

STANDARD FORMAT FOR PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION ON BEST PRACTICES

1. The Institution that is implementing the best practice:
 - The Integrity Commission

2. Title:
 - The Prevention of Corruption Act, Chapter 105, Revised Edition 2011 of the Laws of Belize [POCA] seeks to strengthen measures for preventing and combating corruption and establish probity, integrity and accountability in public life.

 - Under Section 3 of the POCA, the Integrity Commission was established in 2009, and after years of inactivity, it was reactivated in 2017.

 - With advice from the 1st and 2nd Review of the UNCAC Convention, Belize has been working on its recommendations, thereby adopting a legal and regulatory framework that protects witnesses of public servants and private citizens who report acts of corruption out of good faith.

 - Legislation such as the Protection of Witnesses Act, 2022 and the Protected Disclosure Bill (which is in the process of becoming law) will protect witnesses and whistleblowers in criminal proceedings.

3. Description of the best practice:
 - Persons in public life must declare their financial affairs upon becoming elected. Hence, there is a record-keeping of their financial affairs to be declared one year before and one year after they demit office, so that a comparison can be made of their financial affairs.

 - Since its reactivation in 2017, persons in public life have been in compliance with their financial disclosure regime as per the POCA. Holding persons of public life accountable will allow for the people's trust to be regained.

 - There has been enforcement of an administrative fine of \$100.00 per day for each day that the person in public life, as defined in the POCA, fails to file a declaration under Section 19 (2) of POCA.

 - Investigations have been carried out on former public officials holding office, and the misuse for their private gain leading to corruption.

- The Commission has the power to investigate, summon and examine witnesses, and bring forth evidence such as books and documents etc., failure to disclose such information\details carries a fine and imprisonment or both.

4. Reasons/Importance:

- The importance of the commission is to promote integrity and tackle corruption and misconduct, to which investigations and hearings are the main tools to achieve its objective. The commission is the leading role in preventing, investigating and sanctioning corruption while enhancing integrity.
- The regulation of all persons in public life is the key to ensuring proper and efficient performance on their duties.

5. Approach:

- The design and methodology employed were to establish the commission under the Prevention of Corruption Act Chapter 105 of the Laws of Belize; the powers of the commission as set out in Part II Section IV (Integrity Commission).

6. Implementation:

- The commission will continue to educate the public on integrity and the public complaints mechanism and their protection through the present legislation and the new legislations coming into effect.

7. Outcome:

- The commission's outcome is to contribute to the reduction and elimination of corruption of persons in public life.

8. Potential for technical cooperation:

- Yes, this best practice can be used by other countries

9. Follow-up:

- The commission is responsible to investigate complaints regarding non-compliance with or breach of the provisions of POCA.

10. Lessons:

- Due to the years of inactivity of the integrity commission, there has been a public outcry due to the lack of accountability, integrity and transparency in the financial affairs of those in public life.
- There is not an equal level of financial compliance across all those in public life. Some members report more thorough report than others as there any many discrepancies in some submissions.

11. Documentation: Where can further information be found regarding the best practice (e.g., Internet links)? http://www.oas.org/juridico/PDFs/mesicic5_blz_resp_annex6.pdf

12. Contact:

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