

## Observatory on Strategies and Mechanisms for Effective Public Management Belize

(Currently under review by the Ministry of the Public Service, Elections and Boundaries)

August 2015



### General Information

#### General Information

##### By Country: Indicators on Public Management

###### 1. The Government of Belize

**Official Government Website:** The Website unifies the information of the institutions that are part of the Executive Branch.

###### 2. United Nations:

**World Statistics Pocketbook:** The United Nations website on data and statistics comprises economic and social indicators on the country.

###### 3. The World Bank

**World Development Indicators:** Presents statistics and indicators in several topics from finances and equality to climate change.

###### 4. The Commonwealth:

**General Information:** The Belize's Commonwealth profile includes the country key facts regarding geography, population, transport, GDP and International Relations.

**Local Government Forum:** The Forum presents the key facts on local government organization and legislation in Belize.

##### By Country: Studies and Investigations

###### 1. United Nations:

**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs:** Presents the Belize Country Profile on Public Management. This document includes information on the legal structure, civil service, citizen participation and public expenditure.

###### 2. Inter-American Bank of Development:

**Strengthening Government Effectiveness in Belize Achievements and Challenges in Planning, Investment, and M&E Systems:** It is a study carried out by Jorge Kaufmann and Juan Pablo Cuesta in July 2015. The document is an assessment

of the country's progresses and challenges regarding the planning, and monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

## Long Term Vision

### Introduction

Belize is a democratic parliamentary state organized under a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch is represented by the Governor General and following the legislative elections, the prime minister is usually the leader of the majority coalition and is appointed by the Governor General. After being part of the British Empire, it became independent in 1981 retaining Queen Elizabeth II as head of the State. With a estimated population of 340 844 in 2014, Belize is the only country in continental Central America whose official language is English.

Regarding the Belize's long-term vision, the Cabinet, as the main executive organ and with the participation of civil society and representatives from a large variety of sectors, launched the "National Development Framework for Belize: Horizon 2030". The 46 pages document gathered the different perceptions and vision of an extensive range of actors about the country situation in 10 years (2010-2030).

### Institutional Framework

"The National Development Framework for Belize: Horizon 2030" established a complete institutional framework for its implementation, which includes a monitoring and evaluation scheme. In this order of ideas, the National Cabinet is conceived as the main decision making organ. Then, the Framework envisaged the creation of three main organs: the Horizon 2030 Commission, the Horizon 2030 Coordinating Unit and at the territorial level, the District Committees.

Institution	Description	Responsibilities
<b>Horizon 2030 Commission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-sectoral oversight body.</li> <li>Broad representation reflective of the H2030 steering Committee.</li> <li>It is constituted by labor unions, private sector, rural sector and NGOs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the implementation of Horizon 2030.</li> <li>Report to the National Assembly on the progress of its implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>Horizon 2030 Coordinating Unit</b>	The Unit is situated in the Ministry of Economic Development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist the Commission in preparing the annual reports.</li> <li>Assistance in the organization of the H2030 consultations every 3 -4 years.</li> <li>Assist the Ministries in developing strategic policies and action plans.</li> </ul>
<b>District Committees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprised of senior official of ministries and departments: District Agricultural officer,</li> </ul>	The main responsibility is ensuring that District priorities are addressed in policy and

	Rural Development officer, Women’s Development officer and Education officer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandate and structure should facilitate inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial planning implementation.</li> </ul>	planning efforts.
<b>Ministries PPU</b>	All ministries.	Develop strategies, policies and action plan for the ministry.

### Strategies and Mechanisms

The document stated as Belize’s expected [2030 vision](#) that “Belize is a country of peace and tranquility, where citizens live in harmony with the natural environment and enjoy a high quality of life. Belizeans are an energetic, resourceful and independent people looking after their own development in a sustainable way”. Subsequently, it delimited the public action in six strategic areas and transversal core values.

- **Strategic areas:**

The country’s strategic areas listed throughout the document are divided in specific goals and strategies to their materialization. In the following section the main areas, goals and strategies are indicated.

**1. Democratic governance for effective public administration and sustainable development:** In order to have an effective governance framework, citizen participation, accountability and effective management of public resources to meet public needs should be ensured. Consequently, the document set six main strategies.

