of the relations and roles of women and men.

Gender Responsive: This refers to the planning process in which programmes and policy actions are developed to deal with, and counteract, problems which arise out of socially constructed differences between women and men as well as lay the groundwork for the achievement of gender equity, equality and women's empowerment.

Gender Roles: The expectations, demands, compulsions, opportunities, responsibilities placed on women and men because of/on the basis of biological differences. These roles generate different attitudes, behaviours and assumptions indicating what it means to be a woman or a man, boy or girl.

Gender Sensitive: This refers to the state of knowledge of the socially constructed differences between women and men, including differences in their needs, as well as to the use of such knowledge to identify and understand the problems arising from such differences and to act purposefully to address them.

¹⁴ United Nations Definition

¹⁵ ECOSOC Definition.

Human Rights: “Basic rights and freedoms to which are humans are entitled. All humans are born free and equal in dignity and human rights”¹⁶

Life Cycle: The stages of life that a person goes through from birth to death. This approach recognized that human beings have different physical, social, emotional and economic needs at each stage of their lives.

Practical Gender Needs: The needs identified to help be women cope better in their existing subordinate positions. Practical needs are related largely to issues of welfare. These do not challenge the existing gender division of labour or to women’s subordinate position in society.

Policy: Declared principles and objectives that decisions-makers use to guide a course of action to address a particular issue or issues, which in this case, is the achievement of gender equality, equity and women’s empowerment.

Pro-Poor Strategies: Targeted efforts aimed at increasing economic growth among people living in poverty as well as development strategies designed to ensure that poor people benefit from overall economic growth.

Project: A temporary endeavour, having a defined beginning and end, undertaken to meet particular goals and objectives, usually to bring about beneficial change or added value. Projects achieve outputs that can contribute to long-term change on a particular issue. In this Policy, a project refers to a temporary endeavour geared towards achieving gender equality, equity and women’s empowerment.

Programme: A systematic and ongoing set of activities or projects design to achieve a particular goal and objectives. Programmes can produce outcomes that contribute towards long-term change on a particular issue. In this Policy, a programme refers to ongoing activities within a medium to long-term plan of action geared towards the achievement of gender equality, equity and women’s empowerment.

Reproductive Rights: “the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free from discrimination, coercion and violence.”¹⁷

Sex: This identifies the biological/anatomical differences between males and females.

Strategic Gender Needs: The needs which are identified as necessary to transform the existing unequal relations between women and men. Addressing women’s strategic gender needs expedites women’s empowerment and facilitates the fundamental social transformation necessary for the establishment of gender equality.

¹⁶ From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

¹⁷ From the World Health Organization.

ⁱ Maheia, Dian (ed.) (May, 2004). In Search of Reform: A Comprehensive Look at Belize's National Education Summit from Preliminary Consultation to Action Plan. Ministry of Education.

ⁱⁱ Catzim, Haylock and Santos (2006). Public Consultation Report. National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (2006-2010). NHDAC.

ⁱⁱⁱ By Audrey Matura, former Director of the Legal Aid Services Commission.