EIGHT GOALS ONE NATION: ACCELERATING PROGRESS TO ACHIEVE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Belize Scorecard and Outlook Report 2010 presents a comprehensive assessment of how well the country has performed in reaching the Goals, particularly those related to improving maternal health, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and ensuring access to water.

Moreover, it highlights the main challenges that Belize faces particularly in relation to poverty reduction, employment generation, access to sanitation and gender equality.

In the last two years the Government of Belize has addressed some of the challenges brought to light by the Report through innovative programmes and legislations. The summary below attempts to underscore both the key messages of the 2010 Report and more recent data, policies and initiatives aimed at the attainment of all Millennium Development Goals.
GOAL 1 – Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Goal 1 and Goal 8 - Develop Global Partnerships, both act as bookends for all the other MDGs. As a result, the macro successes, challenges and priorities for MDG 1 are echoed throughout all the other Goals. The fight against poverty, unemployment and inequalities remains very high on the political agenda.

More concretely:

Success: The Government of Belize has worked to secure co-financing at the multi-lateral and bilateral levels for investments in poverty reduction programmes and projects.

Challenge: The ongoing effects of the world economic downturn on export prices and the country’s debt obligations, and capacity limitation, all interact to lessen the fiscal space available to government, for accessing more capital to direct towards poverty reduction and development.

Priority: More than half of Belize’s population live in rural areas and more than half of those people are poor. The Belize Rural Finance Programme is geared towards offering access to micro-financing for the rural poor; targeting particularly women, youth, as well as small agricultural and non-agricultural entrepreneurs.

Priority: Strategic focus on the northern and southern districts for poverty reduction through 1) Completing Accompanying Measure for Sugar Programme which addresses quality assurance from field to mill for sugar cane, road rehabilitation (including farm roads and main trading roads etc.) and economic diversification support for those who desire to move away from cane production; 2) the on-going Banana Support Programme focuses on enhancing the performance of all stakeholders in the banana industry to improve competitiveness, as well as offer opportunities for economic diversification, with a spotlight on education as the tool to drive such diversification and providing for social infrastructure (water systems, electrification etc.) in the Banana Belt. The Belize Rural Development Project II (BRDP II) has three main results oriented goals - more efficient market driven and competitive Small and Micro-enterprises (SMEs) established for rural groups and communities; improving access to strategic infrastructure measures to create an enabling environment.
for rural development and strengthening policies and institutional environment within which rural enterprises, traders, processors, local organisations and communities operate.

**Success:** Since 1996, the Belize Social Investment Fund (BSIF) has responded to the human development needs of the poor and vulnerable to enable every citizen to fully develop, flourish and function to his or her maximum potential. The Fund approves projects and programmes and provide financial and technical assistance to community groups and local government organizations which provide basic services to the most severely affected groups in the country.

**Priority:** Urban poverty has both similar and differing dimensions than from rural poverty and the government has projects and programmes that address these similarities as well as the differences. The Community Action for Public Safety (CAPS), the Youth and Community Transformation projects seek to address triple concerns of security, youth and poverty. The Southside Poverty Alleviation project and Belize Municipal Development project are underway and are levelled at improving existing social infrastructure and providing for new infrastructure where the need is identified.
GOAL 2 – Achieve Universal Primary Education

Belize has made significant progress in primary education, particularly in relation to net enrolment.

More concretely:

**Success:** Accordingly with 2010 data census figure, the net enrolment has significantly increased reaching 95 per cent in 2011.

**Challenge:** Lack of adequate data continues to be a concern, including the mapping of the 5 per cent of children still out of primary school.

**Challenge:** The recruitment and the retention of qualified teachers represent both a challenge and a priority.

**Priority:** The Government is rolling out the *Quality School Initiative* aimed at improving the quality of education through a *bottom up* approach. The initiative encourages schools, through self-evaluation to define self-improvement plans. Pilot schools are then given some resources to address the challenges they have identified.

**Priority:** Strengthening public-private partnerships aimed at mobilising financial resources in support of the Quality School Initiatives.