**Strategy #1: Accountability both in government and politics:** To achieve it, the document contemplates the need to expand information to be published by the government, the preparation of regular performance reports and the inclusion of programs in governance and democracy in the formal education curriculum.

**Strategy #2: Eradication of corruption and the improvement of the public service delivery:** The formulation of a zero tolerance anti-corruption policy is at the core. Then, the strengthening of laws regarding the transparency and the engagement of private sector in implementing high standard of ethics in business are also taken into account.

**Strategy #3: The transformation of the political culture:** To develop this strategy, the document included the improvement of rules to determine beneficiaries of social programs, and some activities related to the training of political aspirants and the participation of women in politics.

**Strategy #4: Strengthening democratic governance:** As a part of the process of political reform, two main activities are involved, on the one hand, increasing public knowledge about the alternatives of governments in order to the eventual move to a Republic. On the other hand, transform the Senate into an elected body that will be able to hold the government accountable.

**Strategy #5: Strengthening accountability of village administration:** This strategy involves the education and training of village council members after every election and the clarification of the responsibilities at all levels of government.

**Strategy #6: Strengthening law enforcement and access to justice:** The activities included in this strategy are related to the improvement of training and the infrastructure of the Police Department. Likewise, working on the relation between that Department and the community is also contemplated.

**2. Education for Development - Education for Life:** “The National Development Framework for Belize: Horizon 2030” stated the importance of education for development. In that sense, the 2030 goals regarding education involve the ensuring of universal education under the principles of quality and equality. In order to do that, it also established five main strategies:

**Strategy #1: Strengthen management, monitoring and accountability in the education system:** The reform of the education system, the importance of an efficient human resources management and the development of a system of incentives are at the center of this strategy.

**Strategy #2: Improve access to education:** It is related to the expansion of the quantity of secondary school places, the development of other means to deliver education and the promotion of internet access. The above, should be provided under the condition of gratuity and with a rural emphasis.

**Strategy #3: Improve delivery and relevance of the education curriculum:** The third strategy includes four dimension of the educational reform. 1. “Educate to build character” integrates both civic and extracurricular education. 2. “Educate to build social cohesiveness”, which takes into account the need to acknowledge the importance of Belize’s cultural and ethnic diversity. It also refers to the demystification of gender issues and awareness. 3. “Educate to emphasize respect and appreciation for the natural environment”, corresponds to the re-introduction of gardening and agriculture to the primary and secondary school curriculum, and an environmental emphasis in general. 4. “Broaden the curriculum and integrate new methods of teaching”, which refers to expanding the teaching methods and training teachers in English and Spanish to manage children with learning disabilities.

**Strategy #4: Develop education support systems and services:** This strategy relates to all those services that are crucial for children to fully enjoy the education provided. Therefore, these services include schools feeding programs, school and family counselors, physiological support for children, adolescents and adults that are willing to start or continue their studies, among others.

**Strategy #5: Develop adult and continuing education:** It is constituted by nationwide literacy programs and the provision of incentives for adults to get enrolled in an educational program.

**3. Economic resilience: Generating resources for long term development.** The main goals within this area are related to achieve a resilient economy by increasing productivity, competitiveness and environmental sustainability within a level playing field for all businesses.

**Strategy #1: Develop a strong small business sector to create jobs:** The Belize's government strategy is based in the provision of support and incentives to the creation of small business. The support that will be given by the government regards the provision of information, management and financial support and planning advice. Within this strategy, the National Development Framework emphasized in the participation of women and youth entrepreneurs.

**Strategy #2: Develop the domestic market as a springboard for exports to produce quality goods and services, and expand exports:** The development of this strategy includes the promotion of the domestic markets by regulating the illegal imports. Additionally, the strategy takes into account the need to foster investment in productive sector and the key role of public investment in infrastructure and to make technology more accessible.

**Strategy #3: Build a vibrant agriculture sector and strong rural communities:** It regards the improvement of the access to land, finance and insurance for farmers. As well, the strategy is centered in a higher government involvement in giving incentives to farmers and communities by transforming the tax system and investing in technology and infrastructure.

