

CONCEPT NOTE

STRENGTHENING THE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE RESPONSE THROUGH GENDER ADVOCATES IN BELIZE

1. BACKGROUND

1.01 Belize has not conducted a country wide Gender-based Violence (GBV) Survey, but there was a pilot study in two districts (Orange Walk and Stann Creek) in 2015. This study suggested that more than half of all women reported that they had been abused or physically disciplined before the age of 16, and that 22.2% of women had experienced physical abuse and/or sexual abuse by their current partner or a previous partner. However, the study also found that "...the incidence of physical violence by a partner is significantly higher than that of the 22.2% who reported it." The survey concludes that "With more than 1 in 5 women being victims of domestic violence, and more than 1 in 5 witnessing their mothers being abused by their partners growing up, this is a serious concern for the country of Belize" [1]

Furthermore, the survey indicates that women reported several barriers to reporting gender-based violence, including lack of services. One of the recommendations emanating from the study speaks to the limited availability or access to services which can be more pronounced in rural communities; "Men, women and children need to recognize the seriousness and unacceptability of gender-based violence and victims need to have access to supportive services so that they can remove themselves and their children from unsafe situations" [2].

1.02 In Belize, GBV not only includes cases of domestic violence, but also extends to other forms of violence that occur in the public sphere. Examples are commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons. These forms of GBV have been reported increasingly in the last three decades. According to the National GBV Violence Plan, however, police statistics indicate that domestic violence was the most widely reported form of abuse. In 2012 only 948 were reported. More recent administrative data (2015) from the Ministry of Health show a similar picture with 859 reports of domestic violence. Rape is the most reported form of sexual violence against women, with an annual average of 28.6 cases between 2006 and 2013. According to Police Department crime statistics, the cruellest form of violence, femicide, amounted to 96 cases between 2006 and 2014 with an average of 10.6 per year.

1.01 Under-reporting leads to an underestimation of GBV figures.[3] Among the reasons for under-reporting are limited availability of services, lack of public awareness and cultural norms that hinder victims to speak out. These factors are particularly pronounced in rural areas.[4]

Of concern to the national response is the absence of immediate services in the rural areas of the country. Belize has around one hundred ninety-six (196) villages and communities spread in some cases far apart from each other and from the main towns which are the center of government services. The GBV survey notes that, women in rural villages with less access to agencies, safe

houses, and other resources, and who face fear of being ostracized in their communities if they speak out, may be particularly at risk.

2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

2.01 This project is aimed at addressing one of the worst forms of gender inequality and equity in Belize. It seeks to contribute to an environment in which families, in particular women and children, in rural communities will enjoy their right to violent free lives. The project will further the goals and objectives of several international, regional, and national commitments but most importantly the reality in which many Belizean women and children find themselves.

2.02 It is expected that through this project the capacities of GOBZ in extending services to rural areas will be strengthened and victims and survivors of gender-based violence will benefit from improved and strengthened services in rural areas. It is also expected to contribute to an increase in the reports. The project will also enhance and strengthen the reporting systems which will provide consistent, current data and trends for informed policy development, program planning and monitoring and evaluation.

3. EXPECTED RESULTS

3.01 The Ministry of Human Development, GOBZ, envisions a cadre of twenty (20) gender advocates from within the 6 districts focusing on twenty communities identified by The National Women Commission, The Women and Family Support Department and UNICEF.

The areas are as follows:

- Belize- Sandhill, Maskall, Bermudian Landing, Caye Caulker
- Orange Walk – August Ridge, Guinea Grass, San Jose
- Cayo– Camalote, Succotz, Bullet Tree, Maya Mopan
- Stann Creek- Independence, Seine Bight, Santa Rosa
- Corozal – San Narciso, Xaibe, Sarteneja, Libertad
- Toledo – San Pedro Columbia, San Antonio, Indian Creek

3.02 These gender advocates will fulfil the five functions below:

- A. Creating awareness about GBV.
- B. Providing basic information to women about their legal rights and options.
- C. Providing immediate assistance (including accompaniment through the legal process) and making the referral to relevant entities, professional services, and psychosocial support.
- D. Improving reporting on GBV; and
- E. Monitoring of “low risk” gender-based violence cases

4. PROPOSAL

4.01 The project will cover seven (7) components:

- a) Design of a recruitment strategy as well as a job description of gender advocates to mobilize gender advocates.
- b) Development of an operations and procedural manual to include topics such as:

- 1) Safety plans for personal, victim and community safety.
 - i. Protocol for assessment of GBV cases.
 - ii. Protocol for referral of cases.
 - iii. Protocol for accessing the judicial system
 - iv. Protocol for gender equality
- c) Development of a training manual inclusive of a tool kit based on international good practice to cover inter alia:
 - i. GBV – forms, causes, prevention and response.
 - ii. GBV – legal and institutional framework; custody and maintenance; laws and frameworks
 - iii. Public awareness raising, participatory methods and messaging
 - iv. Personal safety and safety of victims (victim protection).
 - v. Community engagement.
 - vi. Leadership.
 - vii. Advocacy
 - viii. Mediation and conflict resolution.
 - ix. Trauma and self-care.
 - x. Reporting.
- d) Training of Gender Advocates including an orientation to service providers and relevant stakeholders including magistrate and family courts in the relevant jurisdictions via a field visit (3 – 5 days)
- e) Conduct a sensitizing session for service providers and relevant stakeholders including magistrate and family courts in the relevant jurisdictions
- f) Seek a partnership with Belize Telecommunication Ltd. And SMART to facilitate communication of advocates with clients and relevant stakeholders providing services and reporting in rural areas
- g) Development of an M&E Framework including utilizing the GBV Complaint Mechanism and documenting complaints from their communities.

5. EXECUTION

5.01 The National Women Commission in collaboration with the Women and Family Support Department, both situated within the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous' Peoples' Affairs will execute the Gender Advocate Program as outlined in the proposed Implementation timeline below with financial and technical support from UNICEF:

6. PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE (July 28, 2021 – February 28, 2021)

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