**Priority:** The Ministry of Education is planning to increase the scope of its *school feeding programmes*. One programme is currently being rolled out in Belize River Valley area (targeting 300 students) and in the next few weeks another programme will be launched in the Belize City South Side (targeting 500 students).
Success: The literacy rate of 15-24 years old increased from 70.3 per cent in 1992 to 94.7 per cent in 2006, surpassing the literacy target of 90.6 per cent for 2009. Belize is on track to meet the target of 100 per cent literacy among persons 15-24 years by 2015.

Success: Belize has made significant progress in increasing girls’ school enrolment at all levels. For instance, in the Toledo District, where girls traditionally were underrepresented at the secondary school level, there has been marked improvements and enrolment figures have increased from 558 in 2006-07 to 801 in the 2010-11 period.

Challenge: Boys’ participation in the education system, particularly at the secondary level and above is a national concern. Boys tend to drop out for several reasons including socialisation which perpetuates the stereotype that no matter the age, it is the responsibility of boys and men to be breadwinners.

Priority: The Government has introduced a Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (called BOOST) targeting the poorest families. The families receive a cash transfer if they meet certain conditions, including school attendance (85% attendance on a monthly basis). One of the objectives of the programme is to increase boys’ attendance, particularly at the secondary level.


Priority: Government’s efforts to improve women’s political participation include the Women in Politics Project which began in October 2009 and has offered several leadership training initiatives targeting women of all ages of both rural and urban locations. There have been two completed cohorts of the programme involving 53 women at the intake level and where 47 finished for the first cohort, and the second had 25 starting and 22 completing the programme. The third cohort currently has 20 participants and graduation is expected in March 2012.
Priority: Born out of disparate sub projects under the social assistance programme (a part of the portfolio of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation), since 2008 the Government has offered various types of social support to the poor. These supports have been reconciled and launched as the Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation initiative (BOOST) in 2010. Households entering the programme need to comply with several conditions ranging from a valid social security number as a form of identification, ensuring the immunisation of children and their school attendance. Moreover, pregnant women are required to attend pre natal care, while elderly participants’ responsibilities include yearly health check-ups. Furthermore, payments are made via credit unions to encourage those who would not normally do so, including women to open a bank account and increase savings.

Priority: Supporting single mothers’ project - started in October 2008 with the aim of providing professional skills training to single mothers in the following areas: housekeeping, childcare, sewing, and cosmetology. The project also entails personal and professional coaching and free access to childcare facilities, to enable the mothers to attend the training. 2012 will be the fifth cycle of the programme. So far 232 single mothers and their families have been through the programme and the Women’s Department does continue to offer family support to these graduates.

Priority: Advocacy campaigns aimed at ending gender based violence and at the promotion of Women’s rights are being developed and rolled out throughout the country.

Success: The proportion of women employed in the non-agricultural sector has increased from 38.7 per cent in 1995 to 41.7 per cent in 2007, signalling the opening up of labour markets to women. The Labour Amendment Act No. 3, approved in 2011, grants for the equitable treatment of women in the labour force.

Challenge: The lack of adequate Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) legislation undermines progress in the provision of physical well-being of persons in the workforce. The approval of such Act is a priority.

Challenge: Gender stereotypes, traditional gender roles, and socialization of both women and men severely hinder the advancement of gender equality and of women empowerment. Greater advocacy on the meaning, scope and importance of Gender Mainstreaming is needed.
GOAL 4 – Reduce Child Mortality

Belize is making very good progress towards reducing child mortality. The country has already met the target of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015, and aims to further improve it.

More concretely:

Success: Both infant and child mortality have shown decreasing trends over the years. The under-five mortality rate Belize has declined from 23.7 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 22.5 per 1,000 live births in 2009, resulting in early achievement of the MDG target.

Success: Children immunisation against measles increased from 69 in 1992 to 96.6 in 2009. Belize is on track to achieve the target of 100 per cent by 2015.

Challenge: The main causes of death occur in the neonatal period and inadequate nutrition is one of the leading causes.
GOAL 5 – Improve Maternal Health

Belize has made qualitative progress towards improving maternal health and has succeeded in bringing to zero the number of maternal deaths.