**Strategy #4: Support sustainable fisheries and build sustainable and responsible tourism:** The Government's role within this strategy is to provide the necessary support to improve standards, quality, access to technology and training within the fishing sector. On the other hand, regarding tourism, the main strategy is related to the importance of providing real solutions to crime situation.

**Strategy #5: Target selected new sectors with growth potential:** This strategy involves the identification of new sectors such as finance, knowledge sector and green business. In addition, it also bears in mind the need to build institutional capacity to develop cultural industries.

**Strategy #6: Implement a coherent and consistent macro-economic policy framework:** As a crucial part of the macro-economic policy, the Framework envisaged as a primary strategy the pursuance of a prudent, consistent and sustainable fiscal policy. Moreover, as the participation of the financial sector in the economy is growing, the document acknowledged that need for its regulation is increasingly important.

#### **4. The Bricks and the Mortar: Healthy Citizens and a Healthy Environment**

**4.1. Healthy Environment:** The Belize's 2030 vision took as transversal subject the protection of the environment, since it constitutes the basis of the main economic drivers: agriculture and tourism. Therefore, the document established the necessity to enforce laws and regulations regarding the environmental protection and the promotion of the sustainable development.

**Strategy #1: Incorporate environmental sustainability into development planning and strengthen protected areas management:** The formulation and implementation of a comprehensive natural resources and environmental policy is at the core of the strategy. In that sense, environmental disaster management strategies, the improvement of human capital in those areas and a reforestation plan are included in the policy.

**Strategy #2: Promote green energy and energy efficiency:** Since the green energy sector is a growing sector in Belize, the primary activity is referred to the creation of an institutional framework for producing a viable energy policy. Consequently, the policy might

include the strengthening of a regulatory framework, incentives to increase energy saving and investments in the production and use of renewable energy, and the formulation of a national transport policy making use of this types of energy.

**4.2. Healthy citizens:** In addition to the environmental protection, the Framework highlighted the importance of “universal access to affordable and high quality healthcare that provides citizens with preventative and curative health services throughout their lives”.

**Strategy #1: Universal access to healthcare:** In order to achieve universal access to healthcare, the Framework centered the governmental action in expanding the National Healthcare Insurance (NHI) scheme countrywide. Particularly, the document paid special attention to rural communities, elderly people and preventive healthcare.

**Strategy #2: Promote healthy lifestyles throughout the life cycle and establish family and community healthcare programs across the country:** The strategy empathizes in the promotion of preventive healthcare by focusing in people’s lifestyles. In addition it incorporates a gender based vision especially in relation to mental health problems.

**Strategy #3: Ensure accountability for the delivery of health services:** It regards transparency and accountability in the use of human and financial resources. Additionally, it takes into account the improvement of the institutional capacity for self-regulation and independent monitoring and enforcement of laws and codes.

- **Core values:**

Those strategies and the implementation plans should be guided or formulated on the basis of different core values, which are also meant to be the foundations of the community life. Therefore, the Horizon 2030 plan includes as Belize’s core values:

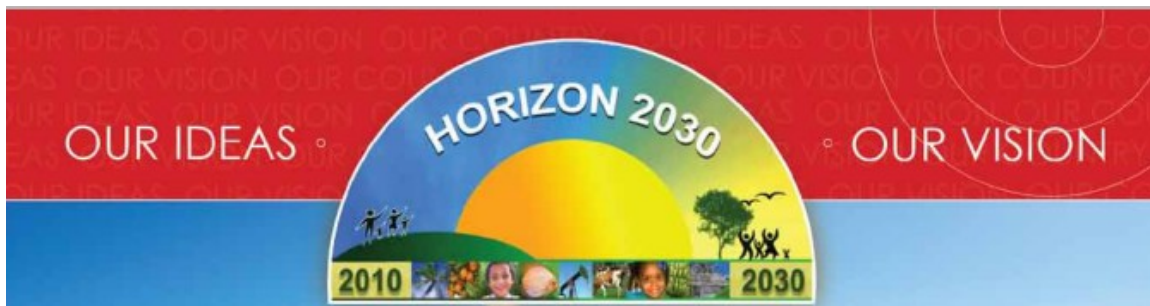
- 4.2.1.** Respect for the rule of law and human rights
- 4.2.2.** Education as a basic human right and a life-long process
- 4.2.3.** Transparency and accountability
- 4.2.4.** Fairness and equity
- 4.2.5.** Strong families as the foundation of stable communities
- 4.2.6.** Multi-culturalism and collective identity
- 4.2.7.** Vibrant resourcefulness and sel-reliance
- 4.2.8.** People participation in economic, social and political development patriotism
- 4.2.9.** Gender equity and non-discrimination in access to opportunities
- 4.2.10.** Excellence

