



# Women's Issues Network of Belize

Shadow Report presented to CEDAW  
In relation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Period State Party Report  
of Government of Belize  
CEDAW Conference, July 2007, New York

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Submitted on: MAY 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007

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## **INTRODUCTION**

When Belize became a signatory to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in March 1990, it committed itself to promote women's human rights, and, to take national action to ensure access to, and enjoyment of, these rights.

Women's Issues Network of Belize (WIN-Belize), an umbrella organization of NGOs, was asked to determine whether those ultimately affected by Belize's obligation to create, modify, and implement policies and procedures, in conjunction with CEDAW requirements, are aware of the means at their disposal to improve their lives and, or living conditions; as well as, to determine what issues affect women in both the Urban and Rural areas of Belize.

This report includes information obtained via consultation with representatives of WIN-Belize member organizations and reviews of various documents referenced in the Government's Report, and, of available statistics. Focus group discussions were held with women from various villages in Rural Belize and interviews were conducted with various other individuals involved in human development. A general evaluation of the implementation and realization of CEDAW, as well as reflections on a number of critical issues, including the equality, development, and advancement of women, were addressed. This report is not a comprehensive evaluation of issues described in the Government's periodic report; instead, it critically assesses the status of Belizean women in terms of education, health, the economy, and violence against women. It also provides a general introduction to the country's background and a brief Economic Review. The Economic Review is presented in an attempt to provide a better understanding of the underlying financial environment faced by Belizeans, particularly, Belizean women. The main methods used for data collection were the focus group sessions and personal interviews.

Since 1999, which was the first year of the third periodic report, there have been several modifications to Acts and implementation of policies in various areas affecting women. The desired results of these modifications and implementations have not been achieved. Women, primarily in the rural areas of Belize, are still not educated about their rights, health issues, and economic advancements.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to determine whether those ultimately affected by national policies and procedures are aware of the means at their disposal to improve their lives and, or living conditions. Additionally, the report aims at determining what major issues affect women in both urban and rural areas of Belize.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In November 2006, Women's Issues Network of Belize, the coordinating body for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which advocates for policy, mechanisms, and services aimed at promoting the empowerment of women in Belize, was contacted by the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW) to conduct a Shadow Report with regard to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Periodic State Party Report on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), presented by the Belizean Government.

A number of research methods were used to identify issues of concern faced by Belizean women. The main methods used for data collection from represented individuals affected by various policies were personal interviews and focus group sessions.

This report draws on information obtained from consultations held with representatives of some member organizations of WIN-Belize, reviews of various documents referenced in the Government's Report, as well as reviews of available statistics. Additionally, focus group sessions were conducted with women from various villages in the Stann Creek, Cayo, Toledo, Corozal, and Orange Walk Districts. Approximately 200 women in total were invited to attend these focus group sessions; however, only about one-half of those women invited actually attended the sessions. Interviews were also conducted with various other individuals including nurses, past and present police officers, human development agents, doctors, a magistrate officer and a couple lawyers. Specific questionnaires, aimed at identifying the problems experienced by women, and their knowledge of policies and Acts available for their benefit, were developed for use in interviews with representatives of member NGOs, the magistrate officer, and the lawyers.

In addition to a general evaluation of the implementation and realization of CEDAW, this report also includes reflections on a number of critical issues of concern to women, including the equality, development, and advancement of women. It does not provide a comprehensive evaluation of the issues described in the Government's periodic report submitted to the CEDAW Committee. Rather, it critically assesses the status of Belizean women in terms of selected areas of serious concern, such as: education, health, the economy, decision-making, and violence against women. The selection of these topics was based on time and availability of information.

## **LIMITATIONS**

While conducting the research for this report, a number of obstacles were encountered. These included difficulty in acquiring information and statistics; primarily, because of the way in which various organizations and agents collect, organize and disseminate data. For example, in the Abstract of Statistics, the data for HIV/AIDS collected up to 1998 was reported by district, but not by gender. In later editions, the data was disaggregated by gender and age, and by district, but with no correlation. Additionally, the researchers

learned that there were instances where data was still stored in journals; hence, data extraction and manipulation was tedious and time-consuming and posed the possibility of obtaining inaccurate results. The researchers also learned that cross-referencing data and information is difficult. For example, cases of sexual assault reported to the Police Department may, or may not, have also been reported to the Human Services Department. There is no system in place for the two departments to cross reference the data and information to reflect more accurate reporting.

Various requests were made for statistics and information, including the Police Training Curriculum on Gender Based Violence and HIV/AIDS, from both governmental and non-governmental organizations. These were difficult to obtain, or, were not provided at all by the organizations from which they were requested.

Data collected by various government and non-government agencies is concentrated primarily in the Belize District, so it is not a good representation of what actually transpires throughout the entire country. In addition to experiencing the aforementioned difficulties, Women's Issues Network of Belize also experienced limited funding and time restrictions in preparing the report; consequently, the field work for the report did not commence until January 2007.

This report is thus limited to themes of which participating member organizations have the most knowledge, experience, and accessibility to information.

## **COUNTRY BACKGROUND**

Belize, the only English speaking country in Central America, is bordered to the North by Mexico, to the West and South by Guatemala, and to the East by the Caribbean Sea. Even though she is land-bordered by Latin American countries, Belize is most similar to Caribbean countries with respect to culture, politics and economy.

Belize is divided into six administrative districts: in the North are the Corozal and Orange Walk Districts, in the West is the Cayo District, in the East is the Belize District and in the South are the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

According to information obtained via the Central Statistical Office, the year 2000 data showed the major ethnic groups of the country with the largest being Mestizo at 48%, mixed heritage descendants from Spanish colonists and indigenous people, followed by the Creole at 25%, mixed African and European, the Maya at 11%, including Mopan Maya, Ketchi Maya and Yucatec Maya, the Garifuna at 6%, the Mennonite at 4% and the East Indian and Other at 3%, respectively. The main religious bodies were the Roman Catholic (49.6%), the Pentecostal (7.4%), the Anglican (5.3%), and the Seventh Day Adventist (5.2%).

In 2003, 37.8% percent of the population participated in the labor force. The participation rate of women in the labor force was approximately 35.3% (36,132 of 102,437). Twenty-seven point four percent (27.4% or 9,913) of the female labor force participants were heads of households.

The 2004 Mid-Year Population Estimates published by the country's Central Statistical Office estimated that Belize's population was 282,600 people, of which 139,900 (49.5%) were women, at that time 68,400 (48.9%) of these women lived in the rural areas of Belize.

## **ECONOMIC REVIEW**

The year 2004 ends the period under review. The following economic review for that year puts into perspective the economic situation of the country moving into the next review period. It also provides some insight into possible economic reasons why women are not favorably affected by economic developments and direction of the country.

### *Domestic Production*

Growth in gross domestic product (GDP) slowed to 4.6% in 2004. The primary sector led economic activity with a 9.1% increase in output while the secondary sector grew by 7.3% and the services sector grew by 3.3%.

Agriculture expanded by 11.9% reflecting strong growth in the major export crops of sugarcane, citrus and banana. Higher output of farmed shrimp and harvests of lobster and conch accounted for a 4.8% growth in fishing.

Sugar production grew by 11.6%, while citrus juice production jumped by 24.0%. Output of beer, cigarettes and fertilizer fell, while that of rum and soft drinks expanded during the year.

In the services sector, increases in stay-over tourists and cruise visitors stimulated a 15.5% growth in hotel and restaurant activity. This also contributed to a 5.9% rise in transportation and communications activity.

The rate of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 3.1% during the year, influenced largely by increases in energy costs, sales tax, and higher import costs.

### *Monetary Sector*

Funding for transactions involving real estate, the private utilities, construction, and the government dominated commercial bank lending in 2004.

Over 56% of net commercial bank loan disbursements were for tertiary sector activities led by real estate (\$33.1 mn) and tourism (\$11.9 mn). The secondary sector accounted for 40.2% of net loan disbursements of which \$33.0 mn were for the private utilities and \$18.7 mn targeted commercial, residential and infrastructural construction projects, in that order. At \$9.4 mn (7.0%), the primary sector accounted for the smallest share with loans mainly allocated for banana cultivation and mining & exploration activity.

Due to external debt servicing requirements, net credit to Central Government more than doubled to \$175.3 mn. The Central Bank accounted for 76.4% (\$64.6 mn) of the total increase while net financing from commercial banks rose by \$20.0 mn. Loans to statutory bodies rose by \$25.8 mn, about 90.0% of which were Central Bank loans to the Development Finance Corporation (DFC).

### *Public Sector Operations*

The fiscal deficit fell markedly in the 2004 calendar year. Total revenue and grants rose by 15.5% to \$523.6 mn while current expenditure contracted by 2.7% to \$648.9 mn, reducing the overall deficit by nearly 41.4% to \$125.3 mn (6.0% of GDP). Financing came mainly from the domestic banking system as a significant proportion of externally sourced funds (\$432.9 mn) were used for re-profiling and servicing of the external debt.

Strong growth in expenditure continued to outpace the increase in revenues, which rose by 9.4% to \$462.0 mn (22.3% of GDP) as a series of tax measures were implemented in January 2004. The strongest growth (22.7%) occurred in tax revenues from goods and services, substantially the result of a 1.0% increase in sales tax. Robust growth also occurred in revenues derived from taxes on 'income and profits' and to a lesser extent, on international trade.

At \$468.0 mn, current expenditure was 19.1% higher with all major categories of current outlays increasing. The most notable growth was in interest payments on the public debt, which rose by \$44.1 mn (56.9%) to \$121.5 mn while outlays on salaries and pensions were up by 11.4% and subsidies by 15.8%.

Capital expenditures were sharply rolled back, resulting in a 34.0% reduction that brought the total to \$180.9 mn (8.7% of GDP). Some 24.4% of these outlays were allocated to work on infrastructure projects and land development and acquisitions.

In 2004, the public sector's disbursed outstanding debt rose by \$176.2 mn (11.7%) to \$1,682.0 mn (81.2% of GDP). Disbursements (almost all to Central Government) summed to \$433.4 mn. Principal payments amounted to \$260.7 mn of which \$190.7 mn was assigned for loan re-profiling. When this is excluded, debt service payments amount to \$182.9 mn, raising the external debt service ratio from 13.6% to 18.1%.

Interest and other payments on the external debt rose by 35.2% to \$112.9 mn. Some 97.0% (\$109.5 mn) consisted of Central Government payments, of which \$86.2 mn went to commercial creditors.

### *Foreign Trade*

A more substantial decline in imports relative to exports caused a 16.0% contraction in the merchandise trade deficit to \$347.7 mn (16.8% of GDP) during 2004. Gross imports declined by \$83.2 mn to \$961.5 mn where imports for domestic consumption and the Commercial Free Zone (CFZ) fell 6.7% and 14.7%, respectively. Total exports declined from \$631.0 mn to \$613.9 mn as a reduction in CFZ sales overshadowed increased earnings from domestic exports that were achieved, despite depressed international prices, as a result of more sales to preferential or high valued markets combined with increased volume, which drove up the value of domestic exports by 7.1% to \$408.3 mn by the end of the year.

### *Economic Prospects*

Growth in the economy was not expected to exceed 3.0% in 2005 as monetary and fiscal policies would be tightened to restrain excessive growth in domestic demand and bring further improvements to the external current account position.

Growth in services was expected to slow considerably, even with a projected 10.0% increase in cruise ship arrivals and 5.0% growth in stay-over tourists. Slower credit growth aimed at controlling the balance of payments deficit would directly impact the merchandising sub-sector, while fiscal restraint would be seen in a lower level of government activity.

There was the expectation that the one-off effect of the increase in taxes (environmental, sales, and 'sin' taxes) that the government would implement should push the inflation rate above 4.0% during the year.

Continued interest payments on the external debt, higher expenditure on salaries and pensions, budget allocations on infrastructure projects and land development and acquisition, and reductions in allocations to non-physical, non-productive social programs all contribute to problems associated with budget (mis)allocations to social service programs that affect women and children.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Belize became a signatory to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in March 1990, thereby committing itself to promote women's human rights, and to take national action to ensure access to, and enjoyment of, these rights. Since the ratification of the Convention, Belize has compiled two cumulative reports, the first and second periodic report was presented in 1999, and the third and fourth report to be presented in 2007.

Women's Issues Network of Belize (WIN-Belize), the coordinating body for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which advocates for policy, mechanisms, and services aimed at promoting the empowerment of women in Belize, was asked to determine whether those ultimately affected by Belize's obligation to create, modify and implement policies and procedures, in conjunction with the CEDAW requirements, are aware of the means at their disposal to improve their lives and, or living conditions; as well as, to determine what issues affect women in both the urban and rural areas of Belize.

Despite several modifications to various Acts, and the implementation of various policies that affect women, it can be concluded that women, particularly rural women, are still not educated about their rights, health issues, and economic advancements.

### *Article 2 - Legal Provision*

Too many people at the "grassroots" level are unaware of a number of policies that have been developed as a result of CEDAW, as well as the Convention itself, and Acts that exist for their benefit; hence, they are unable to utilize these. It is recommended that the government effectively implement existing policies by incorporating monitoring and evaluation systems so that continuity in policy design and implementation is ensured when changes in resources occur. It is also recommended that more collaboration occur between and among the Government and NGOs, and for the Government to increase NGO subventions. Since there is insufficient education on and awareness of existing policies and legislation, it is recommended that Acts and policies be widely disseminated in multiple local languages, as well as in a format for the non-literate population.

