

FINAL REPORT  
ON THE BUDGET CONSULTATIONS FOR  
FISCAL YEAR 2008/2009

AND

REPORT OF THE ONE-DAY SYMPOSIUM  
ON THE ECONOMY, JUNE 11, 2008

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THROUGH THE UB-UNDP-UNICEF POLICY OBSERVATORY PROJECT  
AND THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE

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# FINAL REPORT ON THE BUDGET CONSULTATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008/2009

## PREFACE

The Government of Belize is seeking to change the way that public policy is formulated by broadening consultation with stakeholders so as to make the policy and planning processes more transparent. The main objective is to improve the quality of policy making by focusing on the needs and expressed desires of the people that are affected by government policies.

Specifically in relation to the annual budget exercise, Government initiated a process of national consultations to provide an opportunity for as many Stakeholders as possible to contribute their views on: the impact of existing revenue and/or expenditure measures on particular sectors of society, what expenditure priorities should be, revenue measures that should be reviewed and priority projects that should be considered. Government is also seeking to develop this consultative approach not only around the annual budget, but also around the longer term planning process which will take place through the Horizon 2030 project.

Since May 5, 2008, a team from the Government of Belize and the University of Belize has been meeting with a wide cross section of Belizean Society including representatives of the private sector, labour unions, women's organizations, environmental organizations, agricultural producers, rural communities and the tourism industry. While we attempted to meet with as many groups as possible, we realized that in the time available, we were not able to meet with some key stakeholder groups. However, this consultative process is a "work in progress" and, as it develops, it is hoped that it will grow to include a broader group of stakeholders. A list of organizations and persons met is attached to this report.

These meetings provided an opportunity for these stakeholder representatives to discuss issues and provide information to be taken into account in the preparation of government's budget. This is the first time that Government has taken this approach. Usually when the draft budget is prepared, it is done by the Ministry of Finance on the basis of proposals that come from each Ministry. There are some discussions between the Ministry of Finance and the other ministries before the draft budget is prepared and submitted to Cabinet for consideration and revision before sending it to the House of Representative for debate and approval. But this is the first time that an opportunity was created for a wide range of stake holders outside of government to discuss the parameters and priorities of the budget before the draft budget was prepared.

The consultation team included persons from the Ministries of Finance and Economic Development and the University of the Belize. The University, through the UNDP-UNICEF funded Policy Observatory Project is seeking to develop a capacity to play a

public policy role. It is felt that, as the National University, UB can play an important role in the policy process in Belize through, for example, policy research, review and assessment.

This document presents a synopsis of the issues raised in the National Consultations on the Budget for fiscal year 2008/2009. It is based on the discussions with the groups and organizations with whom the consultations team met and on written submissions received from groups and individuals. We received written submissions from several agencies and email submissions from 5 individuals. This report also includes a summary of the discussions at the Symposium of June 11, 2008 where a broad range of participants in the budget consultations came together to discuss broader issues of economic policy and strategy.

This report will be widely circulated to participants in the consultation process and Government Ministries. It is a permanent record of the discussions so that, in future consultations, it can be utilized as a reference against which progress can be measured.

We apologize in advance for any errors in this report and look forward to the consultation process growing and developing in the months and years ahead.

Carla Barnett and the Consultation Team  
July 2008

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF THE KEY ISSUES RAISED BY STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENT

Stakeholders have identified many issues that they feel government should address through the budget process by way of review of existing policies, development and implementation of new policies, allocation of additional resources, strengthening of public accountability frameworks and continued consultation with stakeholders. Many of the issues will require medium to long term approaches and solutions and stakeholders generally expressed support for the establishment of a medium to long term planning framework. Stakeholders understand that government's ability to respond to issues is framed by available resources and in the context of scarce resources and the desire for best results, the need for proper development planning is critical.

Many of the issues listed below were raised by several groups separately. Some issues can be directly addressed by Government; others can be addressed through support for processes and organizations who can address them directly:

- A. Support for micro, small and medium enterprises should be provided through:
- Improved access to affordable financing for investment and operations.
  - Assistance for the development of marketing and business plans
  - Assistance in accessing small scale processing equipment
  - Strengthening of the Bureau of Standards
- B. Support for agricultural sector should be through:
- Timely road maintenance in agricultural communities
  - Mechanisms for reducing the cost of agricultural inputs
  - Promotion of cooperatives in agricultural production
  - Additional resources for district Agricultural Officers and expansion in extension services
  - Using local petroleum refining to make cheaper fuel available to farmers
- C. Rural community development should be promoted through:
- Review and rationalization of public sector organizations operating in "Rural Development".
  - Strengthening the capabilities of Village Councils to better administer village affairs in keeping with the responsibilities of the Councils set out in the Village Councils Act.

- Provision of additional education resources - there is not enough classroom space and not enough teachers, in comparison to the number of teachers in the towns and cities.
- Provision of programmes for rural youth to keep them productively occupied in the villages.
- Expansion of potable water supply systems, Primary Health Care Services and Communication and transportation. These are critical basic services that are not available to all rural communities.

D. Sustainable development requires protection of the environment through

- Implementation of a proper national solid waste management plan
- Increased financial support for environmental management, including management of the protected areas.
- Review of land use laws and practices, including tax laws.
- Introduction of valuation of environmental resources.

E. Reduce poverty and improve quality of life by

- Addressing the rising cost of food through reducing import taxes and widening the range of basic food items that are zero-rated for GST
- Subsidizing child care services in vulnerable communities to increase the scope for single women to become employed.

F. Strengthen governance and accountability through:

- Respect for requirements of Finance and Audit Act including audits, budget process and supplementary financing procedures.
- Continued engagement with the social partners.
- Deepening decentralization by addressing the need for municipal and village administrations to have adequate sources of revenue to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Ensuring equity in the allocation of government subventions to organizations.
- Requiring all NGO's and other agencies that receive government subvention to provide reports on financial performance and service delivery.