## **National Strategies/Planning**

### **General Information**

Since 2010 all policies and programs should be developed and implemented in accordance with “The National Development Framework for Belize: Horizon 2030”. Therefore, each ministry is responsible for the planning and implementation of an action plan within its respective sector. As the document stated, the Horizon 2030 Coordinating Unit -located in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development- is in charge of assisting the other ministries in the planning and implementation of the Plans.

The [Horizon 2030](#) is part of the Belize’s governmental efforts to design a roadmap to guide the sectoral policies with special emphasis in economical and social development. As a result, some of the main general strategies in Belize are: “the Agriculture Development Management and Operational Strategy (ADMOS), the Belize Rural Area Development Strategy (BRADS), the National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (NSTMP), the National Land Use Policy and Planning Framework (NLUPP), the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), the National Protected Areas Policy and Systems Plan (NPAPSP), the National Health Plan and Policy and the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents”.



Source: [“The National Development Framework for Belize: Horizon 2030”](#).

## **Public Budget**

### **Introduction**

Belize is classified by the [World Bank](#) as an upper middle income country. As a result of its richness in natural resources, the main economical sources are agriculture and tourism. In addition, since the last decade the services’ sector has acquired more relevance in the country’s GDP. However, as a result of it’s the importance of mainly primary sectors in the economy, Belize continues to be highly vulnerable to external shocks.

The chapter IX of the [National Constitution](#) contains the dispositions regarding the planning and implementation of the public budget. The section 115 (1) states that “the Minister responsible for finance shall prepare and lay before the House of Representatives in each financial year estimates of the revenues and expenditures of Belize for the next following financial year”.

### **Institutional Framework**

During the first stages of the budget process, the [Ministry of Finance](#) is responsible of planning the annual budget after receiving the estimates of each department and ministry. As stated in its [mission](#), the Ministry of Finance shall “advise on, coordinate and implement the government’s economic and fiscal policies and programs including the generation and allocation of financial resources to provide appropriate public services and to contribute to the overall development of Belize”.

Following the formulation of the budget, the Ministry of Finance presents the estimates of the budget of the next fiscal year to the Belize’s [National Assembly](#). Then, the legislature is responsible for its discussion and approval, which transform the national budget in the Appropriation Bill.

Since the expedition of the Appropriation Bill each fiscal year and regarding the section 120(2) of the National Constitution, the [Auditor General](#) “shall satisfy himself that all moneys that have been appropriated by the National Assembly and disbursed have been applied to the purposes to which they were so appropriated and that the expenditure conforms to the authority that governs it; and at least once in every year audit and report on the public accounts of Belize”. Regarding the public budget, the Auditor General is responsible of the accounts’ report submission to the Minister of Finances to be presented before the House of Representatives (public elected camera of the National Assembly).

### **Strategies and Mechanisms**

The budget process can be divided in three main stages, as follows:

- **Submission and preparation:** Where departments and ministries sent to the Ministry of Finance their financial estimates, performance indicators, purposes, priorities and planned results. The Ministry of Finance analyzes the information and makes the respective assignments to each ministry and department in order to formulate the Annual Budget Estimates Document.
- **Presentation and debates:** During this stage the Minister of Finance presents the Document to the House of Representatives, who debates the budget some weeks later. Throughout the debates, the House is allowed to carry out public consultations. Then, the House passes the budget and sends it to the Senate, who is in charge of the ratification. Finally, the Governor General signs the budget into law.
- **Audit:** The Belize’s constitution establishes that the Auditor General shall at least once in every year audit and report on the public accounts of Belize to the National Assembly. The report is presented first to the Ministry of Finance, “who shall, not later than seven days after the House of Representatives first meets after he has received the report, lay it before the House”.