The years 1998/99 to 2004/05 saw several reshuffling of the Cabinet and their ministerial portfolios, and corresponding budget allocations. Despite the reshuffling, the budget estimates consistently reflected less than 1.5% of the total recurrent and capital budget allocated to the Ministry of Human Development (reference Table 4). The meager allocation of the national budget to this Ministry is the primary contributor to the greatly negative implications for financial and skilled human resources allocated to facilitate coordination, planning/design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the provision and supervision of social services, specifically those resources catering to women. It is recommended that the Government of Belize execute a budget exercise to

determine by how much to increase the budget allocation for the Ministry of Human Development to make it more effective and efficient in service provision and supervision.

There is limited or no coordinated national framework for the collection, storage, analysis and dissemination of public data and information. It is recommended that a centralized data house for storage of similar information be explored and implemented.

### *Article 3 - Development and Advancement of Women*

Belize's economic situation is not conducive to the financial development and advancement of women. Domestic production is still dominated by the primary sector, which tends to have more male labor force participation. This may also be why women have higher unemployment rates and lower labor force participation rates than men. The last few years have seen an increase in the number of households headed by women who work outside the home. There is need for government-operated or –sponsored child care and geriatric centers throughout the country to assist women who have multiple jobs, or shift jobs.

Some women, heading single-parent households, who have sought the help of the Family Court in order to collect child maintenance from fathers of their children, find themselves unable to obtain the maintenance, partially due to the Family Court's inability to collect the monies owed due to the lack of resources, and partially because of the Court's inability to track payments made outside of the court system. The Court does not have a system in place to track payments made outside the court, or to facilitate the transfer of financial support to single-parents. This situation is exacerbated by the way the amount to be paid is determined and the difference between payment schedules for children of married versus unmarried parents. It has been the Family Court's experience that often children lose out on monies because men (fathers) have had children with multiple women, and have to share a meager income among multiple children of multiple households. It is recommended that the Family and Children's Act be amended to increase the amount of child maintenance/support to parents. Another recommendation is for the implementation of a computerized payment tracking system to keep track of payments in arrears.

### *Article 5 - Sex Roles and Stereotyping*

Belize is still primarily a patriarchal society, in which the male is attributed most of the social and financial power in the home and in the workplace. This male-dominant status continues to affect women's roles in society as women are still expected to be home-makers and to fill less prominent jobs. This attitude is still prevalent even in educational institutions, where textbooks depicting traditionally stereotypical gender roles are used in the schools, perpetuating this patriarchal outlook on power. It is recommended that more gender-neutral educational material be identified and used in the school system.

### *Article 6 - Exploitation of Women*

It is illegal to sexually exploit children, yet some parents and other adults still do so for economic reasons. It is believed that educating these parents about the negative impact of this violation and showing them alternative ways of gaining finances may be more effective than implementing the full impact of the law. Nevertheless, the economic situation of those who participate in the exploitation of children continues to be a major contributor to this problem. Because of their economic situation and control by those who exploit them, women and children have little means of extricating themselves from exploitative situations. It is recommended that the Trafficking in Persons Act be strongly enforced; additionally, there should be more counseling and other services provided to assist women and children in finding refuge and a way out of the exploitation.

### *Article 7 - Political and Public Life*

The participation of women in political and public life has increased over the last decade or so, primarily as a consequence of Government's commitment to appoint at least 30% of women to leadership positions. However, the view is that these "leadership positions" do not carry the authority to make and carry out significant decisions.

### *Article 10 - Education*

Only a small number of secondary schools in Belize allow girls who become pregnant to return to school after delivering their baby. Research suggests that girls at the primary school level who become pregnant would not return to school due to both institutional policies and social pressures. Since the decision to readmit an unwed teenage mother to school is ultimately the decision of the school's management board, it is recommended that alternative forms of "traditional" education be offered in order to meet the needs of girls who find themselves in situations like these.

### *Article 11 - Employment*

As indicated in the 1999 *Women's Issues Network Report: Challenging Barriers to Women's Economic Development* "women have a low labor force participation rate, high unemployment rate and are more likely to be unemployed for significantly longer periods than men." A variety of skills training and business development and micro credit programmes have been designed to meet these needs; some were successful, others were not. Furthermore, even though some women engage in non-traditional education and skills training programmes to acquire non-traditional skills, there persists a general lack of confidence to pursue careers in male-dominated fields such as upholstery, welding, and auto mechanic. The recommendation is that support programmes and mechanisms be provided for women who endeavor to enter male-dominated fields of work and to extend financial facilities for women seeking to finance small businesses.

At the end of 2004, an HIV/AIDS in the World of Work policy was presented to the National AIDS Commission addressing the discrimination of those infected with HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Some private organizations have begun to implement this policy; however, no such policy document has been produced for members of the Public Service. It is recommended that the Government develop its policy document addressing this discrimination for those working in the public sector.

#### *Article 12 – Equality in Access to Health Care*

In general, it appears that the education and promotion of various health and family planning issues is directed more towards women in urban areas of the country. Despite the breastfeeding policy of 1998, many women - from both urban and rural areas - indicated they were not provided with sufficient or any information on breastfeeding at many public health care facilities. For the most part, the primary health care package has seen improvements; however, more attention is needed in the area of tertiary level health care services.

The focus group discussions showed that a substantial number of rural women were unaware of various sexual health and reproductive issues including the use of contraceptives, and the understanding of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Rural women who had multiple children expressed the view that they would like to have easier access to contraceptives. Shockingly, many adolescent females were unaware of the biology of reproduction and pregnancy. The rural women were aware that AIDS kills, but were unaware of what it really is, how the disease is contracted, or, how to prevent its spread. The recommendation is that Government should increase the spectrum of health services offered to women to include tertiary level care and continue the sexual and reproductive health education in the cultural languages of rural women. Additionally, potential trainers who originate from the villages, need to be identified and trained so that other women in the villages can acquire reliable information, education, and training from them,.

#### *Article 13 - Social and Economic Benefits*

Because of their economic situation, many women find themselves in exploitative situations. When these women try to extricate themselves, perpetrators threaten them or take advantage of weak laws and mechanisms. On the other hand, some women are unaware of applicable laws, are unable to access legal/social services, or are afraid of the consequences of taking action. Additionally, many women lack confidence in the Labor Department's ability to resolve job-related issues. This lack of confidence may be highly correlated with the lack of human resources faced by the Department. Many women who head their households expressed the concern that wages were not increasing in line with the cost of living, which is a sentiment expressed by the general populace. The Labor Department provides a brochure on the rights of a worker. It is recommended that this brochure be more readily available, along with an educational campaign to more inform workers of their rights, where they can turn for information, what the minimum wage is

and what laws are available to them. It is also recommended that the Government revisit the real cost of living, from the perspective of workers, in relation to income and determine a more appropriate minimum wage.

Belize's volatile economic situation affects women in both rural and urban parts of the country. Many women indicated that they would like to have their own businesses, but did not have the financial backing for such an undertaking. Most women knew that the bank is a source of funding; however, they were afraid of risking a default, or not meeting the lending criteria. It is recommended that more low-interest lending institutions be established to facilitate the acquisition of funds and to transfer rudimentary business practices that would enhance the possibility of success. These institutions would be more sensitive to women desirous of entering into or improving a small business, both for individual and group borrowing.

#### *Article 14 - Rural Women*

Adequate health care is not reaching rural women, despite having mobile health clinics visiting the villages on a monthly basis. These clinics are not equipped to handle medical conditions other than pediatric vaccinations. In the Southern region of Belize, there were primarily male community health workers or nurse assistants in villages that had such services. This made women too embarrassed or fearful of seeking medical assistance. Many rural women did not understand much about the various infections they can contract and preferred to suffer silently and hoped the situation would resolve itself. Some women were unaware of the use and benefits of contraceptives or condoms. In the Northern part of Belize, women were generally more educated about women's health concerns, but were not comfortable seeking advice or assistance because they lacked confidence or trust in the medical services available at the public clinics or hospital in their area.

There are still some cultural influences/pressures on young women (15 years old) to leave school and marry or to begin a family of their own; however, there are some people who are becoming more liberal and do not force this practice onto their children. Several young women indicated that even though they wanted to continue their education, they were unable to do so due to financial reasons or maternal fear that the girls would become pregnant. Furthermore, some young women indicated that even when government and non-government agencies provided occasional training on various issues, the trainers would speak in a language not readily understood by community inhabitants, especially in the Mayan villages. Also, trainers expected that everyone had some level of literacy. Consequently, the training was often unsuccessful.

Rural women's involvement in community development is still very minimal due to cultural pressures. A number of women shared similar experiences of receiving invitations to attend their village meetings, but the men, their partners, did not feel that they belonged so they did not attend the meetings. Similarly, persons going into the

villages to conduct women's sessions indicated that men served as translators, thus making the gathering uncomfortable for the presenters and the women participants.

It is recommended that the scholarship portion of the Ministry of Education budget be revisited, particularly to increase scholarships provided to young women of the Southern region of Belize. It would also be advisable to identify and educate village women who would be able to pass on various types of needed information and training to the community and provide basic services in the area of health and community work.

#### *Article 15 - Equality Before the Law and in Civil Matters*

Women, in general, are on equal legal footing with men under Belizean Law. Belizean women are seen to have their own legal persona; consequently, they may bring cases to court, work as lawyers and judges, and serve as witnesses in court proceedings. Additionally, women in Belize are able to enjoy the protection of the law, which includes the freedom of movement, the ability to own and operate a business, as well as to own and develop their own property. The steps taken by the Government is clearly embodied in the Constitution of Belize, which is the supreme law of the land. It is recommended that more women are informed of their rights as stated in the Constitution.

#### *General Recommendations*

##### *Violence Against Women (VAW)*

The domestic violence information obtained generally revealed an increase in the reporting of domestic violence cases; however, there was an under reporting of domestic violence incidences, particularly in the South of the country. Some women indicated that a lack of confidence or mistrust in the system prevented them from seeking the assistance of the Police or the Family Court. Interview responses pointed out that the punishment for convicted perpetrators is too lenient under the law, causing the perception that it was a "joke".

In many instances, those charged with the protection of the rights of women are not sensitive to the effects of crimes against women. This sentiment was expressed not only about police officers, but also about others in the judicial system. Police officers are minimally trained to be sensitive to women in domestic violence and sexual abuse cases or situations. Often, they do not respond in a timely manner, or do not respond at all. Response time is also frequently affected by the lack of transportation or other resources, feelings of inadequacy in dealing with such situations, and mindset of futility with the effort since the victim would often reconcile with the abuser by the following day. Those charged with the responsibility of assisting victims in these situations are frustrated, overworked, and unable to perform their tasks due to significant lack of training and resources.

In March 2007, the Domestic Violence Act of 1992 was repealed and replaced with the Domestic Violence Act 2007. The Act “seeks to increase the power and jurisdiction of the Family Court in dealing with domestic violence cases so that the court can grant protection orders, occupation orders, counseling orders, tenancy orders, orders for payment of financial compensation, and other related orders or interim orders; provide more severe criminal penalties in respect to domestic violence offenses to reflect the community's revulsion to this social ill and to act as a deterrent; enlarge the categories of people who may apply for orders against domestic violence; streamlines and provides greater powers to the police in respect of their ability to intervene in domestic violence situations; and increases the offenses which constitute domestic violence. Importantly, the definition of domestic violence has been extended to include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse.”

Women, primarily in the rural areas, also indicated that they were unaware of their rights as pertaining to the Domestic Violence Act. Alarming, various women working in the rural communities have expressed serious concern that migrants coming from other Latin countries bring some child abuse practices that were commonly accepted in their original communities.

It is recommended that all police officers receive on-going training in basic counseling, especially with regards to domestic violence and gender sensitization; that those charged with the protection of women’s rights also need to be better trained to practice more sensitivity towards victims. Additionally, the Police Department needs to put in place mechanisms to ensure a decrease in response time, to update and increase financial compensations and benefits offered to the police officers, which in turn, would increase the number of effectively trained police, the degree of sensitivity, and the effectiveness of the response by the police. Laws also need to be amended to include stiffer penalties for perpetrators.

### *The Cry of Mothers*

The crime situation in Belize is such that almost every week the news reports on someone who was killed, robbed, molested, shot or damaged in some form or the other. Many Belizean mothers have buried a child, and those who have not had that experience, worry whenever a child leaves the home. Mothers globally worry about their children; however, the reality of the Belizean woman is that an instance other than the traditional “mishap” or illness will take the life of her beloved child. The Constitution of Belize clearly states that “A person shall not be deprived of his life intentionally”; given this statement, it is necessary to increase the number of well-trained, sensitized police officers. This may result in an overall sense of security. The recommendations here are similar to some previously mentioned; these include having a Police Department with the necessary mechanisms to ensure a decrease in response time, and providing benefit packages to law enforcement officers as incentives for enrollment and as a means of retaining those already in the Department.

