

The National AIDS Commission

# One Response E-Bulletin



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Dear Partners,

The National AIDS Commission Secretariat is pleased to provide you with the tenth issue of the One Response E-bulletin.

We thank you for the collaboration in supplying us with the relevant material in making this issue possible and continue to seek your support for future editions.

We wish you all a safe and blessed weekend.

Sincerely,

Elio Cabanas  
National AIDS Commission

## *Final Drafts Of Our NSP And NOP 2011 - 2013 Mark A Landmark In Coordination And Planning Of The National Response*

The National AIDS Commission is pleased to announce that the final drafts of its 2011 to 2013 National Strategic Plan and accompanying National Operational Plan (NOP) have been completed. The process employed was very exhaustive utilizing a multi-sectoral approach of consultation with the broadest possible group of actors and stakeholders including persons living with and/or vulnerable to HIV. The comprehensive documents were developed with the input of stakeholders from across the country and written by consultants Joe Hendrix and Martha Carillo seek to:

- document the evidence related to the key determinants of the epidemic in Belize
- draw lessons learned from the past five years of the response
- engage participation of key stakeholders in program planning and implementation

- set clear program goals and priorities for the future of the HIV response
- estimate the financial and human resources needs of the response
- enhance collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders
- establish a results framework to measure performance

The revision of the 2006 - 2011 NSP highlighted the need to integrate gender responsiveness and stigma and discrimination reduction more across all other interventions for us to finally achieve the goals we have set in these two priority areas. It is presented in a logical framework that identifies the key gaps in our response surrounding three priority areas. The discussion of these gaps then focuses on strategic approaches to overcoming the problems that are seen as catalysts to these problems. As such, the NSP is an important living document that will not only greatly assist in coordinating and directing our response but also attempts to articulate the need to find and put in place new approaches to partnerships, mainstreaming and allocating sustainable financing to compensate for the expected loss of attention and resources.

The accompanying NOP is the blueprint that translates the objectives and results of the NSP into activities and actions that contribute to the achievement of the overall goals outlined in the National Strategic Plan (NSP). The documents meet our national priorities and the review also focused on international and regional commitments such as the UNGASS, MDGs, the Mexico Declaration as well as the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework. The members of the Commission are giving the documents one last review and next week the document will be prepared for presentation to the Cabinet for government acceptance and support.

Launch of the NSP 2011- 2013 and NOP is anticipated for mid October and will be followed by countrywide workshops that are aimed at giving all key partners a chance to anchor their institutional and organizational planning into this key strategic planning tool.

## *2011 World AIDS Week Plans Moves Forward*

On September 8, 2011, the National AIDS Commission's IEC Sub-committee hosted a special strategic planning initiative for World AIDS Week (WAW) with key partners instrumental in the planning of activities for World AIDS Day (WAD) in the past.

Participants from relevant partner organizations and key line ministries participated in the planning initiative that sought to increase collaboration among partners in a national response effort to create a unified agenda of activities leading up to and celebrating World AIDS Day.

The established consultation objectives were:

1. To gain input from all involved partners in the planning of one united set of WAW activities
2. To promote ownership of our national efforts surrounding WAW at the local level
3. To ensure that the planning is responsive to our national needs and evidence-based

Expected Outcomes:

1. One concerted, relevant master plan of activities for WAW for 2011 including assessment plan
2. Clear and accepted structure for planning the details of WAW activities for 2011

In establishing the appropriate stage for the meeting, a review of the Post Mortem of WAD 2010 activities was made by IEC Chair, Eckert Middleton. Presentations on the situational diagnosis of HIV in Belize and Challenges, Gaps and Imperatives arising from the NSP were also made by the IEC Committee.

Participants of the special meeting unanimously agreed to focus on the most impacting gaps that are highlighted in our NSP with an emphasis on Prevention. The spirit of the participants was to plan activities that are transformative and that reach out to previously overlooked target groups. focusing on prevention to impact on positive behaviour change in urban and rural communities.

In conclusion of the consultation, it was agreed that a National WAW Planning Committee would be established to provide the oversight and further develop the 2011 WAW plans and that the District Committees will help to lead the implementation at the local level.

## *GoJoven Makes Its Marks With Its Official Launch And First Trainee Cohort In Personal Development And SRH*



On Wednesday September 7, Community leaders, youth and partners in the national response gathered at the new Go Joven offices on the ground floor of the B.E.S.T. Offices on the Hummingbird Highway in Belmopan for the official ribbon cutting ceremony and launch of the NGO in Belize. Present at the ceremony was the Mayor of Belmopan, his worship Mr. Simeon Lopez and Executive Director of the NAC Secretariat Dr. Martin Cuellar who joined Ms. Josie Ramos, Program Manager of Go Joven's parent organization The Public Health Institute's Regional Office in Guatemala City to cut the ribbon. The event was attended by students from three Belmopan High Schools who listened and discussed ways that the SRH and Leadership training that Go Joven brings to their community can impact their lives directly.

On the day after the ribbon cutting, a group of fourteen GoJoven fellows who are youth volunteers from the Belize Red Cross, BFLA and Escuela Mexico and Youth for the Future gathered at the Aguada Hotel in San Ignacio from September 8 - 14 for an empowering workshop entitled, "Youth Leadership in Sexual & Reproductive Health." The training exercise of the first cohort of trainees was facilitated under the auspices of GoJoven Belize and co-sponsored by Public Health Institute and The Summit Foundation.

The fourteen participants, travelling from Orange Walk, Corozal and Belize City, benefited from comprehensive SRH training modules that included Personal Skill Map Analysis, Leadership and Ethics, SRH & HIV/AIDS, Intro to Gender & Equality and Career Planning. Complimenting the intense and highly participatory program were two useful guides to individual development and a positive assessment of career/life effectiveness skills - "Career Planning Workbook" and "Personal Skills Map," respectively.