### **Professionalized Civil Service**

#### **General Information**

Belize’s public administration constitutes an important part of the country’s GDP. According to the Inter-American Bank of Development, in 2011 the personnel expenditures as a percentage of GDP was 10.3%, which makes the country’s public administration one of the most expensive in



Central America compared to the size of its economy. However, the percentage of people working in Belize's public service in 2012 was 4.7% of the population.

The part of the government in charge of managing the civil service is the Ministry of the Public Service and Elections & Boundaries. According to the section 106 of the National Constitution, the functions of the Ministry are:

- (a) The formulation of schemes for recruitment to the public service.
- (b) The determination of a code of conduct for public officers.
- (c) The fixing of salaries and privileges.
- (d) The principles governing the promotion and transfer of public officers.
- (e) Measures to ensure discipline, and to govern the dismissal and retirement of public officers, including the procedures to be followed.
- (f) The procedure for delegation of authority by and to public officers.
- (g) Generally [advice] for the management and control of the public service".

In addition to the Ministry, the Constitution established three commissions regarding the appointment, promotion, transfer and retirement of public officers. These commissions are:

1. **The Public Services Commission:** Following the section 106, "the power to appoint persons to hold or act in offices in the public service, other than the offices in the judicial and legal services and the security services, including the power to transfer or to confirm appointments, and, (...) the power to exercise disciplinary control over persons and the power to remove such persons from office, shall vest in the Public Services Commission".
2. **The Security Services Commission:** The Constitutional section 110D contemplated that the Security Services Commission had "the power to appoint persons to hold or act in offices in the security services, including the power to make appointments, and to deal with all matters relating to the conditions of service of such officers and, (...) the power to exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in such offices and the power to remove such persons".
3. **The Judicial and Legal Services Commission:** The section 110F gives the Commission "the power to review the suitability of applicants, and to appoint persons to hold or act in offices in the judicial and legal services, including the power to make appointments, promotions, transfers, to confirm appointments, and to deal with all matters relating to the conditions of service of such judicial and legal officers and, (...) the power to exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in such offices and the power to remove such persons from office"

In all case, the access to the civil service in Belize is based on a system of merits. Therefore, "Regulation 11 of the Public Service Regulations provides that officers shall be qualified for appointments and promotions; and lists "merit" first, along with performance, as a criteria for promotions. See below:

- (1) No officer shall be appointed or promoted to a post for which he is not qualified.
- (2) The promotion of officers to fill vacancies shall be approved by the relevant Commission, and the Commission shall base its decision on the following factors in descending order of importance:- (a) Performance/Merit; (b) Integrity/Professionalism; (c) Experience/Employment History".

## Decentralization

### Introduction

Belize is a parliamentary democracy. Even though its constitution doesn't contemplate provisions for local governments, the country has made pivotal efforts to regulate the local administration. In 2009, the national government issued a policy of local governance that had as a provision the integration of the local governments to the constitution. The country is organized in 6 administrative districts: Belize, Cayo, Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek and Toledo. Each district is composed by different types of local government (see strategies and mechanisms).

### Institutional Framework

The [Ministry of Labor, Local Government, Rural Development, NEMO and Immigration and Nationality](#) has been in charge of the oversight of local governments. It is divided in four areas: labor, local government and rural development, national emergency management and the Department of immigration and nationality. Regarding local governments, the local government and rural development area is divided in two departments: Rural Development and Local Development. The former is in charge of the villages and communities, and the latter of the municipalities. The Ministry's functions regarding local governments include:

- "The provision of legislative and regulatory oversight to the local government sector.
- The provision of administrative and legal advice.
- The promotion and coordination of interaction between the public, private and NGO sectors.
- Providing support to programming and budgeting through financial and technical assistance.
- Monitoring and evaluating progress on activities within the sector".

### Strategies and Mechanisms

- **Legislation:**

Act	Description
<a href="#">Belize City Council Act 1999</a>	Regulates the composition, election, appointment and functions of the council of Belize city.
<a href="#">Belmopan City Council Act 1999</a>	Defines the functions of the Belmopan City council, its responsibilities and the election, composition and appointment of its members.
<a href="#">Town Councils Act 1999</a>	Establishes councils for the towns' administrative units. It gives provisions regarding the duties, responsibilities and functions of each council. In addition, to the rules that govern the election and appointments of their members.
<a href="#">Village Councils Act 1999</a>	Defines the role and responsibilities of village and community councils. The act formalizes the village councils that have existed since 1950.
<a href="#">Inferior Courts Act 2000-</a>	Provides dispositions in relation to the role and powers of the

2003. Part VIII

'alcaldes'.