## **ARTICLE 2 - LEGAL PROVISION**

### *Political Will*

The National Gender Policy was designed as a result of the recommendations made to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> periodic CEDAW report. The purpose of this policy is to achieve gender equity and equality. This policy is generally good; however, at the “grassroots” level, too many people are unaware of the policy, its purpose, or its benefits. Conventions are signed and Acts modified, affecting the rights of the people, namely women and children, with a mere mention of these in the news. Those whom should benefit are ignorant of even the existence of these, much less the modifications made to them. Currently, there are several policies and Acts in place, such as the Families and Children Act, specifically aimed at protecting the rights of women and children; however, the lack of implementation, or effective implementation, of these needs to be addressed.

### ***Recommendations:***

- Effectively implement existing policies by designing and building in monitoring and evaluation systems
- Ensure that there is continuity/consistency in policy design/implementation when and where there are human resource changes within the hierarchical structure of government ministries
- Work more closely with NGOs and increase NGO subventions.
- Disseminate Acts and policies more widely in the various local languages, and prepare material for distribution with the non-literate population in mind, so that everyone, both in urban and rural areas, are aware of the mechanisms in place for their protection and benefit.

Year	Ministries	% of Recurrent Expenditure	% of Capital II Expenditure	% of Capital III Expenditure	% of Total Recurrent and Capital
2004/05	Ministry of Health & Communication	11.19%	8.81%	5.69%	10.26%
	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports	25.43%	11.88%	18.63%	23.26%
	Ministry of Human Development	0.92%	3.83%	0.00%	<b>1.08%</b>
2003/04	Ministry of Health & Communication	9.61%	9.44%	2.98%	8.65%
	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports	23.30%	7.78%	15.52%	20.46%
	Ministry of Human Development, Women & Civil Society	0.86%	2.81%	0.52%	<b>1.03%</b>
	Ministry of Rural Development	0.27%	1.66%	0.00%	0.39%
2002/03	Ministry of Health	8.26%	6.78%	0.72%	6.88%
	Ministry of Education & Sports	21.83%	6.24%	18.24%	19.12%
	Ministry of Human Development, Women & Civil Society	0.77%	2.17%	0.12%	<b>0.86%</b>
	Ministry of Rural Development	0.24%	1.22%	0.00%	0.34%
2001/02	Ministry of Health	8.41%	5.76%	1.23%	7.02%
	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports	22.38%	8.80%	18.83%	20.15%
	Ministry of Human Dev, Women, Children & Civil Society	0.72%	2.40%	0.68%	<b>0.93%</b>
	Ministry of Rural Development	0.22%	1.28%	0.00%	0.32%
2000/01	Ministry of Health	9.40%	8.97%	5.33%	8.68%
	Ministry of Education & Sports	22.61%	9.23%	4.14%	17.96%
	Ministry of Human Dev, Women, Children & Civil Society	0.92%	2.75%	2.67%	<b>1.43%</b>
	Ministry of Rural Development & Culture	0.38%	1.81%	1.07%	0.67%
1999/00	Ministry of Health	8.77%	8.37%	7.40%	8.47%
	Ministry of Education & Sports	22.41%	7.21%	3.17%	17.21%
	Ministry of Human Development, Women, & Youth	1.05%	5.15%	0.97%	<b>1.46%</b>
	Ministry of Rural Development & Culture	0.24%	2.46%	6.12%	1.57%
1998/99	Ministry of Health & Sports	8.97%	6.32%	9.12%	8.73%
	Ministry of Education	22.08%	5.52%	8.65%	17.82%
	Ministry of Human Resources, Women's Affairs & Youth Dev	1.21%	3.43%	1.09%	<b>1.41%</b>

Table 1: Summary of Expenditures

SOURCE: Belize Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures

The years 1998/99 to 2004/05 saw several reshuffling of the Government Ministries and their respective funding. Despite these reshuffling, the budget estimates consistently reflected less than 1.5% of the total recurrent and capital expenditure allocated to the Ministry of Human Development.

The meager portion of the national budget (reference Table 4) assigned to the Ministry of Human Development responsible for the social services sector is a major, if not the major, cause of the greatly negative implications for financial and skilled human resource allocated to facilitate coordination, planning/design, implementation, provision and supervision of social services – and, more specifically - those that cater to women, and to monitor and evaluate services provision and policy implementation. The impression of some agents is that the meager budget allocation points to the government’s abdication of its responsibility to effectively provide for the implementation of policies, provision of services, and enforcement of laws.

It is also to be noted that inadequate data collection, manipulation and dissemination hinders the forecasting and the address of serious issues in area specific regions of the country. This inadequacy is as a result of the category of data collected, the manner in which data is collected and how the data is stored.

There is also a need and demand to increase the number of personnel in the Human Services Department. It is unrealistic to expect that a few people will be able to reach the entire population that is in need of the services offered by this Department.

***Recommendations:***

- Government should execute a budget exercise or financial audit to determine by how much to increase the budget allocation to the Ministry of Human Development. This is not necessarily to increase the national budget, but more to determine a reallocation of the funds in the budget.
- Government should also look into developing and implementing a coordinated national framework for data and information collection and a centralized data house for storage of similar information. Hence, a database of information relating to and affecting human services, where data can be used to identify clusters of HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse and domestic violence incidences, and the like, may be accessed and used to make informed decisions to improve the systems currently in place.

**ARTICLE 3 - DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

The reality of Belize’s economic condition is not conducive to the advancement of women, particularly women heading single-parent households and those at lower income levels, who work outside the home. Over the last few years, there has been a rise in the number of female headed households. It has been suggested that there is need for

government-operated, or -sponsored child care and geriatric centers where women who need to work multiple jobs, or shift jobs, would have a safe place to leave their children or elderly. Even though it is illegal to leave minor/s at home alone, many women are faced with the reality of having too low an income to pay a sitter, or having no other family member with whom to leave their children, when they go to work. As a result, too often mothers are forced to leave 9-, 10-, or 13-year old children to be responsible for their younger siblings or an ailing grandparent.

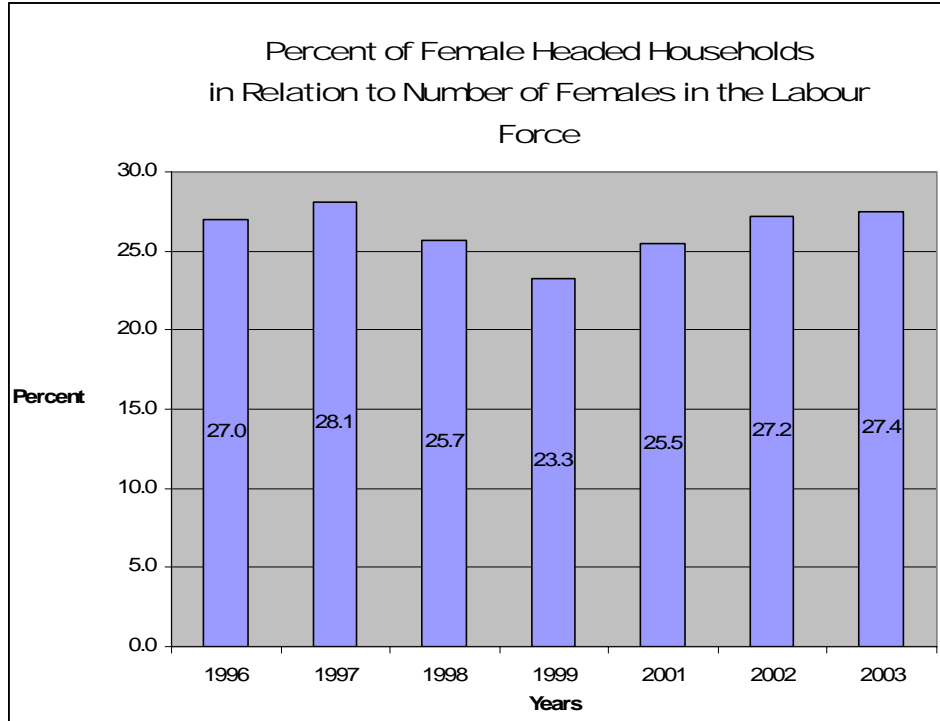


Chart 1: Percent of Female Headed Households

## BELIZE FAMILY COURT

Cases	2004	2005	2006
Maintenance	626	649	704
Protection Order	477	524	533
Occupation Order	124	150	151

*Table 1: Belize Family Court Cases 2004 - 2006*

Some women, heading single-parent households, who have sought the help of the Family Court in order to collect child maintenance from fathers of their children, find themselves unable to obtain the maintenance, partially due to the Family Court's inability to collect the monies owed, due to the lack of resources, and partially because of the Court's inability to track payments made outside of the court system. Even when the Family Court is able to collect the monies owed for maintenance, it is not enough. Currently, for married persons who are legally separated, the weekly maintenance per child is a maximum of \$50 per child. The weekly maintenance per child for separated persons of a common-law union has no minimum and no maximum allowance. The amount paid, terms of maintenance and the frequency of payment are determined by a Intake Welfare Officer after discussion with the parties directly involved or affected. Men, especially those not employed in the traditional sector, may claim inability to pay the suggested amount agreed upon, and make a lesser payment. It has been the experience of the Family Court that many times children lose out on monies because the paternal parent has children with multiple women, and must spread the meager income among multiple children of multiple households. It is difficult for the Family Court to ensure that maintenance is paid because some people, even though they had agreed to make payments through the court, would end up making payments outside the court directly to the mothers. It is up to the women to report a lack of payment to the Family Court in order for action to be taken. Here again, frustration or lack of confidence with the system would prevent such reports.

### ***Recommendations:***

- Amend the Family and Children's Act to effect an increase in the amount of child maintenance/support to parents. The source of the change would come from an examination of fathers' incomes and tying maintenance/support to a percentage of that income, in relation to the cost of living.
- Keep track of delinquent payments by implementing a computerized payment tracking system, and by verifying if those who are delinquent on the books are delinquent in reality. This would require an increase in both financial and human resources allocated to the Family Court.

- Implement more country-wide government-operated or -sponsored child care and geriatric care centers.

The progress of the development and advancement of women and women's issues is slow due to weak, or no implementation of national/organizational policies, some inadequacy in the design structure, and/or insufficient resources, which contribute to inadequate or poor coordination between/among organizations and agencies with objectives for the intervention and provision of services to address women's development and enhancement. Additionally, many interviewees expressed the sentiment or opinion that there exists a lack of political will to make some of the improvements necessary, which includes reallocating the amount of the budget set out for Human Development.

***Recommendations:***

- Provide appropriate budget allocation to Human Development Ministry
- Design effective networks in the social services sector
- Minimize disruptive human resource changes
- Install effective support frameworks

**ARTICLE 5 - SEX ROLES AND STEREOTYPING**

The Gender Integration Committee, (GIC) has made some attempt to sensitize public officers through training. However, Belize is still primarily a patriarchal society; and, as a result, male dominance of women continues to affect the roles women play in society and development. These attitudes and associated practices are prevalent not only in the work place, but also in the homes and educational institutions. Children still use textbooks depicting traditionally stereotypical roles: firemen are depicted as males and nurses as females. Even though in some households there are males who still expect to be served the meal, this is changing slightly, as more females are joining the work force for additional income; consequently, both male and female children are left to do chores and assist in the home in ways that were traditionally only female.

***Recommendation:***

- Identify and implement more gender-neutral educational materials, as well as provide more information, via children's programmes or printed material, empowering children, and, adults alike, with the benefits of gender neutrality.

**ARTICLE 6 - EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN**

*Trafficking of persons*

Under Belize law, persons caught sexually exploiting their child or children for economic gain can be charged and prosecuted for human trafficking; however, in many instances, this is not done. The belief is that by educating these persons on the negative impact on

those violated and showing them alternative ways of gaining finances, they will stop the exploitation. The reality of the poor economic condition of those who participate in the perpetuation of the exploitation of young people, particularly young girls, continues to be a major contributor to the exploitation of children and adolescents. Many times victims of this exploitation remain in the situation because of family obligations/debts.

***Recommendations:***

- Enforce the law for trafficking of persons
- Provide more counseling and services, similar to the battered women's home, where women, adolescents, and children can find/take refuge when seeking a way out of exploitation

**ARTICLE 7 - POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE**

The participation of women in political and public life has increased over the last ten or so years; however, this increase may be viewed as a direct consequence of meeting government's commitment of appointing at least 30% women to leadership positions. However, even though more women hold leadership positions, they are not provided with a wide scope of authority in decision-making. Additionally, the impression is that women need to desensitize themselves and assume a male persona to progress in this male-dominated career field.