G. Improve revenue performance through:

- Strengthening revenue management process
- Fighting contraband
- Reducing trade taxes

- Reviewing tourism sector taxes

H. Improved impact of public expenditure through:

- Continued control of recurrent expenditure.
- Expansion in Capital 2 and Capital 3 expenditures on the basis of proper planning for road and other infrastructure development for agriculture and tourism.
- GOB assistance for emergency tourism marketing



## SUMMARY REPORT OF EACH MEETING

### BEST AND HELP FOR PROGRESS

1. Financing for small enterprises is a key issue to be addressed by Government through the budget process. With the demise of the DFC, there is no financial institution that provides access to finance for those business that outgrow agencies like BEST and HELP that finance micro-enterprises. There are viable small enterprises that have a good record of managing loans and have demonstrated that they are capable of expanding service, but they find it difficult to access affordable financing.
2. There is a gap in providing certain business development services to small and micro enterprises. Many services are not affordable because of the small scale of operations of these businesses. The gap includes:
  - Marketing is an important business activity, but small and micro enterprises are not able to effectively develop and utilize marketing strategies for reasons of scale and cost.
  - Access to small equipment (bottling and drying equipment etc.) to do food processing is important. Government or quasi-government institutions like BELTRAIDE can make connections with companies that sell small-scale equipment for food processing for such products as cohune oil, honey etc. GOB can provide duty exemptions on this equipment to support the development of small enterprises.
  - Training in food processing (possibly through the work of the Ministries of Agriculture and Human Development) is an area that would be help small and micro-businesses utilize agricultural production levels that exceed local needs.
3. Road maintenance is critical. There is a need to fix roads and improve transportation services to get products to market. Agricultural feeder roads need urgent attention.
4. The cost of agricultural inputs is sky-rocketing. In particular, the cost of fertilizers and fuel is making production cost exorbitantly high. This is a major concern to clients of BEST and HELP and to agricultural producers in general.
5. Government needs to give urgent attention to access to financing for student loans. This is an area of critical need as a result of the status of the DFC. Organizations such as BEST can consider becoming involved in the provision of student loans, but it would need access to low cost financing.

### BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The Chamber welcomes Government's new approach of consultation on the budget process as an important first step in developing a more responsible manner of managing the resources of the country. It is hoped that this consultation process will be

institutionalized in a manner which would realize an ongoing multi-partite engagement on pre and post budget discussions.

1. The business community over the years has been concerned about the loose manner in which Government has managed taxpayers' tax dollars, in many cases in ways that are not beneficial to the majority. Examples of these are: retroactive approval of huge overspending through supplementary budgets sometimes years after such overspending occurred; paying private sector debts; unauthorized government guarantees of private sector debts; defaulting on the audit requirements; diverting funds intended for certain public causes to private interests; disposing of public assets significantly below market values and constant violation of the Finance and Audit Reform Act of 2005. The private sector is hopeful that in this new dawn the Government will behave more responsibly and accountably and be reminded that taxpayers' dollars should be handled in the most responsible manner possible. Strict adherence to the Finance and Audit Reform Act of 2005 and value for resources expended are necessary.
2. The business community feels that taxation in Belize is a heavy burden to bear. Taxes increased to 23.2% for fiscal year ended 2007/2008, up from 18.9% in 2001/2002. Revenues have been performing very well, especially taxes on Income and Business Tax and the General Sales Tax. Despite this commendable performance, the Chamber feels that collections could be much higher. It is the Chamber's view that inefficiencies in collections in the various tax systems artificially force the nominal tax rates to be higher than is necessary. This has an undue adverse effect on taxpaying businesses that operate by the rules.
3. Import duties continue to be a major concern for businesses in Belize. While import duties raise revenues for government and protect certain locally products, it is felt that the duties are too high. The GST was implemented with the understanding that import duties would ultimately be reduced under the CET. This matter needs to be addressed urgently.
4. High import duties have created an economic opportunity for "contrabandistas". Contraband goods either pass through formal ports of entry or simply through non-authorized access points along the very porous border. These illegal activities have a two-fold effect. It erodes the tax base of Government and causes severe hardships to companies that pay their import duties and as a result find it difficult to compete.
5. The concern about the evasion of taxes is not only in relation to Customs Duties, it is also about underreporting of income for the purpose of calculating Income Business Taxes and the reporting of sales for the purpose of GST. It was suggested that GOB should require that all businesses registered for GST should have a computerized system in place that can easily be checked by government for compliance.
6. Government has indicated that improved management of the revenue departments is a high priority on its agenda. The Chamber is suggesting that Government undertakes an exercise to determine the potential revenue from each tax so that efficiency can then be measured with respect to collection. It is possible that in the budget

exercises, inefficiencies are built into standards and norms and the targets set result in under performance.

7. Belize's tax policy is mainly "revenue-driven." Governments determine the amount of revenues that are required to sustain the bureaucracy and the system and the resultant tax rates are applied. The discussion needs to be had about what type of tax structure would most support development of industry and enterprises.
8. The Chamber asks that Government takes into consideration the following as the budget process is taken through its stages. In the short term:
  - Implement a fixed "per gallon" dollar amount tax on fuel.
  - Zero rate all inputs for local producers.
  - Change status of certain tourism related services from Exempt to Zero rated.
9. In the long term, Government should:
  - Seek ways to reduce the tax burden on businesses;
  - Secure the necessary study to determine the revenue potential of all its taxes in order to determine efficiency and effectiveness of collections;
  - Set progressive targets over a period of time to improve collections in the Customs Department and eliminate leakages.
  - Fully implement the ASYCUDA system in the Customs Department.
  - Put additional resources into the Customs anti-contraband unit and have this unit's performance monitored by an independent board comprised of producers and importers.
  - Further strengthen tax administration within the Sales Tax Department in an effort to tighten the net and eventually lower the nominal rate.
  - Government needs to evaluate the cost/benefit of its high excise taxes given the information coming from those sectors which the excise tax applies.
  - Allow start-up businesses to pay taxes on profits and exempt from monthly business tax payments as this causes cash flow difficulties.
  - Integrate the tax collections departments into one hybrid which would eliminate redundancies and improve efficiencies.
10. On the expenditure side, Government must continue to cut expenditures where possible and ensure that resources are utilized in a prudent and cost effective fashion. Efforts must be made to manage the debt so that interest payments will not be stifling. This means that those debts incurred as a result of defaults on private sector loans should see no efforts spared in liquidating assets held as collateral with the ultimate goal of reducing debts and interest payments.
11. Vigilant monitoring of the recurrent deficit needs to continue to ensure that there is no slippage on the path back to sustainability. Notwithstanding, additional resources

will have to be allocated into fighting crime and into programs to provide alternatives to crime.