More concretely:

Success: Maternal mortality has been on a decreasing trend in recent years. In 2010 and 2011 there have been zero maternal mortality deaths, putting Belize well on target on this Goal.

Success: Over 95 per cent of births are now attended by skilled health personnel, on track for achieving antenatal coverage (98 per cent in 2008).

Priority: Bringing down adolescent birth rate.
GOAL 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

Belize has made remarkable progress in reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

More concretely:

Success: Belize has achieved a reduction of 82 per cent in the number of malaria positive cases between 2000 and 2008 exceeding the expected target of 50 per cent for 2010. Belize is on track to achieve the malaria and TB related objectives by 2015.

Success: The incidence of malaria cases per 1,000 persons in the population fell significantly from 49.3 in 1994 to 1.7 in 2008. Belize is on track to achieve the target of halting the spread of malaria by 2015.

Success: In fighting HIV/AIDS new infections of HIV are down. In 2009, the total number of newly diagnosed HIV Infections was 365, indicating a relative decrease of 14 per cent from 2008. There is also progress in access to treatment and coverage rate, which has increased from 48.7 per cent in 2007 to 50 per cent in 2008, and to 62 per cent at the end of 2009. Moreover, 89 per cent of pregnant women receive HIV testing, and 48/52 of newborns receive prophylaxis.

Success: There has been significant progress in reducing the incidence rate of malaria infection. The rate went from 43.5 per 1,000 population in 1995 to 5.9 in 2000 (1,486 positive cases), 3.8 in 2004, and 1.7 in 2008 (540 positive cases).

Success: The Ministry of Health’s investment in early detection and treatment systems to control chronic diseases has showed marked gains.

Success: The prevalence rate for TB went down from 78 (1990) to 26.7 per 100,000 in 2009. Belize is on track to meet the TB target.

Challenge: There are not sufficient public awareness initiatives on HIV/AIDS and against HIV stigma.
Belize has made significant strides in the stewardship of its natural resources to ensure that it continues to be the source of economic growth and social progress. It has succeeded in bringing clean water to multiple communities and in increasing the share of population benefitting from an improved water source. However, progress in access to sanitation facilities has been slower.

More concretely:

**Success:** The enabling environment for responsible resources management has been significantly strengthened and bolstered by a number of public policy instruments that guide the continued, sustainable use of Belize’s natural resources; these instruments include: Horizon 2030, National Protected Areas Policy and System Plan, Land Use Policy and Integrated Planning Framework, Energy Policy, Land Management Program, Forest Policy, National Integrated Water Resource Act, and World Bank Policy note on Natural Resources for Climate Resilient Growth.

**Challenge:** Although the baseline information and strategies are in place, coordinated implementation of these policy documents will take considerable resources that exceed Government of Belize’s budget allocation capacity for these areas.

**Success:** The Government of Belize has issued: (i) a moratorium on the clearance of mangroves, (ii) a national ban on bottom trawling for shrimp and (iii) a ban on the sale of coastal shoals, and lands in protected areas. It also (iv) leads the region in percentage of marine no-take zones. These initiatives demonstrate Belize’s commitment to the responsible use and conservation of the country’s natural resources.

**Challenge:** These decisions come at significant opportunity costs to the Government and people of Belize. Significant financing must be mobilised to ensure continued progress in meeting our commitments, while we continue to meet the socio-economic needs of our growing population.
Priorities:
1. A Climate Change Office that will oversee the development of a climate change strategy for Belize that will allow for vulnerable populations to better respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
2. Institutionalisation of the natural resource management components like the National Integrated Water Resources Management (NIRWA), the National Protected System (NPAS), National Forest Policy and National Land Use Policy;
3. Explore expansion of the Solid Waste Management Project beyond the Western Corridor to ensure proper disposal and management of waste;
4. Increase service delivery of land management unit countrywide, to improve internal controls, safeguard files and land tenure via the implementation of the Land portfolio Land management program; and
5. Implement the strategies and recommendations outlined in the National Energy Policy Framework to set the foundation for Belize’s energy security and transformation to a low carbon economy.