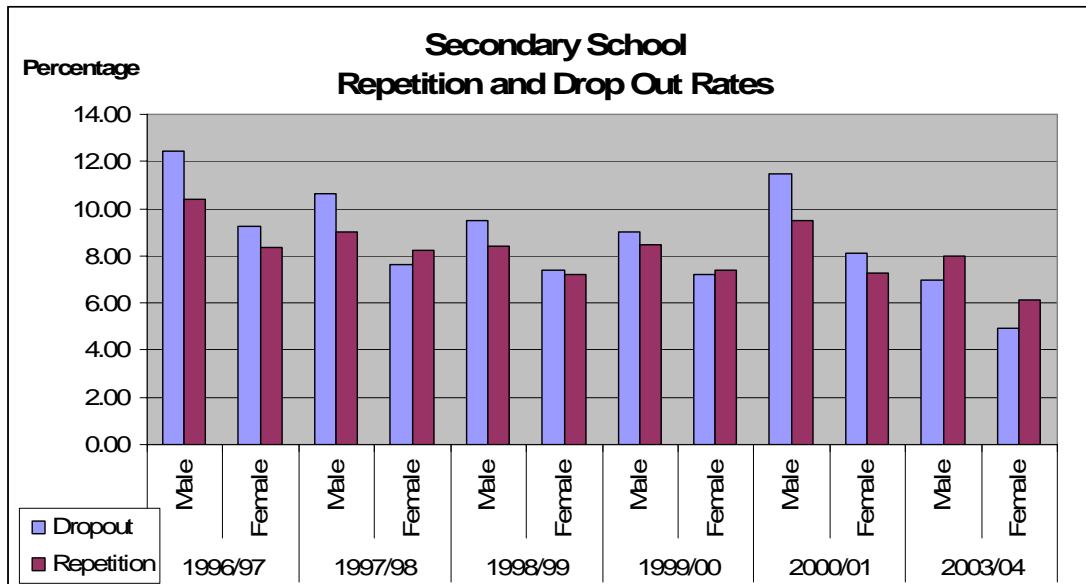
**ARTICLE 10 - EDUCATION**

Currently, there are only a handful of secondary schools which allow a girl who has become pregnant to return to school after delivering her baby. When the pregnancy is reported to the school, the girl is asked to leave the school for a period of confinement (for students in forms one to three, that period is one year), and after that period, she must reapply for readmission into the institution. In the case of government-operated or -financed schools, the parent/s must go to the Education Department and present their child's case for consideration. In most cases, the father, when he is also a student, is still unaffected, and not asked to leave school for any period of time, unlike the female. The research suggested that younger girls in primary schools who became pregnant would not return to further their education, both as a consequence of the institution and as a result of social pressures. This conclusion was as a result of interviews and the implications of the 2001 *Discriminatory Practices Within Our Education System* Report. It is also difficult to support statically as the Ministry of Education does not provide published, organized records of this.

It is difficult to ascertain other reasons why young women drop-out or repeat years of school because data and information on drop-out/repetition rates disaggregated by cause – financial, medical or capacity – does not exist.

**Recommendations:**

- Since the ultimate decision as to whether a young female who becomes pregnant must leave the school is left up to the respective school management board, alternative forms of “traditional” education should be provided, initiated by the government if the school board does not do so. Previous recommendations were made in the position paper *Fairness in Education for Women and Girls* presented in 2004 by the Coalition to End the Discrimination against Pregnant Students and Unmarried Teachers to amend the Education Rules to ensure fairness in education for women and girls. These recommendations should be revisited and serious consideration given to their implementation.
- In order to get a better understanding of the “real” reasons for drop-out/repitition rates, the collected data should be disaggregated by reason.



*Chart 2: Secondary School Repetition and Drop Out Rates*

### Secondary School Enrolment by Form, 1995/96 - 2003/04

Year	Total	Prep	Form I	Form II	Form III	Form IV
<b>Both Sexes</b>						
1995/96	10,445	203	3,491	2,788	2,409	1,757
1996/97	10,751	0	3,652	2,889	2,441	1,769
1997/98	11,260	146	3,691	2,991	2,453	1,979
1998/99	11,720	153	3,744	3,060	2,707	2,056
1999/00	12,253	0	0	0	0	0
2000/01	13,053	0	4,555	3,363	2,848	2,287
2001/02	13,725	0	4,689	3,713	3,026	2,297
2002/03	14,525	105	4,854	3,898	3,255	2,518
2003/04	15,359	86	4,984	4,052	3,569	2,668

Year	Total	Prep	Form I	Form II	Form III	Form IV
<b>Male</b>						
1995/96	4,929	129	1,719	1,281	1,137	792
1996/97	5,124	N/A	1,829	1,347	1,121	827
1997/98	5288	86	1797	1381	1127	897
1998/99	5532	89	1852	1439	1255	897
1999/00	5846	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2000/01	6,230	N/A	2,230	1,609	1,367	1,024
2001/02	6,709	N/A	2,364	1,797	1,465	1,083
2002/03	7,069	60	2,443	1,883	1,539	1,204
2003/04	7360	54	2469	2005	1649	1183

Year	Total	Prep	Form I	Form II	Form III	Form IV
<b>Female</b>						
1995/96	5,516	74	1,772	1,507	1,272	965
1996/97	5,627	N/A	1,823	1,542	1,320	942
1997/98	5972	60	1894	1610	1326	1082
1998/99	6188	64	1892	1621	1452	1159
1999/00	6407	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2000/01	6,823	N/A	2,325	1,754	1,481	1,263
2001/02	7,016	N/A	2,325	1,916	1,561	1,214
2002/03	7,456	45	2,411	2,015	1,716	1,314
2003/04	7999	32	2515	2047	1920	1485

Table 2: Secondary School Enrollment by Form, 1995/96 – 2003/04

**SOURCE: Abstract of Educational Statistics; Years 1996 to 2003**

## ARTICLE 11 - EMPLOYMENT

In 2000, a situational analysis was conducted by WIN-Belize as part of a project to empower young women for change. It involved the participation of 260 young women, ages 12-25, country-wide. Of those who participated, 121 (46.5%) were not enrolled in school, 99 of those wanted to continue their education, but were primarily prevented from doing so due to financial difficulties (39.4%) and family responsibilities (33.3%). Alarming, and supported by the Youth Enhancement Services (YES) *Position Paper on Reform to Laws and Enforcement of Sexual Abuse* dated November 2004, of those participants, 49.2% indicated that they had experienced abuses in the home, community, school, or workplace (in order of number of occurrences). However, the workplace situation may not be a good indicator since only 24% (65) of the respondents worked.

**Main Labor Force Indicators at April: 1996 – 2003**

At April	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003
Both Sexes	221,120	228,695	236,975	243,390	255,288	262,663	271,061
Population 14 years and over	134,475	137,505	145,895	150,355	159,248	164,352	170,752
Labor Force	75,450	80,940	85,595	89,210	94,430	94,172	102,437
Employed Labor Force	65,025	70,680	73,345	77,755	85,869	84,720	89,222
Unemployed Labor Force	10,425	10,260	12,250	11,455	8,561	9,453	13,215
Employment Rate	86.2	87.3	85.7	87.2	90.9	90	87.1
Unemployment Rate	13.8	12.7	14.3	12.8	9.1	10	12.9
Job Seeking Rate	9	9	8.9	8.8	5	7	N/A
% of Population 14 years and over	60.8	60.1	61.6	61.8	62.4	62.6	63
Labor Force Participation Rate	56.1	58.9	58.7	59.3	59.3	57.3	60
% of Population 14 years and over	60.8	60.1	61.6	61.8	62.4	62.6	63
Labor Force Participation Rate	56.1	58.9	58.7	59.3	59.3	57.3	60

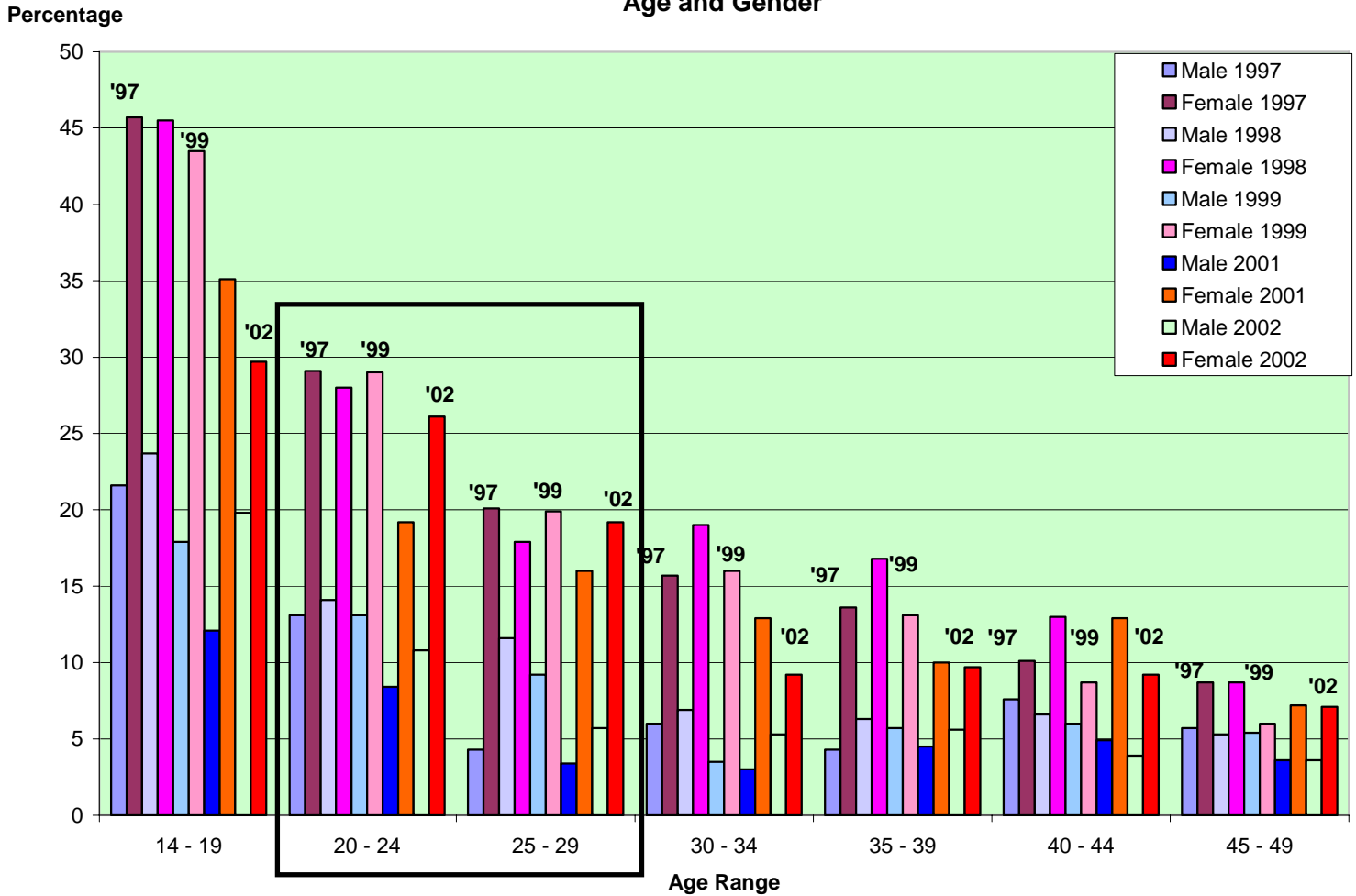
At April	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003
Male Population	110610	113,905	117,640	121,565	127,209	130,717	135,420
Population 14 years and over	66055	67,805	71,310	74,025	78,796	80,567	84,556
Labor Force	52210	54,055	56,035	58,990	62,145	63,310	66,305
Employed Labor Force	46115	49,265	50,090	53,680	58,546	58,582	60,571
Unemployed Labor Force	6095	4,790	5,945	5,310	3,599	4,728	5,734
Employment Rate	88.3	91.1	89.4	91	94.2	92.5	91.4
Unemployment Rate	11.7	8.9	10.6	9	5.8	7.5	8.6
Job Seeking Rate	8.3	7.1	7.6	6.9	3.6	5.7	N/A
% of Population 14 years and over	59.7	59.5	60.6	60.9	61.9	61.6	62.4
Labor Force as a % of Total Population	47.2	47.5	47.6	48.5	48.9	48.4	48.9
Male Labor Force Participation Rate	79.0	79.7	78.6	79.7	78.9	78.6	78.4

At April	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003
Female Population	110510	114,790	119,335	121,825	128,079	131,946	135,641
Population 14 years and over	68420	69,700	74,585	76,330	80,452	83,785	86,196
Labor Force	23240	26,885	29,560	30,220	32,285	30,863	36,132
Employed Labor Force	18910	21,415	23,255	24,075	27,323	26,138	28,651
Unemployed Labor Force	4330	5,470	6,305	6,145	4,962	4,725	7,481
Employment Rate	81.4	79.7	78.7	79.7	84.6	84.7	79.3
Unemployment Rate	18.6	20.3	21.3	20.3	15.4	15.3	20.7
Job Seeking Rate	10.8	13.1	11.3	12.5	7.6	9.8	N/A
% of Population 14 years and over	61.9	60.7	62.5	62.7	62.8	63.5	63.5
Labor Force as a % of Total Population	21	23.4	24.8	24.8	25.2	36.8	26.6
Female Labor Force Participation Rate	34.0	38.6	39.6	39.6	40.1	36.8	41.9

Table 3: Main Labor Force Indicators at April: 1996 – 2003

SOURCE: Abstract of Statistics; Years 1996 to 2003

### Percentage of Unemployment by Age and Gender



**Chart 3: Percent of Unemployment by Age and Gender**

Even though, to some extent, women are now being provided with non-traditional education and skills training in stereotypically male jobs, no follow-up service is provided. Consequently, there are no placement programs subsequent to training in place, and the limited available financing to start small business is difficult for women to access or obtain. Additionally, even after women acquire these skills, lack of confidence to pursue a career in the field of training persists. As reflected in Table 3 and Chart 3, and concluded in the 1999 Women’s Issues Network Report: Challenging Barriers to Women’s Economic Development “women have a low labor force participation rate, high unemployment rate and are more likely to be unemployed for significantly longer periods than men.”<sup>1</sup> A variety of skills training and business development and micro credit

<sup>1</sup> *Women’s Issues Network Report: Challenging Barriers to Women’s Economic Development*, Technical Summary, Page 1

programmes have been designed to address the situation. Some of these have been successful, while others have not. There is a general frustration that resources are made available to groups that later appear to have been “wasted.” In 2007, this is still the sentiment shared by those trying to assist women in their economic advancement.