12. Belize is a developing country and there is much developmental work that needs to be carried out. Efforts need to be directed at stimulating the economy, attract investments and provide more employment. This is especially important in this era of global economic slowdown. The tight financial situation brought about by the previous administration's mismanagement is understood, but irrespective, a plan will need to be developed in an attempt to channel more resources into Capital II and III. The following recommendations are for consideration:

- Provide seed capital for the DFC to begin lending to the productive sector.
- Upgrade and repair road infrastructure in the country.
- Provide stimulus through soft financing and incentives for those in the productive sector so that this sector can take advantage of the current high global commodity prices such as grains.
- Develop a stimulus package in certain key areas such as tourism, data processing and other services with potential to provide employment and generate foreign exchange.

#### BELIZE BUSINESS BUREAU

1. The Bureau has noted that input costs are high and rising and suggested that to mitigate that, government should put measures in place for producers so that taxes are reduced or removed from inputs and perhaps put on end products. There is particular concern about fuel and agricultural inputs.
2. It was noted that agricultural inputs already have a relatively low rate of custom duties; and there is an ongoing consideration of further lowering of duties and taxes. It was also noted that government has expressed an intention to access low cost lines of credit for producers in the agriculture sector.
3. Because the domestic market is small, we have to always think in terms of export markets for production that exceeds domestic demand. It was noted that a Market Information System software (MIS) has been developed as a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Agriculture and BELTRAIDE. The system is not yet implemented. It includes data on price levels, production levels, farm gate pricing and marketing. The Ministry of Agriculture needs to make the budget allocations necessary for implementation of the system.
4. The strengthening of the Bureau of Standards is very important. This is important not only to establish standards for local production but to set standards for imported products as well. Improved standards administration is critical for competitiveness.
5. There is great concern about interest rates on loans at the commercial banks and about plans for development financing given the fact that DFC cannot play that role in its present state. It is important that lower interest rate loans be made available to micro and small enterprises, to the productive sector generally and to finance education

(student loans). It was noted that there is a possibility of accessing financing from CDB to be channeled through a financial institution, but as it currently stands the DFC is not in a legal position to take on such lines of credit.

6. There is a need for business support services, including business planning, to promote the development of small and medium enterprises. There are many persons who have good business ideas but do not have the resources/know how to put business plans together for consideration by financial institutions.
7. The Bureau noted that pensions represented a high and growing expense in government's annual budget. This needs to be reviewed with a view to reducing the burden on taxpayers.
8. It was observed that yachts have been docking in country and there appears to be no legislation to regulate fees and obligations concerning yachts. Government needs to look into this as it has economic, legal, and environmental implications for the country and its people.

#### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCILS (NAVCO)

1. NAVCO welcomed the consultations, noting that this is the first time that rural communities are having an opportunity to make an input into the Budget. NAVCO commended the process as a good start.
2. The priorities for rural communities are in the areas of:
  - Promotion of agriculture
  - Community infrastructure
  - Basic services
  - Institutional issues
3. Promotion of Agriculture:
  - Farm roads need immediate attention. When the rainy season starts some farm areas are not accessible.
  - Farmers need help to access machinery to prepare fields, harvest crops and process crops. They would want to see that the machinery belonging to cooperatives and those cooperatives assisted through credit unions. Development of both credit unions and cooperatives need government support through the Cooperatives Department.
  - Ministry of Agriculture needs to allocate resources to deliver extension services on a more timely and effective basis. Officers must not only be well trained, but they must have practical experience and be more in the field than behind the desks. The Ministry should revive the policy of having an Agricultural Officer and the requisite Extension Officers in every district.
  - UB is not producing agricultural graduates with practical experience. Graduates in agriculture should be trained on the farm.

- Fertilizer costs are very high. Government should take off all taxes off fertilizers and other agricultural inputs.
  - With the demise of the DFC, there is a need for a mechanism to provide financing for agricultural producers.
4. Community Infrastructure:
- Hurricane shelters in rural communities need to be addressed. This may not be possible in this Budget as the hurricane season is now beginning. Work on shelters should also be focused in the rural community instead of only Belize City and other coastal areas.
  - Many villages are still without a potable water supply system. Government needs to provide rigs for rural communities, which should be monitored through the Village Council Association.
5. Basic Services:
- Primary Health Care Services should be more available at the rural level. Some clinics have been improved but not enough and the level of service provided is still too low.
  - There is not enough classroom space in rural schools and not enough teachers, in comparison to the number of teachers in the towns and cities.
  - Rural children need pre-school too. The pre-school programme has not been extended to rural communities.
  - Rural youth need programmes to keep them productively occupied in the villages and not moving to the towns and cities where they get into trouble. An apprenticeship programme for village youth, allied with the CET/ITVET, would be a good place to start.
  - Communication and transportation are key to development and neither is well positioned in rural communities. From post office operations, to bus systems, to telephone service – rural communities need government to take a different approach, one that is more community centered and more appreciative of the needs of rural communities.
6. Institutional issues:
- Village councils, individually and through NAVCO and DAVCO can do much more to deal with the urgent matters within their communities but funding is a major issue. One source of funding is from liquor licensing fees but this process needs to be properly implemented with functioning oversight mechanisms.
  - GOB provides a subvention to NAVCO which was \$100,000 last year. NAVCO was also able to raise money through independent proposals to funding agencies. These funds are used to run NAVCO and to provide support services to DAVCO offices. NAVCO is also doing training in good governance. NACVO believes it

can be positioned to handle all Rural Development matters, including village council matters and water board management.

- All NGO's and other agencies that receive government subvention should be required to provide reports on financial performance and on delivery of service. NAVCO does this and feels it should apply to every agency.
- The Rural Development Ministry requires a different approach from that currently taken. There needs to be a review and rationalization of public sector organizations operating in "Rural Development". The usual ways are not working well. Consideration should be given to returning to the concept of District Administration to bring together ministries and departments working in the rural areas.