Success: Belize will reach the target of 100 per cent access to improved water source for both urban and rural communities by 2015. Official data from the SIB indicates that the share of the population with an improved water source increased from 43.6 per cent in 1995 to 76.4 per cent in 2006 and 90.3 per cent in 2010.

Success: Belize passed a National Integrated Water Resources Act in 2011 aimed at ensuring water resource management and protection. The implementation of this Act puts Belize on target to ensure access to potable water. It also safeguards the country’s water resources ensuring that Belize can meet its development targets.

Challenge: Since 2007 progress in sanitation has been slow. In 2009, 30 per cent of Belizens, mostly rural dwellers, still relied on systems classified as inadequate. The coverage achieved, 70 per cent of the population, is well-below the goal of the 94.6 per cent set for 2009.

Priority: Belize is a MDG’s plus country when it comes to water access. The focus is now towards ensuring that all people have access to adequate sanitation.
GOAL 8 – Develop Global Partnerships

This last Millennium Development Goal was born out of the recognition that for countries like Belize to achieve the rest of the Goals, an international environment which is conducive to their attainment must be sought and sustained.

More concretely:

Success: The benefit of new technologies, especially information and communication, has become more widespread in Belize. The use of cellular phones has rapidly increased from 6.7 persons per 100 in 2000 to 53.2 per 100 in 2008.

Success: The number of internet subscribers has increased from 6 per 100 in 2000 to 11.3 per 100 in 2008.

Success: The gross international reserves increased from US$115 million in 2000 (the equivalent of 0.2 months of imports) to US$218 million in 2010 (the equivalent of 3.2 months of imports).

Challenge: While the primary balance of payments was above 2 percent of GDP over the past five years and the overall deficit was below 2 percent of GDP during the last four years, Belize continues to face challenges in fiscal consolidation. As a consequence, there are obstacles in reducing the debt-to-GDP ratio. Moreover, there are challenges in preserving investors’ confidence and FDI inflows. Finally, Belize is still far from setting up core rules of transparent, accountable, inclusive and responsive governance that can generate local consensus and international support.

Priority: The following priorities are now very high in the political agenda: 1) supporting and promoting sustained growth to facilitate both poverty reduction and development, 2) enhancing Belize’s role within the international community, 3) improving public financial management, 4) facilitating structural transformation, including the modernization of Belize’s regulatory and legal institutions, 5) improving Belize’s credit rating, and 6) promoting agreements and opportunities enhancing global trade. The pursuit of the above priorities will allow greater integration with Caribbean economies and gains from international trade and the financial system.
**Challenge:** Belize is making slow progress in relation to *Trade Policy* and *Development Progress*. The challenge is to further develop a legal framework that will allow greater integration with the international trade and financial system.

**Success:** Implementation of the *Aid for Trade Strategy*, launched in January 2011. One of its milestones is the leverage of the market access opportunities created by the CARIFORUM|EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). This will increase exports by building productive capacity and modernising trade policy and regulations.

**Success:** Belize has leveraged relationships with Central American SICA partners. The *Partial Scope Agreement (PSA)* with Guatemala was ratified in 2010 and has increased by 100 percent exports which are currently at more than US$16 million.

**Priority:** Belize is negotiating a partial scope agreement with Mexico. This will be followed by negotiations with El Salvador and Honduras.

**Challenge:** Strong and deliberate advocacy is required to enable policy makers, technocrats and the private sector to leverage foreign trade as the tool to advance development goals. Lack of capacity within the Directorate General continues to hinder success in this area.

**Priorities:** These are the key trade related priorities: 1) **Mainstreaming trade in the nation’s development strategies**, 2) **Increasing the collaboration between Public and Private entities**, 3) **Developing strong civil society and community-based enterprises**, 4) **Reforming current trade and integration agreements**, 5) **Developing trade policy framework aimed at balancing trade liberalization and trade protection mechanisms**, while enabling innovation.