The unemployment rate for women in age groups 20-24 and 25 -29 highlighted in Chart 3 above is of concern, since these ages could be construed as “child-rearing” ages. Again, the available statistics does not indicate the causes of these women being unemployed, it is necessary to determine the reasons behind the high unemployment rate.

Belize’s domestic production is still dominated by the primary sector which tends to have a high male labor force participation rate. Growth in the tertiary sector, which tends to have more female labor force participation rate lags the primary sector.

***Recommendations:***

- Provide support mechanisms or programmes for women who endeavor to enter predominantly male-dominated fields of work; extend financial facilities for women to access financing for small businesses in non-traditional areas.
- Conduct an in-depth study or analysis of the high unemployment rates of women primarily between the ages of 14 – 29.

***HIV/AIDS Policy in the Work Place***

The Belize Draft Policy on HIV/AIDS in the World of Work was developed and presented by the Government of Belize and social partners, at a National Stakeholder Conference in August 2004. This policy addresses the discrimination against both men and women infected with HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Even though some private sector organizations have begun to make amendments to their internal work policies, as far as information received, no such policy document has been produced for members of the public service.

***Recommendation:***

- Government should facilitate public sector wide adoption of an HIV/AIDS policy in the workplace.

**ARTICLE 12 – EQUALITY IN ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**

***Family Planning and Health Care***

The education and promotion of various health and family planning issues have reached the urban female populace to a significant degree. The urban women who participated in the focus group sessions had been more educated about and were aware of these issues.

This is not to say that more education and access to preventive methods would not be beneficial. The main concern of the findings, though, is in regard to the rural women.

In regards to the promotion of breastfeeding practices, despite the breastfeeding policy drafted and approved by Ministry of Health in 1998<sup>2</sup>, many women, from both rural and urban areas, indicated that they were not voluntarily provided with any information on breastfeeding. Some urban women said they “asked the nurse” for information; however, most were not counseled before or after delivery. Of the women who did receive counseling, they were mostly located in the Belize District. The rural women said they learned through “trial and error” or from an elder or “bush doctor” located in their village.

In terms of family planning and ownership of their sexual reproduction, and despite the Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, the focus group discussions indicated that women in the rural areas, especially in the Southern districts, were still unaware of contraceptives, in particular what a condom was, much less the use and benefits of these. Even some of those who were aware of contraception found that to access this form of pregnancy prevention meant going into the nearest main town to purchase or acquire them. This was unlikely as many women were unable to do so, either due to financial constraints, or, because preventive methods were not given priority. As identified in the First and Second Periodic Report with Supplemental Report 1999, “in many instances, particularly in rural communities, traditional myths prevail over scientific information about how the reproductive system operates. Culture and tradition have also influenced rural women’s decision not to use contraceptives.”<sup>3</sup> This is still the case as was found in the focus group discussions. Alarming, young women indicated that they were unaware of how to become pregnant. Many women are still not empowered to resist any sexual advancements from their partners, or, how to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

In general, the primary health care package and the efforts to improve primary health care have seen some improvement. The National Health Insurance package essentially benefits women since it mainly concerns pre- and post-natal care. However, specialist care does not include treatment of pelvic cancer, or complications resulting from non-communicable and chronic diseases. This is cause for concern since tertiary level health care services in Belize are very expensive.

The medical community recognizes that a woman’s physiological composition makes her more susceptible to HIV/AIDS. The Government has initiated a campaign to prevent the transmission of the virus/disease from mother to child/children at childbirth. However, one limitation of this campaign is the lack of counseling for the prevention of subsequent pregnancies. Currently, free, or, low-cost, medications to alleviate the disease are available. Some milk supplements are provided for the baby/children after birth,

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<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of the All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, First and Second Periodic Report with Supplemental Report, Belize 1999.

<sup>3</sup> *The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, First and Second Periodic Report with Supplemental Report 1999*, paragraph 205.1

depending on supply. The HIV data below comes primarily from the Central Medical Lab and there may very well be under-reporting of cases in the districts. Even with only these numbers, it is alarming that the ratio of male to female reported cases is getting closer to a 1 to 1 ratio.

### Cumulative Reported HIV Cases by Sex and Year Belize, 1996 - 2004

Year	Male	Female	Total	M:F Ratio
1996	61	32	93	2.0:1
1997	61	38	99	1.6:1
1998	112	72	184	1.6:1
1999	143	98	241	1.5:1
2000	123	103	226	1.2:1
2001	192	138	330	1.4:1
2002	245	186	431	1.3:1
2003	241	206	447	1.16:1
2004	242	215	457	1.12:1

Table 5: Cumulative Report HIV Cases 1996 – 2004

SOURCE: National Health Information Surveillance Unit

### New HIV Infections by Sex Belize, 1996 - 2003

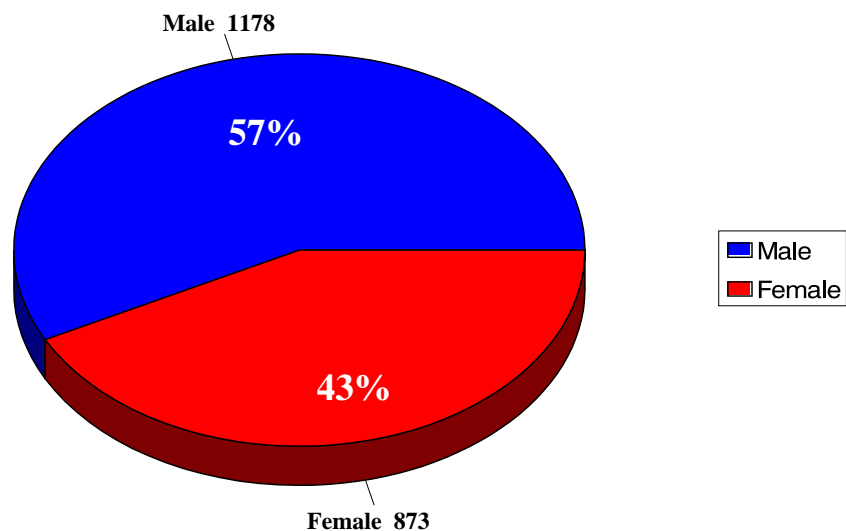


Chart 4 – New HIV Infections by Sex 1996 -2003

The focus group discussions also revealed that there were a number of rural women who have “heard” that AIDS kills, but they were unaware of how to contract the disease, what it “looked” like, what the symptoms included, and how to prevent the spread of the disease. This was true for women in both the Northern and Southern regions of the country. This was a major concern, especially since more of the men are leaving the villages in search of employment, and bringing back to the community the influences of the “western world”, including increased drug and alcohol consumption, infidelity, and rape.

***Recommendation:***

Government should:

- 1) Increase the spectrum of health services offered to women, to facilitate the treatment of pelvic cancer, complications resulting from non-communicable and other chronic diseases, and other tertiary level care.
- 2) Continue the education of women in Sexual and Reproductive Health System in languages familiar and comfortable to those who speak languages other than English and Spanish, and to non-literate persons.
- 3) Identify persons in the villages with whom the women are comfortable and train them as trainers in various health areas.

**ARTICLE 13 - SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

Because of their economic condition, many women find themselves in exploitative situations. When they try to extricate themselves from these situations, perpetrators take advantage of weak laws and mechanisms, or threaten the victim/s. Alternatively, some women are unaware of the laws that are in place to protect them, are unable to access services provided to assist them, or are afraid of the consequences of taking action. Even after “the minimum wage for domestic workers and shop assistants, mainly women, was raised to make it equal to that of manual workers”<sup>4</sup> in 2002, women still found themselves in a tight economic situation. The exploitation of women is substantiated by the survey report in 2006 *Is the equal minimum wage for Domestic workers and Shop Assistants being implemented?* carried out by Catherine Street on behalf of WIN-Belize. The report shows that survey participants, consisting of mostly female domestic workers and shop assistants, viewed “their lack of job security and the lack of job opportunity as a reason why employers are able to get away with flouting the law; employers know that women are desperate for employment and will accept low pay and poor conditions. Employees are afraid to raise issues with either their employer or with the Labor Department for fear of losing their jobs and being unable to find another one.” Additionally participants expressed a lack of confidence in the ability of the Labor Department to resolve their job-related issues. This lack of confidence may be justified by the deficiency of human resources being experienced by the Department. The survey

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<sup>4</sup> Cathrine Street, *Is the Equal Minimum Wage for Domestic Workers and Shop Assistants being implemented?* 2006, Abstract

also indicated that one of “the issues that came up particularly strong, was that wages are not rising in line with the rising cost of living.” This view is one expressed by the general population, more so, by women who are the head of their households.

Higher energy costs and taxes on goods and services contribute to an increase in inflation, which negatively impacts those at lower income levels, particularly those households headed by women who have difficulty maintaining employment due to childcare and in-home productive activity.

***Recommendations:***

- Revisit the Labor Department’s brochure on the rights of a worker and make it more readily available
- Have a campaign to educate workers about their rights, where to turn if these are violated, what the labor laws are and what the minimum wage is
- Revisit the real cost of living, from the perspective of workers, particularly women heading single-head households; and, determine, based on the findings a more appropriate minimum wage

Belize’s economic situation affects women in both rural and urban areas. Many women who participated in the focus group sessions indicated that they would like to have their own business in their village, or community, but did not have the financial backing for such an undertaking. Most women knew that a bank is a source of loans; however, they were afraid of risking a default, or, that they did not meet lending criteria. In one Maya community, the women were skilled in operating a corn mill, which had been donated to them some years previously. The mill is now in need of repair or replacement, but these women do not know where to turn for assistance. Although there are a few projects currently being undertaken to assist rural women to apply for small business grants, the restrictions and conditions are either not practical, or the projects themselves are poorly designed and, or managed. It is the view of the interview participants that these projects, like others, are only a “sham” attempt at meeting some of the conventions to which Belize is a signatory. There are a few institutions that try to service small businesses; for example, Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST) and Small Farmers Bank. These institutions function similarly to the commercial banks, requiring collateral or a guarantor, which the rural women do not have. Additionally, BEST only services the Belize and Cayo Districts, leaving the women in the other districts with fewer opportunities for assistance.

Various lending institutions have indicated their preference in sourcing businesses headed by women. It is their experience that women are more likely to succeed and to repay any monies borrowed. Nonetheless, even though women, single or married, are equally able to own and operate a business under the law, many women do not. Those who do, lean towards “traditional” businesses like food preparation, sewing, and vending. As previously indicated, some women have knowledge in non-traditional businesses; however, the general consensus is that they lack the confidence to venture into these.

***Recommendation:***

- Establish more low-interest lending institutions that would facilitate the transfer of rudimentary business practices that should facilitate success. These institutions would be more sensitive to women desirous of entering or improving a small business, both for individual and group borrowing, as well as provide assistance to “high risk” borrowers.

**ARTICLE 14 - RURAL WOMEN**

Adequate health care is not reaching rural women; a number of them have health issues relating to the poor quality of drinking water, inadequate food and nutrition, and lack of medical attention. There are mobile health clinics that visit the villages on average once a month to distribute immunizations to children, but these clinics are not equipped to handle other medical conditions. Thus, women would be referred to the health facilities in one of the bigger, nearby villages or in town. Additionally, in the Southern region of the country, for those villages that have male community health workers or nurse assistants, the women would not go for gynecological ailments due to embarrassment, or fear that the visit would become public information. Many rural women are unaware of various infections women may be more prone to contract and would prefer to suffer silently and hope the situation would resolve itself. Some of them were unaware of the use of contraceptives, or condoms. They indicated, however, that sexual intercourse was often left to the decision of their male partners.

In the northern areas of the country, women were generally more educated on women’s health concerns, but were not comfortable seeking advice or assistance because they lacked confidence in the medical services provided by public health facilities. Again, it was a situation where women had access to mobile health clinics that concentrated on pediatric immunization, not on the general health issues of the general populace.

In some areas, cultural beliefs or practices still influence/pressure young women (15 years old) to leave school and marry, or, to begin a family of their own. This still dominates even though within these communities some families are becoming more liberal and no longer force the young women to marry.