BELIZE TOURISM BOARD, BELIZE TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION AND  
BELIZE HOTEL ASSOCIATION

1. The tourism agencies expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the national consultations on the budget and indicated a willingness to continue dialogue with government in key issues.
2. It was noted that, in the past, there wasn't a functioning tourism ministry and all planning and implementation was carried out by the BTB. The Ministry has been reconstituted. It is responsible for policies and planning while the BTB and other stakeholders implement these policies.
3. Issues discussed in the meeting included: marketing, infrastructure, crime and national security, training and taxation.
4. Marketing.
  - Marketing is a priority in the BTB budget. Current funds available for this are about \$7.1 mn. This is just a drop in the bucket compared to competitors in the market. There is an urgent need for an additional sum of between BZ\$3 - \$5 mn to do additional marketing to offset the impending effects of the US economic downturn.
5. Infrastructure
  - Upgrading of the roads to facilitate the transportation of tourist and others to various in-country destinations is critical. Money is lost to Belize when tours have to be diverted to places such as Tikal in Guatemala because roads to sites in Belize become impassible. The following roads need attention in this context:
    - a. Northern Highway from the Phillip Goldson International Airport junction to Belize City.
    - b. Access roads to archaeological sites (Caracol, Altun Ha, Xunantunich, Caves' Branch etc)
    - c. The Placencia Road

- d. The road leading into Frank's Eddy
  - e. Major streets within Towns/Cities (e.g. Belize City and San Ignacio)
  - f. The Coastal Road to act as an alternate, scenic route to the south of the country.
  - g. Roads to Nim Li Punit, and other sites as part of the exercise to complete the Southern Highway
- Repairs to or construction of water supply systems and domestic air terminals in San Pedro, Caye Caulker and Belize City. The present terminals are congested and dilapidated.
  - There is need to access utilities to facilitate tourism development in the rural areas as well in those parts of established tourism areas in the cayes where these utilities are lacking.
  - Land prices are skyrocketing in traditional rural communities. There is a need for the land use policy to be disseminated at the community level to ensure that residents know and use land properly.
6. Crime and national security is a large concern; the western and northern highways are very dark at night. More reflectors and road lights need to be installed as a deterrent to criminal activities. As a simultaneous move, there is a desire to see an increase in the Tourism Police Unit.
  7. Education and training for tourism development is needed
    - The curriculum in primary and secondary schools should encompass tourism. At the tertiary level the caliber of tourism training should be improved to reflect present day realities.
    - Improve training in how to market Belize
    - Consideration should be given to establishing a hospitality training institute. One way could be through linking UB with, for example, the Belmopan Convention Hotel to create a tourism training hotel
  8. Taxation
    - There needs to be a general review on tax regime for the tourism industry. It is a perception by the tourism industry that the agricultural industries receive favorable incentives which the tourism sector is not given. Within the tourism sector, there is a view that the accommodation sector is heavily burdened with taxes
    - At present only large hotels can afford the application fee for development concessions. This incentive scheme should be more economic affordable to smaller and locally run hotels



- Relevant government departments should visit hotels and business periodically to foster better relationships between both entities and not just show up during tax season
- Proper solid waste management is important to maintain the pristine environment that sustains the tourism and welfare of all Belize. Linked to the issue of solid waste management and environmental sustainability is the problem faced by those importing biodegradable containers. Import duties are prohibitive so more people do not take advantage of the “green technologies” that are available.

#### WOMEN’S ISSUES NETWORK [WIN]

1. There is a general concern that the budget allocations for programmes for children, women and youth are woefully inadequate. Additional resources are needed if meaningful programs are to be implemented to reduce social ills such as crime, domestic violence, poverty, and unemployment.
2. Proper allocation of funds is needed to implement the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents – 2004 – 2015 which was signed on to by the leadership of both political parties.
3. NGOs would like the Government to review the subventions granted to this sector and make them more equitable.
4. The advocacy efforts need to be continued within the education system to reduce discriminatory practices, e.g. expulsion of teenagers who become pregnant from schools.
5. All ministries need to be more gender sensitive in developing their budgets. There should be a change in the way GOB does business to ensure that policies meet the needs of both women and men across all sectors. To facilitate this idea, GOB can build capacity in these ministries through training on gender related concepts.
6. For single and teenage mothers:
  - There is a need for child care services to allow them to go to work or school. Daycare Centers in existence can be subsidized and additional centers can be provided in more vulnerable areas.
  - There is need to provide assistance for women to gain skills and employment to reduce poverty. Programs should include a monitoring and evaluation framework to promote the best use of funds.
7. There is a need for proper support for the children who are in domestic violence situations and single parent homes. This support could include:
  - provision of education-allowances
  - access to trained counselors for children in vulnerable situations. Organizations are presently using social work students from the UB as default counselors. As a way to facilitate this, scholarships should be funded for students who want to pursue a degree in Counseling

8. The curriculum for primary schools should be reviewed with a view to instituting special programs in the arts (e.g. music, drama, singing etc.) for children of low income families.
9. Government should take steps to keep prices for basic food items, e.g. rice, milk, etc. to a minimum.
10. The YWCA has requested financial assistance to complete the renovation/expansion of a building which it uses to provide job training and support services to the vulnerable, especially women and girls.
11. There needs to be a revision of laws governing sexual abuse and exploitation.