- **Forms of local government:**

As a result of the legislation noted above, Belize's local governments are elected in a first-past-the-post system, and they are organized in four types of organization:

**City and Town Councils:** The country is composed by seven town and city municipalities. On the one hand, the District of Belize has one town council and one city council and the District of Cayo has two town councils and one city council. On the other hand, the districts of Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek and Toledo have one town council each. Both town and cities councils cover the Belize's urban area.

According to the law, the city and town councils are governed by a mayor and a group of councilors. The mayor has the role of executive officer of the local government. He in agreement with the local administrator and the council members decides the portfolio of the government. The subjects covered by the council's portfolio can include "environmental protection, town zoning, tourism and recreational planning". Elections for city and town councils are held every three years; both councilors and majors are elected on the basis of a majority system. However, elections are carried out separately.

**Village Councils:** According to the [Village Councils Act](#), the creation of such entity is decided by the Ministry of Labor, Local Government, Rural Development, NEMO and Immigration and Nationality; after meeting some conditions described throughout the Act's Part II. The elections for the council members and chairman are held separately every three years.

The Village Councils in addition to the Community Councils and Alcaldes cover Belize's rural area. There are 193 Village and Community Councils in Belize. According to the Statistical Institute of Belize, their distribution throughout the six districts is: Belize 32; Cayo 36; Corozal 27; Orange Walk 24; Stann Creek 25; and Toledo 49.

**Community Councils:** The Community Councils work in the same way as the Village Councils. However, they are established in areas that are not comprised within a city, town or village. Regarding the regulation, they must declare a community and shall be accepted by a ministerial order. After being recognized, the community can proceed to set up the Council.

**The *Alcalde* System:** It system that governs the indigenous communities that are mostly located in the Southern part of Belize. Nevertheless, any community can decide to organize itself under an *alcalde* system by requesting it to its own administrative authority. Although the system is similar to that of the village, the role of the *alcalde*- in addition to the regular functions of a village chair person- has judiciary power.

Therefore, the *alcalde* has the power to "decide who lives in the village, and can also call for a communal cleaning (*fajina*) of the village". Under this power, an Inferior Court is established. The Court is headed by the *alcalde*, who shall maintain the law and order and has the capacity to judge petty crimes committed within its jurisdiction. There are 84 *alcaldes* in Belize (4 in the District of Stann Creek and 80 in the District of Toledo).

## **Cordination**

### **General Information**

The most important example of coordination between the different levels of government is related to the implementation of the [Long-term Vision Plan Horizon 2030](#). The framework established two coordination instances that are located in the Central Government. On the one hand, the **Horizon 2030 Commission**, it is defined as a “multi-sectoral oversight body with broad representation (...). [Its responsibility is to] monitor the implementation of Horizon 2030 and report to the National Assembly on the progress of its implementation”. On the other hand, **the Horizon 2030 Coordinating Unit** “will be situated in the Ministry of Economic Development. Responsibility The Unit will assist the Commission in preparing annual reports and in organizing Horizon 2030 consultations every 3-4 years”.

Regarding the local level, the document envisages the creation of **District Committees**. Those institutions “would be comprised of senior officials of ministries and departments with a mandate and structure to facilitate inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral planning implementation. [As a result, they have to] ensure that District priorities are addressed in policy and planning efforts”.

**Implementation Framework:** *Including Monitoring  
and Evaluation*



Source: ["The National Development Framework for Belize: Horizon 2030"](#).

## Information and Communications Technology

### General Information

Belize has made pivotal efforts to build strategies and initiatives regarding the ICT sector and the modernization of the State. [The Ministry of Energy, Science & Technology and Public Utilities](#) has formulated a [National Strategy on ICT](#). One of these concrete actions within this strategy is the National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Center. The National ICT Center was launched in 2010 with the cooperation of Taiwanese Technical Mission in the country. In addition to those initiatives, the [Ministry of Education](#) has included in its action plan an E-education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship initiative.