In some instances, young women indicated that even though they wanted to continue their education beyond the primary school level, they were unable to do so due to either financial reasons or fear. The former includes the use of limited family finances to fund the education of male child/children, instead of that of the female child/children. Also, family finances may be insufficient to cover the cost of transportation from smaller home villages to the towns where the secondary schools are located.

Another obstacle encountered by young rural women is their parents' fear of having their female children on the bus and attending high school outside the village. They are afraid that the young women would end up prematurely pregnant.

Teenage girls in the focus group discussions pointed out that even though occasionally some training was provided in the villages on various issues, the trainers would speak in a language not readily understood, especially in the Mayan villages, where there were variations of the language (Ketchi and Mopan Mayan). They also said that trainers would speak in Spanish or expected that everyone from the village had some level of literacy. Consequently, the training was often unsuccessful.

Rural women's involvement in community development is still very minimal due to cultural pressures. Several women shared similar experiences of being invited to village meetings, but that the men, their partners, did not feel that they belonged, so they would not attend. Similarly, several community/social workers who go into the villages to provide women's sessions, primarily in the Toledo district shared that in many instances men served as translators, making the environment uncomfortable for the women and casting doubts as to exactly what was being said to the village women.

***Recommendations:***

- Revisit the Education Budget, particularly the scholarship portion of the budget, to increase scholarships provided to young women of the Southern region of Belize. The criteria of the scholarships would include: the continuation of secondary education, and for tertiary education, a concentration in Social Work, Nursing, Teaching, Counseling and other human development majors as is needed in the rural areas. At the completion of the training, scholarship recipients would be expected to return to their communities and work in the field of concentration for a number of years equal to the years of financed study.
- Identify and educate women in the villages who could serve as medical assistants and disseminate information/material about sexual health and reproduction, as well as other material that may empower the village women.

**ARTICLE 15 – EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW AND IN CIVIL MATTERS**

Women are on equal legal footing with men under Belizean Law. In general, women are seen to have their own legal persona. The steps taken by the Government is clearly embodied in the Constitution of Belize, which is the supreme law of the land. As of October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002 the Laws of Belize showed:

“2. The Constitution [of Belize] is the supreme law of Belize and if any other law is inconsistent with this Constitution that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void.”

Therefore, under the Constitution, women cannot be discriminated against, as is stated below:

“3. Whereas every person in Belize is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedom of the individual, that is to say, that right, whatever his [her] race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, *creed or sex*, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following:

- (a) life, liberty, security of person, and the protection of the law;
- (b) freedom of conscience, of expression and of assembly and association;
- (c) protection for his family life, his personal privacy, the privacy of his home and other property and recognition of his human dignity; and
- (d) protection from arbitrary deprivation of property.”

“6 –(1) All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law.”

The Married Woman's Property Act, Chapter 176 of the Laws of Belize, under the general legal principle that a married woman lives with her husband, addresses the legal right of a married woman to hold property, be liable in tort, contract debt and obligation, to sue and be sued in her own name like a single woman. This was a change from the previous disadvantaged position which existed prior to August of 1953. The District Court (Procedure) Act, Chapter 97, Section 9 also contends that a married woman can be sued or sue as if she was not married.

The Constitution also allows for women to move about freely within Belize, or to other countries.

“10.-(1) A person shall not be deprived of his [her] freedom of movement, that is to say, the right to move freely throughout Belize, the right to reside in any part of Belize, the right to enter Belize, the right to leave Belize and immunity from expulsion from Belize.”

Under the Families and Children Act Chapter 173, both a man and a woman are required to maintain their children. Furthermore, a man may seek maintenance from a wife or ex-wife depending on the circumstances; likewise, a woman may seek maintenance from her husband or ex-husband. Under the laws of Belize, a single woman has sole legal custody of her child or children, unlike a marriage situation, whereby the custody is shared between the woman and man until the parties agree, or, a court decides otherwise.

With regard to a determination of property rights, in the case of a married couple or persons in a common-law union for five or more years, who have separated or divorced, the law leans towards equality in the sharing of the assets, irrespective as to

whether or not the woman was the child-bearer and, or home keeper (“house-wife”) and the husband was the sole “breadwinner”.

Women are treated as equals in the procedures of the courts and tribunals. They can bring cases and serve equally as lawyers, judges, and witnesses. The Legal Profession Act, Chapter 320 states that “ 6. –(1) A person who after the commencement of this Act [Legal Profession Act] applies to the Supreme Court to be admitted to practice law, and who satisfies the Supreme Court that he:-

- (a) is a Belize citizen and holds a Legal Education Certificate; or
- (b) has obtained adequate training in the law and is suitably qualified and competent to practice law in Belize; or
- (c) possesses a suitable practical experience and competence and is qualified to practice law in any country which the Chief Justice, after consultation with the Council, designates by Order published in the *Gazette* as having a sufficiently analogous system of laws”

Additionally, Belizean women, under universal adult suffrage, have the ability to vote once they have reached the age of 18 years. The Preamble of Belize states “WHEREAS the People of Belize-

c. believe that the will of the people shall form the basis of government in a democratic society in which the government is freely *elected by universal adult suffrage* and in which all persons may, to the extent of their capacity, play some part in the institutions of national life and thus develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority;”

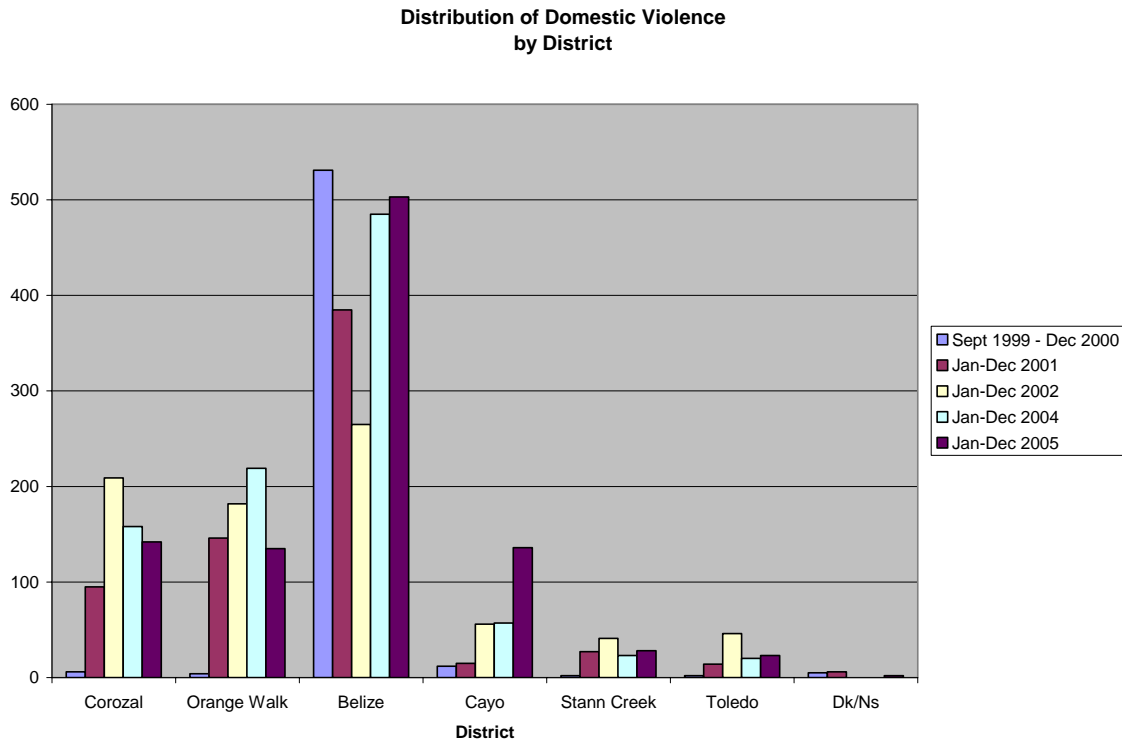
To be noted, is the fact that under the Laws of Belize, any woman, whether a citizen or a visitor, can enjoy the protection of the law. It can be said then, that under the Laws of Belize, women share equal rights and footings with their male counterparts. The question to be addressed is the communication of the laws that are available for the protection of women, and whether they are able to understand and utilize the laws of which they are aware. Many people are intimidated by legal jargon; it is fair to say then that those who are not very literate would be even more intimidated.

***Recommendation:***

- Even though it is not realistic to disseminate the entire Laws of Belize to the populace, it would be beneficial to educate women about their rights as is stated in the constitution, in ways suitable to women ranging from the very educated to the illiterate population.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Violence Against Women (VAW)*



*Chart 5: Distribution of Domestic Violence by District*

The domestic violence data, as well as the focus group discussions, reveal an under reporting of domestic violence, primarily in the Southern region of the country. Some women expressed that a lack of confidence in the “system” prevented them from seeking the assistance of the police or the Family Court. Additionally, some women were unaware of where to turn other than to the Police, and what the procedure would be to seek assistance. Even those who went through the system became frustrated at the time it took to see results, or worse, they lost confidence in the system; consequently, in discussion with other women, they have expressed their dissatisfaction causing other women to not seek assistance. Responses to interview questions also revealed that in the opinion of the women, the punishment for convicted perpetrators is lenient under the law, causing the perception that it was a “joke”.

In many instances, those charged with the protection of the rights of women are not sensitive to the effects of crimes against women. This sentiment was expressed not only about police officers, but also about others in the judicial system.

Police officers are minimally trained to be sensitive to women in domestic violence and sexual abuse situations; often, they do not respond in a timely manner, or do not respond at all. Those police officers who were interviewed and asked what causes them to not respond indicated that it is partially due to the lack of transportation or other resources. They also felt that they were inadequately trained to deal with such situations and frustrated with their effort since in their experience by the next day the victim would have made up with the abuser. This sentiment may change, however, since between mid December 2006 and the first week of January 2007 there were three women whose lives were lost due to domestic violence.

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Distribution of reported Domestic Violence Cases by District  
Belize, January to December 1999-2005

District	Sept 1999 - Dec 2000	Jan-Dec 2001	Jan-Dec 2002	Jan-Dec 2004	Jan-Dec 2005
Corozal	6	95	209	158	142
Orange Walk	4	146	182	219	135
Belize	531	385	265	485	503
Cayo	12	15	56	57	136
Stann Creek	2	27	41	23	28
Toledo	2	14	46	20	23
Dk/Ns	5	6	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>962</b>	<b>969</b>

\*Note: the data for 2003 was unobtainable

\*Note: the data for the first three periods was not disaggregated

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*Table 6: Distribution of reported Domestic Violence Cases by District*

Even though the data shows an increase in the reporting of both domestic violence and sexual abuse, it must be noted that those who are responsible for assisting victims in these situations are frustrated, overworked, and unable to effectively perform their tasks due to significant deficiency of resources. In the various districts, there is only one Women's Development Officer (WDO) who is charged with assisting in the reporting of these cases. Some of these officers have expressed concern that if a case came in during the regular work day to the Police Department, and if the WDO was out doing rural visits, the victim was asked to come back later, or asked to wait an indefinite period of time. This is of concern, especially where it involves women who travel from rural areas to seek assistance. Additionally, if a domestic violence case came in simultaneously with a child abuse case, the WDO was expected to give priority to the child abuse situation.

In March 2007, the Domestic Violence Act of 1992 was repealed and replaced with the Domestic Violence Act 2007. The Act

“seeks to increase the power and jurisdiction of the Family Court in dealing with domestic violence cases so that the court can grant protection orders, occupation orders, counseling orders, tenancy orders, orders for payment of financial compensation, and other related orders or interim orders; provide more severe criminal penalties in respect to domestic violence offenses to reflect the community's revulsion to this social ill and to act as a deterrent; enlarge the categories of people who may apply for orders against domestic violence; streamlines and provides greater powers to the police in respect of their ability to intervene in domestic violence situations; and increases the offenses which constitute domestic violence. Importantly, the definition of domestic violence has been extended to include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse.”

The Attorney General , in his announcement, acknowledged that “legislation can be rendered meaningless if our institutions and citizens do not give meaningful support to that legislation ... we've seen where legislation cannot govern what happens between a man and a woman.”

Women, primarily in the rural areas, also reported that they were unaware of their rights as pertaining to the Domestic Violence Act, including the section on Occupation Orders which gives the women the right to stay in “the residence [if it] is rented, the Court can order the abuser to continue to pay the rent ... and grant the victim the sole right to live in the household residence.”

Of alarm, various women who work in the rural communities have expressed serious concern for the Northern areas of the country. The migrants coming from some Latin countries bring some child abuse practices that were commonly accepted in their place of origin.

***Recommendations:***

- All police officers should receive on-going training in basic counseling, especially with regard to domestic violence situations, and additional training in gender sensitization.
- The Police Department needs to put in place mechanisms to ensure a decrease in response time. Overwork, exhaustion, underpay, and non-existent benefits package are factors that contribute to ineffective police response to crimes in general and those regarding domestic violence in particular. Consequently, not many people enter into law enforcement.

- Update and increase financial compensations and benefits offered to the Police; in turn, this would increase the number of, effectively trained officers, and increase the sensitivity, and effectiveness of the responses of the Police.
- Laws need to be amended to include stiffer penalties for perpetrators.
- People charged with the protection of women’s rights also need to be better trained to practice more sensitivity towards victims.

