



Belize Voluntary National Review

Main Messages

May 19th, 2017

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I. Key plans or Strategies for Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]

Belize has made significant strides in transitioning from the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. **“Horizon 2030: National Development Framework for Belize 2010-2030”** now guides long-term development planning. The strategic priorities for Belize by the year 2030 includes democratic governance for effective public administration and sustainable development; education; economic resilience and a healthy citizenry and environment.

Building on this long-term development plan and to guide the implementation of the SDGs the **“Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) 2016-2020”** was adopted. This is an integrated, systematic approach based on the principles of sustainable development towards a proactive role for the state; accessing global markets; and innovative social policy implementation.

II. Priority SDGs

Successful sustainable development requires prioritization of a country’s goals based on clear criteria and critical success factors that create multiplier effects on other goals. Of the six SDGs prioritized for discussion at the High Level Political Forum [HLPF] in July 2017, Belize has selected two goals: SDG# 5 - Gender Equality and SDG# 14 - Life Below Water, for detailed discussion.

SDG #5: Gender Equality

Achievements:

- The Government of Belize has embarked on aligning gender equality policies, plans and other normative frameworks. The Women’s Department, the National Committee for Women and Children and the National Women’s Commission implements and/or advises the Government on gender-related issues, gender-based violence reduction and ensures gender mainstreaming in all aspects of planning for development, as well as, to ensure compliance with various gender-related international conventions.
- The Ministries of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture; Health; and Human Development, along with regional and international partners, are collaborating on addressing cross-cutting issues, highlighting priority areas, building capacity and improving data collection systems.
- The National Gender Policy was revised in 2013, to take actions and ensure advancements in the areas of: health; education and skills training; wealth and employment creation; power and decision-making; reduce violence producing conditions. The implementation of the policy led to the creation of a Gender Integration Committee comprised of Government and civil society agencies and the appointment of a Gender Focal Point in each Ministry.

SDG #14: Life Below Water

Achievements:

- The Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) plan was finalized and endorsed in 2016. The aim of the plan is to recommend actions that will ensure sustainable coastal resource use by balancing conservation practices with economic and social needs.
- Managed Access (MA) was piloted in two marine protected areas, then rolled out across territorial waters in 2016. MA aims to build good stewardship and improve fishing practices by establishing nine fisheries management areas.
- The Fisheries Resource Bill has been drafted and is awaiting enactment. A Task Force representing the government, private sector and civil society was established to advise the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Immigration [MAFFESDI] on sustainable fisheries practices.

III. Main Challenges Encountered and Areas of Progress

Main Challenges

The main challenges to date are:

- Political adoption of the SDG Agenda has not been fully embraced at all levels and sectors required to move the process effectively;
- Existing processes for data collection, interpretation, standardization, management and dissemination are inadequate to properly monitor and evaluate the SDGs;
- Economic downturn over the past year has necessitated budget cuts which have restricted the government's ability to finance the implementation of programs to meet SDG commitments.
- Ineffective collaboration and coordination, between and among, institutions, agencies, and non-governmental stakeholders responsible for implementation.

Areas of Progress

The main areas of progress to date are:

- Institutional framework for the operationalization of the SDGs, both at the political/governance and technical levels, has been established through the formation of the Sustainable Development Unit of the MAFFESDI and the subsequent activation of Technical Committees and Working Tables;
- The GSDS as the medium term national integrated development strategy, incorporates the principles and priorities of the SDGs, creating synergies within, and among, national implementation agencies;
- The GSDS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework has been developed;
- Statistical Institute of Belize, in recognition of data systems shortcomings, has embarked on a program to enhance its capacity to act as the central repository for GSDS and SDG statistics.

- The adoption of program budgeting by GOB is a critical first step in ensuring that SDG commitments are achieved.

IV. Stakeholder Involvement /Consultation

The development of the GSDS had extensive citizen participation including Civil Society Organizations, Academia, and Statutory Agencies. The integration of the National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan and National Sustainable Development Strategy was a result of stakeholder consultations.

The GSDS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, includes participation of civil society organizations at the Technical Committee level, Working Table and Economic and Sustainable Council.

SDGs and GSDS activities, particularly capacity building and training sessions, makes provisions for extensive citizen participation.

V. Means of Implementation

Governance Structure

- The Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet authorizes and endorses the GSDS.
- The CEO Caucus, provides the next level of oversight. It is tasked with the responsibility of prioritization, coordination, synchronization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the GSDS.
- In line with five Critical Success Factors of the GSDS, five Technical Committees will be established to ensure systemic integration: a) Optimal National Income and Investment Committee, b) Social Cohesion and Resilience Committee, c) Natural Environmental, Historical and Cultural Assets Committee, d) Governance and e) Citizen Security Committee.
- The Economic and Sustainable Development Council, a senior leadership advisory body appointed by the Prime Minister, provides input on priorities and implementation. It serves as a platform for public and private sector and civil society dialogue.

Resource Mobilization for Implementation of GSDS

Implementation of the GSDS will require significant resources. Consequently, four broad approaches will be pursued to mobilize financial, human and material resources:

- Strategy 1: Expenditure Management
- Strategy 2: Enhancing Revenue Generation
- Strategy 3: Improving Financing Options
- Strategy 4: Better Partnerships with the Development Community and Donor Coordination