

Dear Partners in the National Response to HIV/AIDS,

I am pleased to introduce you to the National AIDS Commission's first e-bulletin for members of Belize's national response to HIV/AIDS and visitors to our website. This electronic bulletin is created to allow the Commission to share valuable and updated information with all partners in Belize's national response so that we all remain on the same page.

We are happy to join the existing communication vehicles that currently share information in our national response. The One Response E-Bulletin will complement these existing publications by fulfilling the role of the Commission as the coordinating body for the national response and will contain information that reflects current action, decisions and plans in Belize and those from abroad that can impact the work we do locally.

It is scheduled to be disseminated every two weeks electronically to help us live our commitment to our guiding principle of ONE RESPONSE. The E-Bulletin will also be loaded on the NAC's website at www.nacbelize.org

The strength of this e-bulletin is the information that each member shares with our communication officer (at ecabanas@nacbelize.org) and the number of us who read it regularly so please start the practice of sending reports, updates and relevant information about your office or organization's latest contribution to our NSP and enjoy your new E-Bulletin.

Sincerely,

Martin Cuellar, Ph. D
Executive Director
National AIDS Commission Secretariat

RECOGNITION COLUMN



Recognizing that there are many who go well beyond the call of duty to address the many needs of those infected and affected with HIV/AIDS, the NAC would like to acknowledge these individuals and organizations as singled out by our partners:

CALEB OROSCO, UNIBAM's focal point for his ambitious undertaking to seek a LGBT Legal Review.

ELISA CASTELLANOS for going the extra mile to serve PWH and CSW voluntarily.

STEPHEN DIAZ for the relentless support to the LGBT community

Kudos to **ALEX VEGA** for the exceptional work in Sexuality and Sexual Health Education

Congrats goes to **San Pedro AIDS Commission**, lead by Felix Ayuso, for their wonderful work at the recent Lobster fest. GO TEAM, GO!

Development of Long Standing NOP Underway



The National AIDS Commission Secretariat is pleased to announce on-going work on the development of our long overdue National Operational Plan. The NAC recognizes the urgent need of a plan to make the National Strategic Plan operational and has approved the process being led by the Executive Director of the Secretariat to complete the National Operational Plan by September, 2010.

To this end, visits by the Executive Director - Dr. Cuellar are being planned with the District Committees, Commission Committees, Civil Society, and other key stakeholders to obtain their input into the National Operational Plan.

Recent intern to the NAC, Ms. Jackie Ellison from the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida will play an instrumental role alongside Dr. Cuellar in facilitating the development of the NOP currently identified as a top priority of the NAC.

National District Tour Strengthens Link With NACDCs



On February 9th 2010, the National AIDS Commission (NAC) hosted a special meeting at the NAC Secretariat in Belize City with the Chairpersons of the National AIDS Commission District Committees (NACDC). The purpose of the meeting was to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the District Committees and provide the support needed for the district responses to HIV/AIDS in Belize. The National AIDS Commission committed to ensuring continuation of its mandate to strengthen the District Committees in areas of advocacy, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, resource mobilization and sectoral planning. This process would be initiated with a second round of visits to each District Committee to facilitate their strategic plan and collect their input into our National Operational Plan.

The Empowerment District Tour commenced on May 7, 2010 with funding from P.A.H.O. Mrs. Kathy Esquivel (Chair), Ms. Joan Burke (Vice Chair), Dr. Martin Cuellar (Executive Director) and Elio Cabanas (Communications Officer) of the National AIDS Commission Secretariat visited the District Committees in Corozal, Orange Walk, San Pedro, Belmopan, San Ignacio, Stann Creek and Toledo.

The purpose of these workshops was to strengthen the relationship of the national Commission with all its District Committees by formalizing the communication processes of increased capacity building, collaboration and overall efficiency between the secretariat and its district representation. The tour proved to be necessary and valuable in our effort to strengthen our national response by aligning all efforts with our National Strategic Plan.

Key issues discussed at the meeting included:

- Overview of the District Committees
- Strengthening the coordination of the District Committees
- Membership
- Standardized Name of the committees
- Review of district logistics, assessments and goals
- Training and logistical support
- The way forward

Follow up meetings are scheduled from June 19 through July 23, 2009 for further work on the development of the committee's action plans as well as their input into the National Operational Plan currently being developed by the National AIDS Commission Secretariat.