#### BELIZE AGRO-PRODUCTIVE SECTOR GROUP (BASG)

1. BASG Members are of the view that Government has perpetually neglected Agriculture. They therefore expressed appreciation for the efforts made to include the agriculture sector in the consultations.
2. BASG understands that rising food prices reflects exogenous factors. The question then is what to do to mitigate the impact of escalating prices. Farmers need assistance in lower fuel prices, lower import duties on inputs mainly fertilizers, herbicides, on packaging materials, irrigation equipment, and reduced cost of energy.
3. GOB needs to look at utilizing local petroleum refining versus exporting the current production and redirecting the local petroleum into savings to the farmers through a lower price of fuel.
4. BASG feels that doing business with government involves a lot of bureaucracy and that the red tape is being used to benefit individuals through the “mordida” system which is being used more.
5. Medium and small producers are primarily involved with domestic food production - hence they normally feel the brunt of price distortions. There is limited capability for post harvest treatment of perishable items. This has a significant impact on the quality and quantity small and medium producers are able to supply. Government should seek to provide/facilitate appropriate storage and drying equipment.
6. The concern of financing for the agriculture sector needs to be extended not just to production but also post-production activities. If GOB makes available the required financing, it is recommended that critical areas to be addressed are post harvest storage (commercially run), production and transportation. The instrument/institution, through which such funds should be channeled, is of concern. BASG recommends that consideration be given to channeling funds through credit unions.
7. It was noted that feeder roads, and all connecting roads from the farms to the markets need to be refurbished in some cases and built in others.
8. BASG expressed the view that the operations of BAHA and Belize Marketing Board should be reviewed to ensure that their operations promote development. BASG believes that BAHA is producing a public good and should therefore be financed by public funds.

9. Land tax legislation needs to be reassessed with a view to making sure that it does not undermine the productive sector.
10. BASG recommended that the Bureau of Standards be strengthened, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade should work closer with the productive sector. High commissions/embassies should have an economic focus rather than only a diplomatic focus.

#### NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONGRESS AND CONSTITUENT UNIONS

1. The unions are particularly concerned about:
  - The high level of unemployment situation (creation of jobs)
  - The poverty situation (cost of living too high)
  - Public Health situation (food security and safety)
  - Assistance to small business (taxes too high)
  - The crime situation
  - A salary adjustment to replace increment freeze
2. With regard to revenue matters, the unions suggest that:
  - The 25% across the board personal Income Tax rate needs to be revisited. Consideration should be given to raising of tax threshold (which would increase disposable income) and Increase options to file claims (such as for dependents, mortgages etc)
  - Government needs to find a way to collect taxes from EPZs. Most of the burden of taxes falls on workers and this burden needs to be more equitably shared.
  - Removal of General Sales Tax on medicines
  - Lottery systems/Casinos needs to be better monitored, which will bring in more revenue
  - There is a need for a proper prosecution unit in Customs Department to collect more revenue when persons who commit custom offences
  - Stricter measures need to be put in place to guard against contraband
3. With regard to expenditure matters, the unions suggest:
  - Infrastructure (roads need to be repaired because of the wear and tear on vehicles and construction/renovation of parks – unavailability of parks where children can play could lead to increase in crime)
  - Increase in budget allocation to the Ministry of Human Development
  - More human and financial resources need to be placed in institutions such as CET, CYDP, NDACC, and Social Service institutions.
  - Continuation of the financing of free school books for children program

- Funds that are eventually going to be used in NHI can be used to better develop and equip KHMH etc.
  - Subvention to NTUCB
4. With regard to public service matters, the unions suggest:
- Policies need to be put in place to protect Open Vote Workers who are already in the work force.
  - Government Ministers need to leave public service matters up to the Ministry of Public Service and Commissions that are in place
5. With respect to governance and accountability:
- Monies owed to DFC needs to be recovered
  - The Auditor General needs to submit updated audit report before the budget goes through
  - Quarterly budget review needs to be put in place
  - Priority needs to be given to the offices of Auditor General, Contractor General, Director of Public Prosecutions, Judiciary
6. Questions arising from the meeting were:-
- What is the general situation with Government finances?
  - What will be done with semi-privatized institutions such as KHMH, BAHA, and KOLBE etc?
  - Will Government reduce taxes on locally produced oil? How will Government recover revenue loss when less fuel comes into the country?
  - What is the impact of external debt on the budget?
  - What system will Government put in place to deal with businesses who are evading taxes?

### THE ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR

1. The conservation community is appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to the process for the preparation of the national budget for 2008-2009. Government of Belize has signed several international agreements and conventions that commit the Government to manage the natural resources for the country and for the present and future generations of this world. When the terrestrial and marine areas are combined, only 26.2 % of Belize territorial area is under some form of conservation. These represent 2.6 million acres of Belize's territory. Of these, the majority is under extractive reserves and only 9.3% is under strict conservation.
2. The Government is ultimately responsible for the management of Belize's natural resources. The NGO community with the assistance of its members, volunteers and the financial support from private foundation, multilateral institutions, and individuals

are managing 30% of Belize's protected areas and has served as a watchdog to protect and promote the sustainable use of Belize natural resources.

3. In Belize, the cost for the management of the protected areas managed by APAMO is around BZ \$18.46 (US \$9.23) per acre per year. The annual budget for the 30 protected areas under co-management by APAMO NGOs is around BZ \$24 million dollars. Of this, the contribution from the Government of Belize's national budget is very little.
4. The allocation of sufficient financial and human resources is necessary for the efficient management of the strict conservation areas but also for the adequate management of the extractive reserves in order to promote the sustainable development of Belize. Given that NGOs are managing 30% of the protected areas, the national budget should allocate funding for these organizations to ensure the effective management of these protected areas.
5. APAMO is therefore recommending that the national budget allocate at least 50% of the funds collected from the environmental tax for the co-management of protected areas to be disbursed to NGOs managing protected areas. This will cover about 50% of the funds required for the management of the protected areas managed by APAMO and will enable these NGOs to leverage two to three times this amount. These amounts leveraged by the NGOs (around \$13 million) are generally funds from abroad which serves as an injection of money into the local economy.
6. APAMO suggests that at least 5% of the environmental tax should be allocated to address natural disasters, to conduct rapid environmental assessment and assist with immediate relief for these communities around protected areas.
7. Belize imported approximately 4.7 million pounds of pesticide from several countries in 2007. This is an enormous amount of pesticide thrown into our country and the environment and little or no study is being done on the impact of these chemicals to the environment, to our soil, to our plants, to our wildlife, to the sea and the coral reef, to our freshwater and underground water and to the people of Belize. In other countries like Costa Rica and Honduras, there is evidence of male sterility and birth anomalies yet little or no studies are being carried in Belize.
8. It is therefore recommended that pesticides be subject to a 3% tax which will generate approximately BZ \$480,000 that should be allocated strictly for research to determine the impact of these pesticides on the people and the environment and to develop alternatives or ways for mitigating their impact in order to ensure the safety of the people and the integrity of the environment.
9. The Government of Belize is committed to the Millennium Development Goals which include, among other things, the reduction of poverty. The Government has traditionally allocated its budget by department. Using this approach, very little impact has been accomplished in regards to the reduction of poverty. It is suggested that at least 0.1% or approximately BZ \$6 million dollars of the total annual national revenues should be allocated for poverty alleviation specifically for communities around protected areas as a sustainable rural development fund.