### *The Cry of Mothers*

The crime situation in Belize is such that many youth, children, spouses, and loved ones are losing their lives more frequently than socially acceptable. Weekly, almost daily it seems, the news reports of someone killed, shot, mugged, raped, molested, or affected in some other way by criminal activity. Many mothers in Belize know what it is to have buried a child, and those who have not had that experience, worry whenever a child leaves the home. Understandably, mothers, globally, worry about their children, however, the reality of our Belizean women is that, other than the trivial “mishaps”, women now need to worry about their child losing his or her life by means of shootings not intended for their child, kidnappings, molestation, traffic accidents, and muggings for tennis shoes, mobile phones, jewelry, or even the pocket money of children. The Constitution of Belize clearly states that:

*“4.-(1) A person shall not be deprived of his life intentionally save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence under any law of which he has been convicted.”*

If such is the case as stated in the Constitution, it may be necessary to increase the number of well trained, sensitized police officers as was previously mentioned. This may be done by offering those officers a sense of well-being and protection. In turn, they may offer the general public, and mothers, in particular, a sense of safety.

### ***Recommendations:***

- The Police Department needs to put in place mechanisms to ensure a decrease in response time. Overwork, exhaustion, underpay, and non-existent benefits package are factors that contribute to ineffective police response to crimes in general. Consequently, not many people enter into law enforcement.
- Update and increase financial compensations and benefits offered to members of the Police Department; in turn, this would increase the number of effectively trained, sensitive police, and contribute to effective and efficient response of the Police.
- Increase the resources – both financial and human - made available to the Police Department

## CONCLUSION

After reviewing the feedback of women who participated in the various focus groups, and comments and recommendations made by representatives of WIN-Belize member organizations and persons in the judicial system, it can be concluded that there exist various policies, legislation, and mechanisms that aim to protect women's human rights. What is lacking is the awareness of and accessibility to the different policies, legislation and mechanisms, as well as the education on a multitude of health issues. The lack of both financial and human resources significantly limit the efforts of agencies charged with empowering, educating, and protecting women. For (more) Belizean women to benefit from the different Acts and policies available to them, there is a great need for more financial investments in the Family Court, the Police Department, the Human Development Department, the education of rural women, and NGO subvention.

The Police need more effective training to deal with cases of domestic violence, while selectively identified women in rural areas need training in health and reproductive and general issues. The provision of low-interest credit and rudimentary business practices to rural women should contribute to the improvement of the lives and living conditions of rural women who have the potential to own and operate small and micro enterprises. Also, support programmes and mechanisms should be put in place to assist women who have engaged in skills training programmes that attempt to move women into traditionally male-dominated career fields.

Belize's domestic production is still dominated by the primary sector which tends to have a high male labor force participation rate. Growth in the tertiary sector, which tends to have more female labor force participation still lags behind the primary sector. Higher energy costs and taxes on goods and services contribute to an increase in inflation, which negatively impacts those at lower income levels, particularly those households headed by women who have difficulty maintaining employment due to childcare and in-home productive activity.

Alternative forms of education should be provided to address the needs of young women or girls who become pregnant and must drop out of school, while there is also need to determine why the unemployment rate of women in different age groups is high relative to those of men and what can be done to alleviate the pressures on working women who do not have support structures or systems to help them identify where they can obtain assistance for child and geriatric care while they are at work. There should also be an assessment of the Family Court system that facilitates the collection of child maintenance and the tracking of payments made in and outside the Family Court system.

More attractive incentive packages – better pay, more benefits, better resources, and reasonable work hours - offered to members of the Police Department could facilitate better response time and sensitivity in dealing with domestic violence cases.

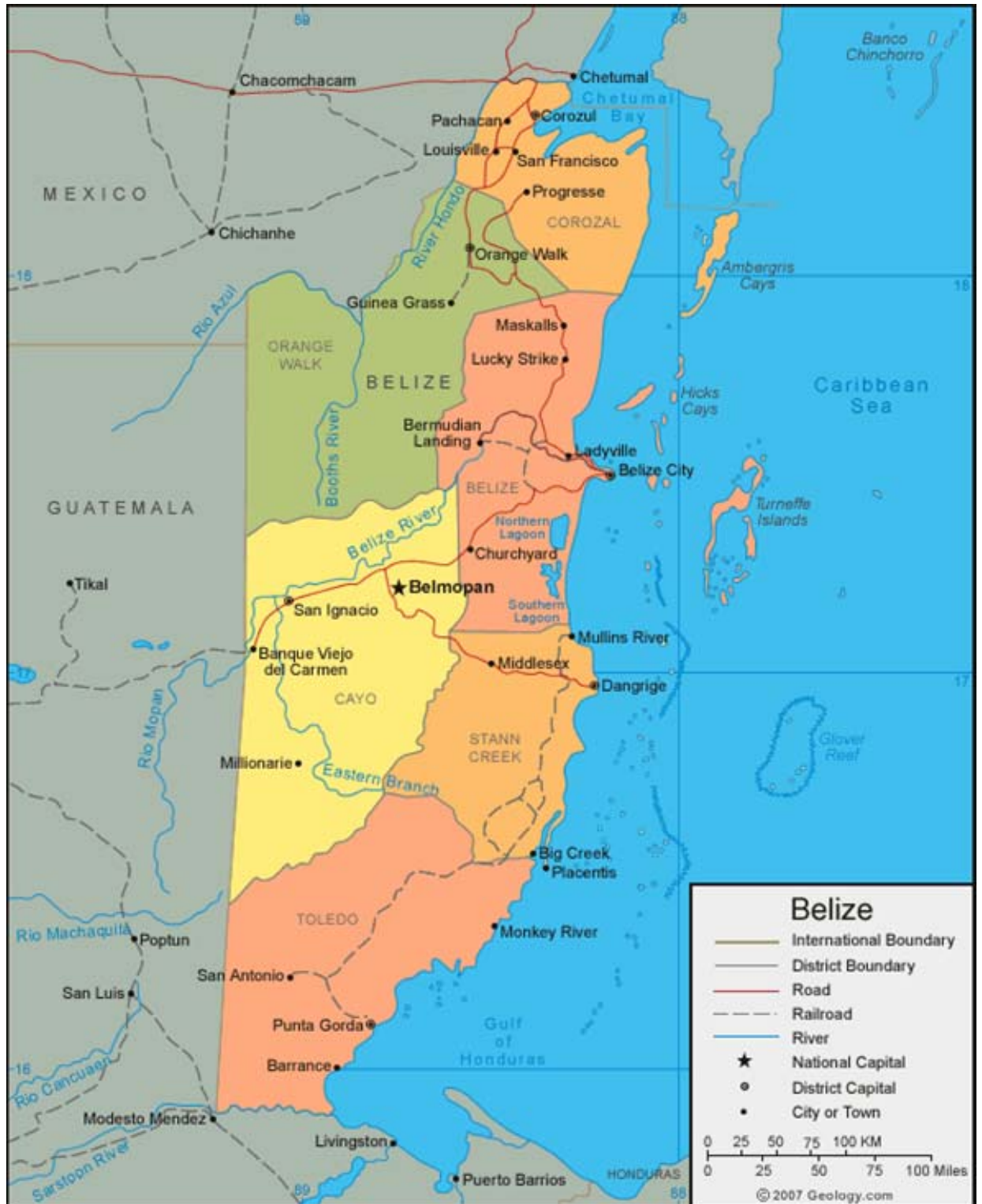
There is a need to develop a coordinated national framework for the collection, storage, manipulation, analysis, and dissemination of data and information to facilitate informed decision-making and policy formulation and implementation, in general; and with regard to those that directly and indirectly affect the development and advancement of women, in particular.

Interest payments on the external debt, higher expenditure on salaries and pensions, budget allocations on infrastructure projects and land development and acquisition and reductions in allocations to non-physical, non-productive social programs all contribute to problems associated with budget (mis)allocations to social service programs that affect women and children.

Finally, the Government of Belize needs to execute a transparent and accountable budget exercise that will more accurately determine the resource needs of public agencies, departments, and units of the various ministries in order to critically assess the contributions of short- and long-term social programs that provide services to women and children. Insufficient or inadequate budget allocations for social programs seem to be the main cause of the deficiency in financial and human resources that are necessary to address the problems and issues that present obstacles to the development and advancement of women.

# APPENDIX

## Map of Belize



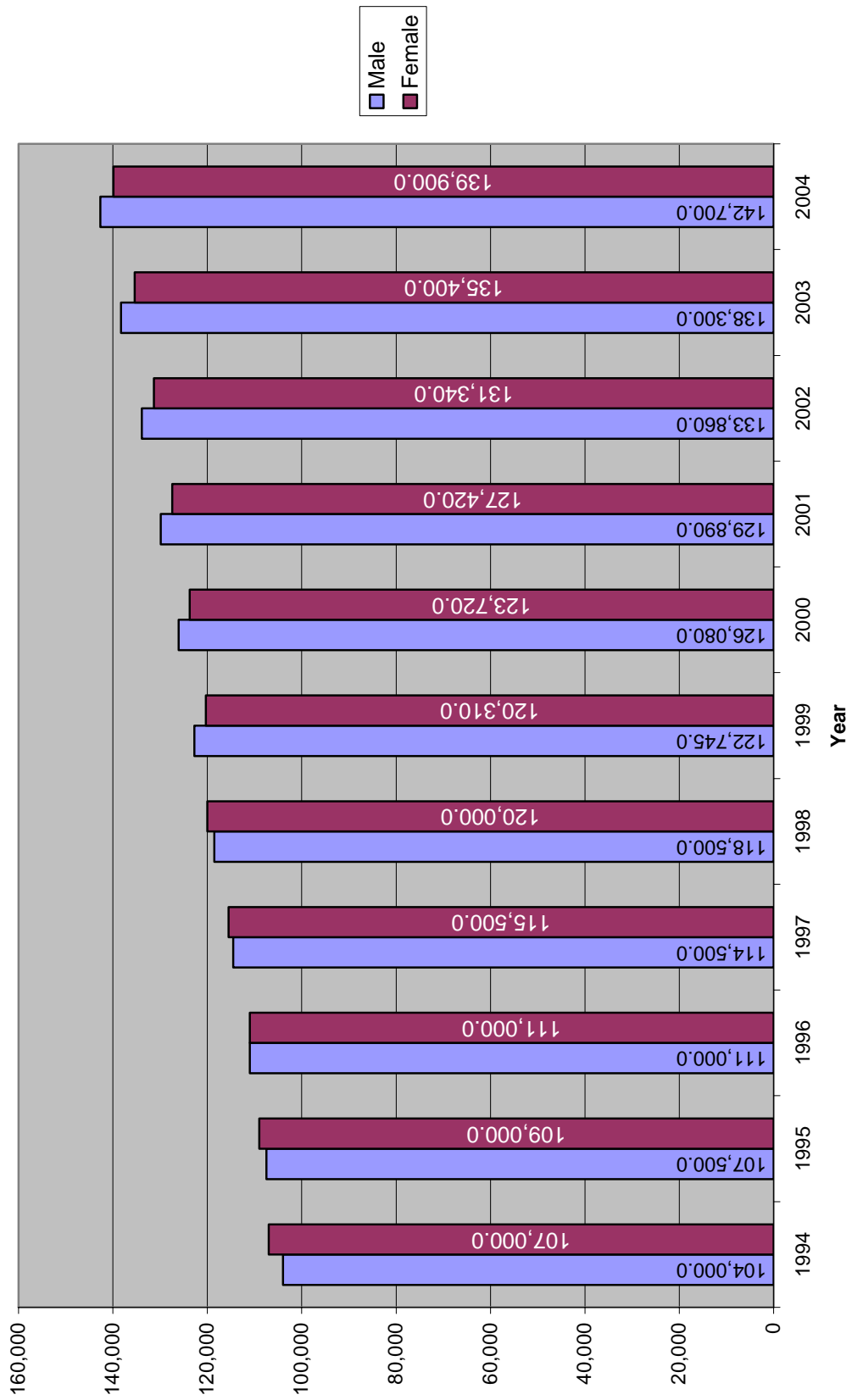
NGO'S Shadow Report Written For Convention On Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (1996-2004)