The National AIDS Commission would like to thank P.A.H.O for the financial support in making these tour possible and all District Chairs for their unyielding efforts in organizing the participation of its members for a successful meeting.

UNIFEM-NAC High Level Round Table - "Mainstreaming Gender Analysis in HIV Prevention Education."

A round table discussion was held on 21 May, 2010 at the Belize Biltmore Plaza with the aim to promote gender responsive HIV prevention education for youth by focusing on human rights and comprehensive sexual education in Belize. Forty two participants were drawn from the Ministries of Health, Education and Human Development as well as various social service sectors and youth groups. In attendance and pledging their support was the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation, the Chair of the National AIDS Commission, The Executive Director of the Women's Commission and the Women's Department along with the Director of QADS at the Ministry of Education.

Three key presentations were delivered on:

1. The trends in the HIV epidemic emerging among young women and young men
2. The concept of gender and sexuality as a social construction, with emphasis on the internalization of traditional sexual gender beliefs and stereotypes and its relation to the adolescent and youth vulnerability to HIV infection

3. The concept of human rights and its relationship to HIV and AIDS.

All three presentations were in alignment with mainstreaming gender analysis and human rights to the HFLE curriculum and to the out of school youth to reduce HIV infection, promote equality and non discrimination. After the presentations, participants discussed the role of the HFLE curriculum as a critical and important tool in gender responsive HIV prevention education and voiced several important issues and recommendations. These recommendations are pursuant to:

- Strengthening the HFLE curriculum by making it more gender responsive and expanding its human rights foundation
- Strengthening the community environment in which the HFLE curriculum is taught
- Maximize its implementation throughout the school system, increase its impact on the health of Belizean youth, and reduce the incidence of HIV transmission.

For further read, please see collated recommendations from participants of the round table discussion on: [Click Here](#)

Civil Society Benefits From a Second Round of M & E Training Workshop



M&E Training held at Princess Hotel

The Caribbean Health & Research Council (CHRC) through the sponsorship of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and in conjunction with the National AIDS Commission (NAC) conducted a second Basic Monitoring and Evaluation training workshop at the Princess Hotel & Casino in Belize City, June 14-16, 2010.

Thirty participants from civil society organizations including non-governmental, faith-based and community-based organizations attended the three day workshop. The primary objectives of this capacity building training were to better enable individuals to monitor and evaluate their organization's efforts, gather relevant data and prepare progress reports for projects and programs.

The Caribbean Health Research Council based in Trinidad and Tobago is a regional health institution with the mandate to promote and coordinate health research related activities in the Caribbean. CHRC has been playing an increasingly important role in building the capacity of persons employed at Ministries of Health and other health agencies, enabling them to conduct essential research and related activities.

Lead facilitator from CHRC delivering the training was Dr. Ansari Ameen, M&E Specialist, assisted by Melissa Sobers - National AIDS Commission Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.

This workshop brought the total number of participants trained by CHRC in basic monitoring and evaluation procedures to sixty persons since February, 2010. It is expected that similar training opportunities will continue in more advanced monitoring and evaluation training workshops in the future.

Funding Power House, GFATM's Round 10 Opens the Door for MARP and TB Proposals

The National AIDS Commission and the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) are calling for proposals for the Global Fund's Tenth Round that focuses on Tuberculosis and a Special Reserve that focuses on Most At Risk Populations (MARP). Civil Society Partners including: Non-Governmental Organizations, International Agencies, NAC District Committees, Government Departments have been invited to submit sub-proposals for projects targeting Most at Risk Populations (MARPS) in Belize. Meanwhile the Ministry of Health via the National Tuberculosis Program and related Civil Society partners are invited to submit sub-proposals for Tuberculosis.

At its 21st Meeting, the GFATM Board agreed to create a dedicated reserve for funding HIV proposals which will focus only on most at risk populations (MARPS). The goal of the country proposal will be to address the needs of the most at risk populations via the larger Civil Society.

In this end, the NAC and the CCM have requested that interested partners submit to the Secretariat of the NAC, in hard and soft copy, no later than 4:00 pm, Friday 9th of July 2010, sub-proposals with the following components:

- A formal letter expressing interest to be considered for the implementation of the proposed project.
- A detailed description of the project (General objective, specific objectives, activities, budget)
- A short document (max. 3 pages) providing information related to the institution and its technical capacities (evidence of its legal status, evidence of the managerial, financial, technical and human resources plans to manage the proposal).