10. There are serious negative impacts on conservations efforts in the forest reserves because of cross border incursions for extraction of forest resources. The BDF & the Police Department should be provided with adequate resources (i.e. equipment, funding) through which adequate patrols can be conducted. It is recommended that a special (Border) Patrol Unit should be established to continuously patrol the Western Border.
11. Review Land Tax law and practice to ensure that they are more conducive to conservation efforts.
12. At the policy level, government should consider:
  - Means through which to provide funds for rural communities through which they can access and utilize viable/alternatives and mechanism ensuring their survival. This includes providing village councils with adequate funds to address needs such as the disposal of solid waste that impact environmental health
  - Reviewing the Water Industry Act, to ensure that water can never be privatized again.
  - Methodologies for valuing environment resources should be investigated. This would help to determine the true cost of water and electricity supply by private sector entities.
  - Reducing the level of ministerial discretion in the legislation that allows for protected lands to be de-reserved
  - Providing funding for the effective functioning of the (NPAC) National Protected Areas Commission
  - Linking investment concessions to a viable sustainable environmental management plan
  - Ensuring that key ministries, such as Public Works and Agriculture, have “Environmental Desks”

#### BELIZE ASSOCIATION OF INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL ADVISERS

1. The Belize Association of Insurance and Financial Advisers [IAFA] is requesting that consideration be given to how insurance advisers are classified in relation to taxes (Business Tax and Income Tax). They would also like consideration to be given to allowing the netting out of expenses when filing income tax returns. This may require revision to the laws and it was suggested that perhaps the time has come to consider further reform of the tax system to reintroduce the concept of “net income” for corporate tax purposes.
2. The Association also suggested that Government consider implementing provisions for individual retirement accounts that would help people to be more self-sufficient at the time of retirement. It would also be a vehicle for increasing domestic savings in the economy.

### FISHERMEN COOPERATIVES

1. The high cost of fuel has resulted in at least a 25% increase in operating costs. As the operating costs go up there is less for fishermen to take home. There is less money to maintain boats and equipment and the cost of traps and equipments have also risen.
2. Fishermen take up illegal fishing activities in order to make ends meet. They fish closer to home as the further they have to travel the higher the cost. This leads to over fishing in certain areas.
3. The recent floods have led to expectations of a decline in the lobster catch for the season that will open soon. In this kind of context, consideration should be given to establishing some kind of emergency fund to offset losses to Fishermen in the event of natural disasters. The recent flood will result in the loss of many lobster traps.
4. Duty exemption on engines, boats, trucks needed to transport products, etc would be a good way for government to provide support to the fisheries sector.
5. At present, the Cooperatives are the sole funding entity to which fishermen can turn for immediate assistance. There is a need for low cost financing for investment expenditure by the fisheries sector. Operational expenses are adequately addressed through the cooperatives, but there is a need for investment financing.
6. The cooperatives are supportive of the Cobia farming initiative and would like to be more closely involved in its development.
7. The cooperatives strongly felt that more resources need to be provided to the Fisheries Department to do more patrolling to discourage illegal fishing by non-Belizeans, which greatly affects the industry. The Department needs more personnel, equipment and financing.
8. Fisheries Advisory Board needs to be re-constituted. Conversations have already begun with the ministry, but these need to result in the urgent establishment of the Board.
9. Fishermen are presently paying for two sets of licenses, one to Port Authority and to the Fisheries Department. Fishermen would like that situation to be reviewed.
10. Fishermen would also like some information on what effect CSME will have on the industry

### BELIZE LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATION [BLA]

1. The Association is convinced that, with careful planning, livestock producers would be able to fill the needs of the domestic market and expand into the very lucrative Mexican and Central American market for beef. There is need for government support to address the needs sanitary and phyto-sanitary [SPS] requirements for exporting into these markets. In particular, there is an urgent need to conduct surveillance to confirm that Belize's cattle is free from tuberculosis and brucellosis. Government is being requested to urgently budget \$600,000 for the Ministry of Agriculture undertake this surveillance. Confirmation that Belize is free of these

diseases will allow Belizean beef cattle producers access to markets in Mexico and, through Mexico, into NAFTA.

2. The Fondo Ganadero, which was managed through the Ministry of Agriculture and which has become dormant needs to be addressed. Agreement had been reached between Government and the BLA to access the residual balances in the Fondo but this agreement needs to be acted on by the Ministry of Finance. In addition to the small residual balance, the BLA would like an injection of \$500,000 into the Fondo to allow the Association to on-lend to members in order for them to improve their herds. While grant funding is preferred, the BLA would be agreeable to low cost loan funds that would allow them to on-lend to members at less than 8% per annum.
3. The BLA supports an increase in budget for the Ministry of Agriculture. Presently the ministry is allocated only 2% of the total budget and this does not represent the priority that should be given to the sector. In particular, the BLA would like to see the strengthening of the ministry's capacity to provide extension services to farmers. This would require recruitment of additional Extension Officers. The BLA had discussions with the Ministry and has requested that the Ministry provides technical assistance to livestock producers through dedicated Extension Officers in each district.
4. To reduce production cost, the BLA is seeking tax exemptions on certain agro products such as fencing materials, barb wire. Further, the BLA would like Government to tax output [production] rather than inputs.
5. The BLA has also asked that where government may receive offers of assistance for the development of the livestock sector, consideration be given to allowing BLA members to receive training in matters involving livestock.