**Labor Force, By Sex and Relation to Head of Household  
1996-2003**

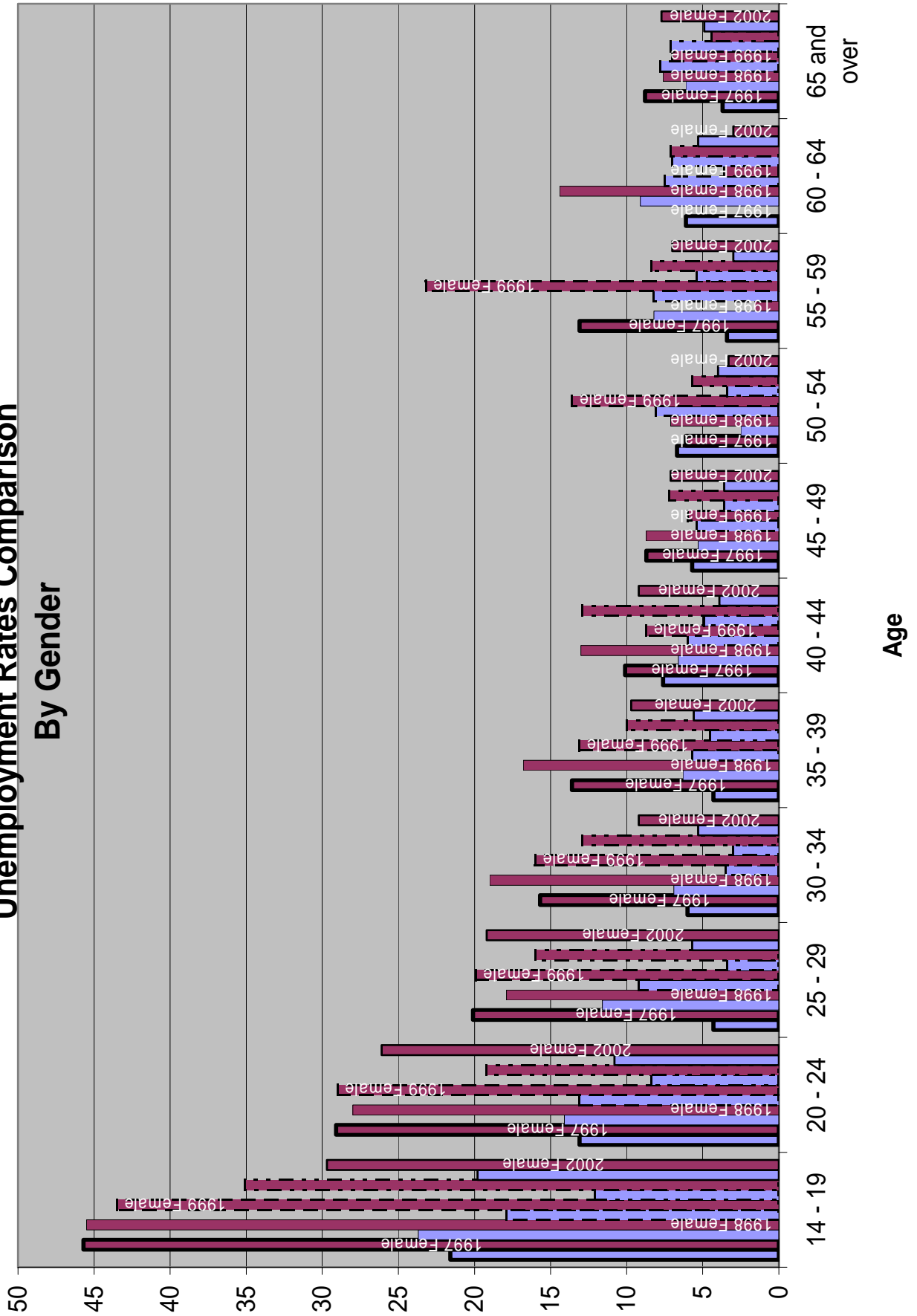
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003
<b>Both Sexes</b>	65,025	70,680	85,595	89,210	94,431	94,171	102,437
<b>Head</b>	36,415	38,300	42,875	44,590	48,351	49,153	50,622
<b>Spouse/Partner</b>	8,470	9,670	12,445	13,200	15,217	13,258	16,272
<b>Child</b>	15,595	17,275	24,040	23,865	23,335	24,732	27,597
<b>Grandchild</b>	615	805	1,245	1,325	1,024	1,273	1,442
<b>Other Relative</b>	3,085	3,590	3,940	4,850	3,703	2,879	3,584
<b>Other</b>	845	1,040	1,050	1,380	2,801	2,835	2,791
<b>DK/NS</b>	0	0	0	0	0	41	129
<b>Male</b>	46,115	49,265	56,035	58,990	62,146	63,307	66,305
<b>Head</b>	31,315	32,285	35,285	37,550	40,131	40,753	40,709
<b>Spouse/Partner</b>	1,295	1,275	1,490	1,505	2,045	1,952	2,312
<b>Child</b>	10,695	12,095	15,520	15,305	15,050	16,262	17,912
<b>Grandchild</b>	405	555	715	915	718	903	979
<b>Other Relative</b>	1,840	2,380	2,370	2,950	2,388	1,792	2,469
<b>Other</b>	565	675	655	765	1,814	1,631	1,823
<b>DK/NS</b>	0	0	0	0	0	14	101
<b>Female</b>	18,910	21,415	29,560	30,220	32,285	30,864	36,132
<b>Head</b>	5,100	6,015	7,590	7,040	8,220	8,400	9,913
<b>Spouse/Partner</b>	7,175	8,395	10,955	11,695	13,172	11,306	13,960
<b>Child</b>	4,900	5,180	8,520	8,560	8,285	8,470	9,685
<b>Grandchild</b>	210	250	530	410	306	370	463
<b>Other Relative</b>	1,245	1,210	1,570	1,900	1,315	1,087	1,115
<b>Other</b>	280	365	395	615	987	1,204	968
<b>DK/NS</b>	0	0	0	0	0	27	28
<b>% of Female Headed Households in relation to Female Labor Force</b>	27.0	28.1	25.7	23.3	25.5	27.2	27.4

**SOURCE: Abstract of Statistics; Years 1998 to 2003**

### Mid-Year Population Estimates



# Unemployment Rates Comparison By Gender



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
**TOTAL NUMBER OF REFERRALS – CHILD PROTECTION**  
*1995 – 2005*  
*Belize District Only*

Nature of Case	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995
Emotional/Verbal Abuse	46	21	29	25	20	8	-	-	-	-
Physical Abuse	194	160	107	112	128	120	59	49	94	49
Neglect	330	317	277	205	218	180	78	68	109	*85
Sexual Abuse	257	213	167	119	153	159	29	21	33	24
Abandonment	164	84	78	92	102	43	31	24	39	-
Wandering	10	10	7	-	1	10	6	-	6	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>1001</u></b>	<b><u>805</u></b>	<b><u>665</u></b>	<b><u>553</u></b>	<b><u>622</u></b>	<b><u>520</u></b>	<b><u>203</u></b>	<b><u>162</u></b>	<b><u>281</u></b>	<b><u>158</u></b>

- Amount is a combination of neglect and abandonment

**NB:** *Figures are raw data only on reported incidences of child abuse, it is not accurate to use as an indicator of the prevalence of abuse. Analysis is needed on staffing patterns and possible external influences on figures.*

*In 1999, the Minister of Human Development, Women & Civil Society passed the Child Abuse Reporting Regulations which made it mandatory/ a duty for professionals and the public to report child abuse. Children's Week's theme was on Stamping Out Child Abuse – target was mainly schools.*

**WIN-BELIZE**  
**Interview Questions for Focus Groups**  
**Shadow Report of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Period State Party Report of Government of Belize**  
**CEDAW Conference, June 2007, New York**

*Interview Conducted by: Luis & Andrea Constantino*

1. Are you familiar with the procedures for reporting and accessing services for domestic violence and sexual abuse?
2. Are you aware of cultural issues regarding domestic violence and sexual abuse?

**Health**

3. Do you know how to access health services in regard to family planning, HIV/AIDS, contraception, etc? Yes/No
4. Do you utilize these services? Yes/No
5. Do you have a community health center? Yes/No
6. Do you have community nurse? Yes/No
7. Do you know the schedule for the Mobile Health Clinics? Yes/No
8. Do you use the mobile clinics? Yes/No
9. When the clinics are there, are there specific days/times for children, women, men, etc?
10. Do you feel that there is adequate maternal health care (prenatal-postnatal) services provided in the villages? Yes/No
11. Do you have safe motherhood education? Yes/No
12. Are you aware of any breastfeeding education programs? Yes/No
13. Do you know of any training of peer counselors and the provision of education of HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention? Yes/No

**Business**

14. In your culture, are you entitled to own a business?
15. Would you like to become/are you involved in your own business?

16. Have you ever applied for any kinds of loans?
17. Do you know how to access financing?
18. Do you know of any skills training in organization management, credit and markets, HIV/AIDS and/or Domestic Violence provided by NGOs and Women's Department? And if so, have you participated in any of these?

**WIN-BELIZE**  
**Interview Questions for NGO Community**  
**Shadow Report of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Period State Party Report of Government of Belize**  
**CEDAW Conference, June 2007, New York**  
*Interview Conducted by: Luis & Andrea Constantino*

***MACHINERIES***

1. Are you aware of any of GOB's national machineries which address the development of women, create equal opportunities for women and ensure women's equal access and results to those opportunities?
2. If so, what machineries have been created?
3. What is the level of coordination with other institutional machineries?
4. What level of progress has been achieved in addressing the development and advancement of women in Belize in all areas, i.e. political, economic, social and cultural?

***NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN***

5. Are you aware of/familiar with national development plan/s?
6. Has/have this/these plan/s addressed women's development and advancement?
7. In this/these plan/s, has GOB incorporated macro-economic and social policies that ensure women's access and enjoyment to overall economic and social development?
8. Do national development plans include specific provisions for specific groups of women – rural, indigenous, disabled, migrant, minority women?
9. Are there any monitoring systems in place to evaluate the implementation of the national development plans in relation to women's development?
10. Are there mechanisms in place to address shortcomings of the implementation of national development plans in relation to women's development?
11. Do you know if there have been any assessments made on the impact of WTO agreements on the rights of women?
12. Can you identify issues or problems related to your work with women and their development and advancement?

13. What are recommendations for government action for issues or problems that you have identified?
14. What have you noticed to be the major obstacles to women's equality in Belize?
15. Given your experiences, what would you say are the main issues affecting women at the national level?

## MAJOR ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>INCOME</b>						
GDP at Current Market Prices (\$mn)	1,464	1,664.7	1,737.6	1,853.0	1,962.3	2,085.9
Per Capita GDP (\$, Current Mkt. Prices )	6,028	6,664	6,753	6,987	7,170	7,381
Real GDP Growth (%)	8.7	13.0	3.9	3.9	9.1	4.2
Sectoral Distribution of Constant 2000 GDP (%)						
Primary Activities	15.3	15.2	14.6	14.1	17.7	8.6
Secondary Activities	16.4	18.1	17.4	17.1	15.1	15.6
Services	68.3	66.7	68.0	68.8	67.2	65.8
<b>MONEY AND PRICES (\$mn)</b>						
<b>CREDIT (\$mn)</b>						
Commercial Bank Loans and Advances	654.5	695.4	788.5	904.5	1,041.7	1,176.6
Public Sector	8.4	11.1	12.9	15.9	26.2	46.4
Private Sector	646.1	684.3	775.6	888.6	1,015.5	1,130.2
<b>INTEREST RATE (%)</b>						
Weighted Average Lending Rate (WALR)	16.3	15.8	15.4	14.5	14.2	14.0
Weighted Average Deposit Rate	5.7	5.0	4.3	4.5	4.9	5.2
Weighted Average Interest Rate Spread	10.6	10.8	11.1	10.0	9.3	8.8
<b>CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FINANCES (\$mn)</b>						
Current Revenue	327.1	349.8	372.1	425.8	422.2	462.0
Current Expenditure	278.8	308.4	333.7	333.4	393.0	468.0
Current Account Surplus (+)/Deficit(-)	48.3	41.4	38.4	92.3	29.1	-6.0
Capital Expenditure	165.3	247.5	267.4	260.3	273.9	180.9
Overall Surplus (+)/Deficit(-)	-	-139.9	-142.4	-68.8	-213.6	-125.3
Ratio of Budget Deficit to GDP at m kt. Prices (%)	29.1	-2.0	-8.4	-8.2	-3.7	-10.9
Domestic Financing (Net)	-8.6	-74.0	72.7	-220.9	-62.4	-39.4
External Financing (Net)	38.5	213.5	69.8	278.3	276.7	164.9
<b>BALANCE OF PAYMENTS (US \$mn)</b>						
Merchandise Exports (f.o.b.) <sup>1</sup>	261.5	281.8	269.1	309.7	315.5	307.0
Merchandise Imports (f.o.b.) <sup>2</sup>	375.8	478.4	477.7	496.9	522.3	480.8
Trade Balance	-	-196.6	-208.7	-187.2	-206.8	-173.9
Tourism (inflows)	114.3	105.8	116.2	102.9	102.9	117.2
Services (Net)	47.1	33.7	36.4	26.4	39.6	53.5
Current Account Balance	-67.8	-156.0	-189.9	-182.6	-207.4	-182.4
<b>PUBLIC SECTOR DEBT</b>						
Disbursed Outstanding External Debt (US \$m n) <sup>4</sup>	252.5	433.7	486.6	574.5	752.9	841.0
Ratio of Outstanding Debt to GDP at Mkt. Prices (%)	34.5	52.1	56.0	62.0	76.7	80.6
External Debt Service Payments (US \$m n)	33.7	43.1	68.0	75.2	72.0	91.4
External Debt Service Ratio (%) <sup>5</sup>	8.1	9.8	15.3	15.2	3.6	18.1
Disbursed Outstanding Domestic Debt (\$ m n)	171.5	176.0	210.8	174.2	257.8	280.9
Domestic Debt Service Payments (\$ m n)	12.2	22.6	17.7	19.2	13.7	18.

**SOURCE: Central Bank Report , 2004**

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