For the purpose of the Round 10 dedicated reserve, the Global Fund considers "MARPS" as populations at high risk of HIV infection with particular emphasis on:

- Men who have sex with men and their sexual partners
- Female, male and transgender sex workers and their sexual partners
- People who inject drugs and their sexual partners
- Transgender people and their sexual partners
- Incarcerated populations
- Mobile and migrant populations

The NAC and CCM are also welcoming sub-proposals to address the prevalence and impact of Tuberculosis in Belize. These sub-proposals are open to any social partner who works in the prevention or mitigation of Tuberculosis along with the National Tuberculosis Program.

Belize Contributes to REDCA+'s Regional Proposal to GFATM Round 10

Belize is proud to have representation at RED Centroamericana de Personas con VIH-SIDA (REDCA+) through the appointment of focal point - Mr. Eric Castellanos.

Mr. Castellanos recently travelled to El Salvador to attend a REDCA+ meeting. Mr. Castellanos provided an update on the current projects being undertaken by the organization.

REDCA+, a regional association with membership from Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize, is currently embarking on a Project called: "Developing & Strengthening the Technical & Professional Capacities of Persons with HIV/AIDS for an effective impact on HIV/AIDS in Quality of Life and the Mitigation of Poverty of Persons with HIV/AIDS of Central America."

This project is a continuation of Round 9 of the Global Fund into Round 10 and forms part of a regional proposal that REDCA+ is preparing in submission to the GFATM.

Phase I of the project involves the participation and contribution of Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras. Phase II of this project will include the participation of the remaining three Central American countries namely Costa Rica, Guatemala and Belize as necessary signatories to the regional proposal to be executed at their next meeting scheduled on July 11 in Panama.

The three key objectives of the project are:

1. Guarantee the participation of persons with HIV/AIDS in prevention to generate behavior changes, social mobilization and the application of the rights and obligation within legal margins without discrimination.
2. To strengthen the political, managerial and financial capacity of the network of persons with HIV/AIDS in Central America.
3. To implement capacity building projects for the empowerment and enhancement of persons with HIV/AIDS to foster the reduction of poverty in Central America

For further read on REDCA+'s initiatives, please visit: [Click Here](#)

Let's Hear From Our Partners!

WIN BELIZE

Winners, the volunteer arm of the women's group for Win-Belize, are currently engaged in community sessions on sexuality and sexual health in response to the feminization of HIV. In their last session, Winners met in an exchange with the Toledo Maya Junior Women's Group. Their discussion focused on gender based violence, cultural experiences, sexuality, and sexual health and relationships and implications on the feminization of HIV such as when women do not receive these messages.

The National Advocacy Working Group (NAWG), formed to advocate for solutions to issues of treatment and care, stigma and discrimination, is currently undergoing advocacy follow up sessions for the development of its action plan with members including the Belize Red Cross, UNIBAM, AAA, WIN-Belize Secretariat, YES and Hand in Hand Ministries.

WIN Belize is now completing its "Sexual Health Project," similar to the Winner's project, aimed at bringing the discussions on sexuality and sexual health to the community. This happy hour type session is entitled "lets talk about sex" is aimed at women and their partners for the activity that includes food, games and drinks while casually speaking of sex.

BELIZE RED CROSS

As part of the "Together We Can" (TWC) program, an Instructor's Trainers Training was conducted on June 17 and 18, 2010 at the Orange Walk Red Cross Branch where 24 Police Officers participated in the program.

The HIV prevention program of the Belize Red Cross teams up with the DiPECHO7 to deliver prevention education in community sessions in Belize Rural and Cayo District. At least 10 participants benefited from this activity.

As part of the Belize Red Cross's Global Alliance on HIV, the BRC seeks to implement wellness centers as identified in their recent needs' assessment. Services to be provided through these centers seek to promote healthy lifestyles practices and also contribute to narrowing the gaps within the healthcare systems.

BRC attends meetings of the BFLA to discuss ongoing projects as well as to identify meaningful ways for closer collaboration with the BFLA

Editor's Note: We are all interested in what your organization is doing so please send me your updates.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading your new e-bulletin. I would like to give special thanks to UNIBAM, BRC, WIN BELIZE and the San Pedro AIDS Commission for their submissions as well as invite the rest of you our partners in the national response to provide us with your updates for future editions as we work together to become one voice, one national response. If you know of anyone who could benefit from our E-Bulletin, please don't hesitate to send me their email address.

Kind regards,

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