#### MAYORS ASSOCIATION

1. The meeting with the Mayors Association was the only consultation session that took place after the Symposium of June 11, 2008. The original meeting date had to be rescheduled because of the national emergency caused by the floods caused by Tropical Storms Alma and Arthur. It was explained that, at the end of the consultation process, a completed report would be prepared for the entire series of consultations meetings, including this meeting with the Mayors.
2. The Mayors noted that for a long time there has been no increase in subventions provided by government to the municipalities and requested that consideration be given to increasing these subventions in the budget being prepared. It was also suggested that municipalities should be accorded greater access to Capital Funds. It was pointed out that large capital projects that are implemented by Central Government in the municipalities, usually provide for co-management or monitoring by the municipal authorities.
3. With the decision having been taken to devolve the responsibilities of the traffic department to the municipal authorities, the Town Councils have to properly prepare themselves to ensure that there is a smooth transition. There will be a need for Central Government to assist the councils with training during the transition.



4. The Mayors noted that it was extremely difficult to get cases of unpaid taxes addressed in the Magistrates Court - because of the large number of criminal cases, magistrates could not find time to address tax matters. The Mayors have asked that consideration be given to the appointment of a Roving (Revenue) Magistrate for the municipalities.
5. The Mayors also noted that there is a need for the Gaming Board to work more closely with the municipal authorities when applications are being considered from persons who want to open casinos and or install gaming machines. While the Ministry of Finance sometimes consults before final approval is given, there is need for more discussions and for there to be a process by which the Town Council can obtain greater revenue from the legitimate gambling establishments.
6. The Mayor of Belmopan has requested that Government reviews the status of RECONDEV and its relationship with the Belmopan City Council since there continues to be overlap in responsibilities.
7. The Mayor of San Pedro has requested that Pier Fees collected on the island be reviewed. The Town Council used to collect these fees, but these are now collected by the Min. of Natural Resources now collects and the council gets nothing. This is necessary in view of the longer term aim of regulating the building of piers on the island.
8. The issue of solid waste management is high on the agenda of the Mayors. The mayors would like consideration be given to using the Environmental Tax the way it was originally intended – to finance the implementation of proper Solid Waste Management across the country.

## WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED

Contributions were received from the following groups:

- Belize Agro-productive Sector Group
- WIN Belize, and some of its member agencies
- Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Conservation Organisations
- Belize National Association of Realtors

In addition, a number of emails, letters and telephone calls were received from individuals.

## PERSONS/AGENCIES WITH WHOM THE CONSULTATION

### TEAM MET:

#### **Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology:**

Mr. Elvis Requeña

#### **HELP for Progress:**

Mr. Elias Awe

#### **Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry [BCCI]:**

Mrs. Amparo Masson	-	President
Mr. Emile Mena	-	Past President
Ms. Kay Menzies	-	Vice President
Mr. Cecil Arnold	-	Vice President Services
Mr. Israel Marin	-	Vice President – Industry
Ms. Celene Cleland Gomez	-	Secretary of the BCCI Board
Mr. Kevin Herrera	-	CEO Chamber
Ms. Bernadette Ellis	-	Mgr-Finance/Admin/HR

#### **Belize Business Bureau [BBB]:**

Mr. Jorge Auil Jr	-	President, BBB
Ms. Lourdes Smith	-	Past President
Ms. Merilyn Young	-	Director, BBB
Mr. Anthony Mahler	-	BBB – Member
Mr. Louis Sylvestre	-	BBB-Member

#### **National Association of Village Councils [NAVCO]**

#### **and District Associations of Village Councils [DAVCO]:**

Mr. Ernest Banner	-	President, NAVCO
Mr. Orlando Dawson	-	Treasurer, NAVCO
Ms. Martha Hendrix	-	Managing Director, NAVCO
Mr. Justino Palomo	-	Secretary Orange, Walk DAVCO
Mr. Fidelmar Hernandez	-	Chairman, San Estevan, Orange Walk Dist.
Mr. Rogelio Oliva	-	DAVCO, Toledo
Mr. Hilberto Lopez	-	DAVCO
Mr. Orvin Rancharan	-	DAVCO, Corozal

#### **Tourism Industry:**

Mr. Michael Singh	-	CEO, Ministry of Tourism
Mrs. Tracy Panton	-	Director of Tourism, Belize Tourism Board
Mr. Andrew Godoy	-	General Manager, BTIA
Mr. Jim Scott	-	BTIA (Radisson Fort George)

Mr. Yashin Dujon	-	Ministry of Tourism
Mr. Neil Bradley	-	Belize Tourism Board
Mr. Evan Tillett	-	Belize Tourism Board
Mr. Kenrick Theus	-	President, Belize Hotel Association
Mrs. Mariam Roberson	-	Belize Hotel Association

**Women's Issues Network of Belize [WIN Belize]:**

Ms. Karla Cain	-	Youth Enhancement Services
Ms. Carolyn Reynolds	-	Executive Director, WIN – Belize
Ms. Sonia Lenares	-	General Secretary, YWCA
Dame. Elain Middleton	-	President, YWCA
Ms. Dorla Rosado	-	Director, Haven House
Ms. Michelle Longsworth-	-	BEST

**Belize Agro-Productive Sector Group:**

Mr. Jose Alpuche	-	CEO, BAS Group
Mr. Edward Reimer	-	BAS- Vice Chair
Mr. Flint Wagner	-	BAS Group
Mr. Abram Froese	-	Blue Creek Chairman
Mr. Jacob V Dyck	-	Spanish Lookout
Mr. Henry Canton	-	CPBL (Citrus)
Mr. Sam Mathias	-	Banana Growers Association

**National Trade Union Congress of Belize**

Mr. Rasiel Vello	-	Christian Workers Union
Ms. Magdalene Smith	-	TAMM Workers Union
Mr. Earl Lopez	-	Belize Workers Union
Mr. Hartman McKoy	-	Belize Workers Union
Mr. Rene Gomez	-	President, NTUCB
Mr. Barrington Montero	-	TAMM Workers Union
Mr. Javier Roberts	-	Belize Communication Workers Union
Mr. Jaime Panti	-	BNTU
Mrs. Jacqueline Willoughby Sanchez-	-	President, PSU
Mr. Antonio Gonzalez	-	Christian Workers Union
Mr. James McFoy Sr.	-	Christian Workers Union
Mr. Mark Gladden	-	President, BCWU
Mr. George Frazer	-	Executive Secretary, BNTU
Mr. Dylan Reneau	-	Delegate, PSU