Although similar training opportunities were provided in 2004 with the inception of the organization in the region, all training were conducted in Spanish benefiting only Spanish speaking participants. This training exercise, facilitated in English, is part of a four week program spread over the year. Upon completion of the sessions, trained youth fellows will be expected to engage more meaningfully in SRH initiatives in their own districts, nationally and even regionally.

This youth-focused educational program aims to address some of the gaps associated with inadequate comprehensive sexuality education that often results in high teenage pregnancy and HIV infections while also empowering them for increased personal development, sexual and reproductive health and leadership roles in broader social arenas.

Lead facilitator - Angel Martinez, Director of Instructional designs & training for INVOCA/Dignidad, commented, "This kind of capacity building is critical to the development of skills in the areas of research, program development, proposal writing, public speaking and personal development work. Once these programs are completed, the participants become legible for a number of opportunities including scholarships."

The high-spirited and jovial participants were eager to learn the program content and comply with the regulations of the workshop. Confidence in the program and in the participant's ability

to bear fruit on the investment is reassured by the facilitator's comment, "This is one of GoJoven's best programs in terms of quality of follow up and in the quality of young people that it has attracted."

GoJoven hosts a six year Leadership Development Program in Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and the State of Quintana Roo in Mexico. Significant program coordinators and facilitators were Eva Burgos, Omar Rodriguez and Josie Ramos, Program Manager of the Youth Leadership in SRH Program in Belize implemented by the International Health Programs of PHI.



## *Most People Do Not Remember Any Action Of Impact At The National Level To Combat Stigma & Discrimination Made In The Country, Reveals A MARP-based S&D Situational Diagnosis*

Key stakeholders, within the HIV response, met on September 16 at the National AIDS Commission Conference Room for a validation exercise of the Situational Diagnosis of Stigma and Discrimination relating to Homophobia, Transphobia, Sex Work and People Living with HIV hosted by PASMO Belize. Collaborating in the Situational Diagnosis, as part of a combined project on HIV Prevention, in Central America and Mexico, are a regional cohort that includes IPPF WHR, PASMO/R, Chicatelli & Associates and Milk & Cookies, a virtual based marketing firm.

Key findings of the report relating to Belize's institutional, educational, labor, Health and legal environments in context of S &D, were shared with participants which resulted in further general and specific recommendations in response to the gaps in the key findings.

General objectives of this project were to increase access to HIV prevention interventions targeting populations at greatest risk. More specifically, the objective was to increase the implementation of effective activities to reduce hostility in social environments that encourage and tolerate homophobia and attitudes of stigma and discrimination related to sexual orientation, occupation or status over a 5-year implementation period from 2010 to 2015.

The methodology of the study included twelve interviews with key actors and a total of 33 persons in three focus groups (Men who have Sex with Men, Female Sex Workers and People with HIV). Significant comments from respondents include:

- There is a constant hostility and harassment by the police towards MSM and FSW. It is mentioned that the police use Article 53 to harass.
- The FSW mentioned harassment for not walking with identifying documents or for crimes they haven't committed.
- The harassment is greater for foreign FSWs.
- The MSM said that for only being part of the gay group they are associated with carrying HIV.
- It stated that discrimination is more pronounced among the lowest socio-economic bracket.
- There are positive indications for BFLA as a friendly clinic, but some people mentioned concerns of confidentiality.
- It was mentioned that in the private clinic care is better than the public.
- It was mentioned that the police and military did not employ HIV-positive people.
- Most FSW want to leave sex work, said that with better education and job opportunities they would leave sex work.
- The most popular areas of interest to leave sex work are: cooking, sewing, florist, sales and cosmetology.
- The respondents presented the following ideas as their perception of weak areas of the civil organizations
  - a. Unclear visions
  - b. Inadequate management
  - c. Duplication of efforts and actions
  - d. Poorly managed activism
  - e. Little capacity in project formulation
  - f. Inadequate monitoring and evaluation.

All relevant feedback including specific recommendations will be reflected in the final report which will serve to better inform our HIV programs, campaigns, operational plans for greater improvements in our prevention, care & treatment and further harmonization work. This particular study was conducted by Chicatelli Associates a research firm hired by

## C-Net+ Joins HIV Response

The National AIDS Commission applauds and welcomes Collaborative Network for Persons Living with HIV (C-Net+) to the national response Belize's first registered network of People with HIV as registered with the Company Act under Chapter 250 of the Laws of Belize. This reality marks a momentous achievement in advancing the engagement of PLHIV within the response. The objectives of the charitable organization, as delineated in the articles, are to provide greater linkages with existing partner agencies within the response as well as to contribute to the self-empowerment of members.

C-Net+ has a full executive board with Mr. Eric Castellanos as the President. The Network is

proud to use this medium to announce its first General Assembly which is being organized from October 14-16, 2011. During this assembly, the network's strategic plan will be developed through the sponsorship and support of UNAIDS, UNDP, and REDCA+. Kudos goes to all the members of the positive community who worked tirelessly to achieve this for this milestone.

## *News Highlights*

### Upcoming Events:

1. *Leadership Development Program Workshop, 26 - 28 September, 2011. Organized by CNET in collaboration with UNDP and facilitated by regional specialists.*
2. *National Dialogue on Human Rights on 12 - 13 October. Organized by WINN Belize in collaboration with UNDP.*
3. *CNET's first General Assembly at the Black Orchid Resort on 14 - 16 October. Sponsored by UNAIDS.*