Source: National Assembly of Belize. "Inauguration of Belize National ICT Center" [online]. Available at: <http://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz/index.php/press-release-bna/158-inauguration-of-belize-national-ict-center>

## **Gender Perspective**

### **General Information**

Belize's government has made great efforts to tackle the gender disparity situation that the country has historically experienced. This issue is justified by the low performance of the country regarding gender equality indexes. For instance, in 2011, the country was ranked 97 of 187 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. As a response to this situation, the commitment of the government to improve women situation within the country is regarded in the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), including its optional protocol that was ratified in 2002. In addition, the Belize Women's Commission – established in 1982 to manage all the subjects relating to gender equality and women empowerment- has launched an initiative called the Women in Politics Program "to contribute to enhancing women's political participation in Belize by providing training and encouraging women to engage in the political arena at various governance levels"

However, there are still challenges regarding the participation of women in the economy and in politics. On the one hand, Belize was ranked 100 out of 142 countries in the Gender Gap Index 2014. In that sense, "although more women are obtaining secondary or higher education, this is not translating into lower unemployment or higher positions for women in the labor force". On the other hand, the number of women in public institutions - and in general their participation in public decisions-continues to be low. For example, "in the *alcalde* system, women are traditionally excluded from voting in the elections and in meetings".

## **Quality of public services**

### **General Information**

The Ministry of the Public Service and Elections & Boundaries has started to make important efforts to implement a strategy of public service modernization. Therefore, it is planning the

development of [a Quality Assurance / Customer Service Strategic Policy and Implementation Plan for the Belize Public Service](#). The execution of this strategy responds to one of the Ministry's Action Plan 2012-2017 pillars: "maintaining its role of policy-maker, regulator and mediator for the enhancement of the delivery of services".

Therefore, the Plan for the Belize Public Service would be based on:

- "The identification and revision of relevant documentation and reports with the objective of highlighting lessons learnt, and best practices which can be emulated in the Belize context.
- The identification and benchmarking of efforts developed and successfully utilized in Belize, the region and other relevant spheres with the objectives of developing and presenting an analysis of local and regional constraints, opportunities, and threats with special emphasis on the potential value-added from cooperation integration within the region.
- The engagement of stakeholders in public discussions and consultations, as well as focus group discussions which will facilitate buy-in".

## **Citizen Participation in Public Management**

### **General Information**

As a CARICOM member, the country is a signatory state to the [Charter of Civil Society for the Caribbean Community](#). This legal instrument contains the dispositions regarding the protection of rights and the empowerment of communities to participate in public management among the Caribbean States. In terms of the state's obligations regarding governance and citizen empowerment, the article XVII provides that "the States shall adopt and implement all appropriate measures to ensure good governance which is just, open and accountable". Then, it includes that states should recognize "that integral to the concept of good governance are the complementary roles of government, the social partners and the citizenry".

In addition, on the civil society side, the article XXIV recognizes that "the people have an important role to play in the pursuit and maintenance of good governance. Accordingly, the States shall build awareness, engender support and establish programs to foster sound values and positive attitudes and shall enhance individual and institutional capacities to secure objectives".

### **Strategies and Mechanisms**

At the national level, as noted before, citizen participation and government accountability is one pillar of the Belize's long-term vision. In this order of ideas, the *Democratic governance for effective public administration and sustainable development* pillar "aims to ensure citizen participation in the development strategy, accountability of political leaders and effective management of public resources to meet public needs".

At the local level, the law establishes that all city and town councils are obliged to held public consultations at least once a month. Regarding village councils, in principle meetings should be



open to the public. However, the chairperson has the capacity to decide which meeting should be carried out in private.

## **Evaluation of Policies and Programs**

### **General Information**

With the formulation of the [Horizon 2030 Strategy](#), Belize has committed itself to the formulation and implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for public policies and programs. Therefore, the Plan identifies the absence and the importance of a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for an effective public policy process. Therefore, "the Horizon 2030 framework seeks to focus on the community by anchoring development planning in the communities to promote relevance, ownership by beneficiaries and long term sustainability of results".