**Fisheries Sector:**

Mr. Alan Burn	-	National Fishermen Cooperative
Mr. Leslie Faux	-	Placencia Cooperative
Mr. Carlton Young Sr.	-	Placencia Cooperative
Ms. Nadine Nembhard	-	Belize Fishermen Cooperative Association
Mr. Ovel Leonardo	-	Chairman, Northern Fisherman Cooperative

**Environmental Sector:**

Ms. Yvette Alonzo	-	APAMO
Ms. Jessies Young	-	CBS/APAMO
Ms. Celia Mahuma	-	TIDE/APAMO
Ms. Anna D. Hoare	-	Belize Audubob Society/APAMO
Mr. Julian Lewis	-	Gra-Gralagoon/APAMO
Ms. Candy Gonzalez	-	BACONGO & BELIPO
Mr. Lionel Hesedio	-	Solid Cay CK
Mr. Anselmo Castaneda -	-	BAPPA – Belize
Ms. Ellen Mckae	-	FAMRACC/APAMO
Ms. Lisel Alamilla	-	Y'caiche Conservation Trust
Gregory Choc	-	SATIM
Edilberto Romero	-	Programme for Belize

**Belize Association of Insurance and financial Advisers [BAIFA]**

Ms. Olga Herrera	-	President, BAIFA
Mr. Neville Forrester	-	Vice President, BAIFA
Ms. Louise Moore	-	President, ORINCO

**Belize Livestock Association [BLA]**

Dr. Errol Vanzie	-	Chairman, BLA
Mr. John Carr	-	Member BLA
Mr. Paul Bradley	-	Member BLA
Mr. Fred Hunter	-	Member BLA
Mr. Parham	-	Executive Director, BLA

**Belize Mayors Association**

Mayor Elsa Paz	-	San Pedro
Mayor Cariso Galvez	-	Punta Gorda
Mayor Hilberto Campos	-	Corozal
Mayor John August	-	San Ignacio
Mayor Ravell Gonzalez	-	Orange Walk
Mayor Simeon Lopez	-	Belmopan
Enrique Carballo	-	Executive Secretary
Mr. Eugene Palacio	-	Ministry of Local Government

**Government of Belize/University of Belize Consultation Team**

Dr. Carla Barnett	-	Project Manager/Ministry of Finance
Mrs. Zita Magana-Perez	-	Ministry of Finance
Ms. Jeanette Garcia	-	Ministry of Economic Development
Mrs. Sharon Young	-	Ministry of Finance
Mrs. Sharlene Patnett	-	Ministry of Finance
Mr. F.E. Paco Smith	-	University of Belize
Dr. Phillip Castillo	-	University of Belize

Dr. Wilma Wright

- University of Belize

## REPORT OF THE ONE DAY SYMPOSIUM ON THE ECONOMY, JUNE 11, 2008

### OVERVIEW

The Symposium on the Economy brought to a close the first National Consultations on the Budget through with the Government of Belize sought broad stakeholder input into the preparation of its budget for fiscal year 2008/2009. The participants represented a cross section of representatives from the sectors and organisations with whom the Budget Consultation Team met in a series of consultation sessions held in the preceding 6 week period.

The Symposium opened with remarks from the Dr Geraldo Flowers on behalf of the University of Belize and Financial Secretary Joseph Waight on behalf of the Ministry of Finance. The Hon. Prime Minister and Minister and Minister of Finance, Dean Barrow delivered the feature address, the text of which is attached to this report.

### STRUCTURE OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The Symposium discussions were informed by the Draft Report of the National Consultations which was prepared even though the full schedule of consultation sessions had not been completed.

The discussion was divided into three separate roundtables, each of which focused on a main theme and sub-topics which arose during the national consultation sessions. Each roundtable chairperson was responsible for managing the discussion process. Each roundtable also had a rapporteur, who was responsible for recording the main conclusions of the roundtable discussion under each topic, and several discussants who were expected to stimulate the discussion. Chairs, rapporteurs and discussants were chosen on the basis of their knowledge and experience in matters related to the topic to be discussed by the roundtables. Participants in the Symposium joined in the discussion at the roundtable of their choice.

The themes and sub-topics of the 3 roundtables are set out below:

**ROUNDTABLE THEME 1: INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF RELIANCE FOR POVERTY REDUCTION**

Chairperson: Dennis Jones, Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology  
Rapporteur: Ms. Sylvia Cattouse, University of Belize

Sub-topic 1: Small business/enterprise development

Discussants: Mr. Elias Awe, HELP for Progress and Mrs. Lourdes Smith, Belize Business Bureau

Sub-topic 2: Human resource development

Discussants: Mr Rene Gomez, NTUCB and Dr. Filiberto Penados, UNICEF

Sub-theme 3: Tourism and community development

Discussants: Mr. Andrew Godoy, Belize Tourism Industry Association and Mrs. Tracy Panton, Belize Tourism Board

#### ROUNDTABLE THEME 2: HUMAN SECURITY – FOOD SECURITY, PUBLIC SAFETY

Chair: Ambassador Yvonne Hyde, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Economic Development  
Rapporteur: Ms. Anita Zetina, UNICEF

Sub-topic 1: Agriculture – food price increases, long term solutions

Discussants: Mr. Ernest Banner, National Association of Village Councils and Mr Edward Reimer, Belize Agro-productive Sector Group

Sub-topic 2: Crime and social stability

Discussant: Mayor Frank Mena, Belize Mayor's Association

Sub-theme 3: Environment protection and development constraints

Discussants: Mr. Edilberto Romero, Programme for Belize and Ms. Diane Wade, UNDP

#### ROUNDTABLE THEME 3: CREATING THE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Chair: Senator Godwin Hulse  
Rapporteur: Ms. Pat Mendoza, UNDP

Sub-topic 1: Public Finance and Public Debt

Discussants: Mr Marion Palacio, Central Bank of Belize and Mr. Artemio Osorio, Ministry of Finance



Sub-topic 2: Economic Competitiveness and production for export

Discussants: Mr. Belizario Carballo, Belize Agro Productive Sector Group and Mr. Kenrick Theus, Belize Hotel Association,

Sub-theme 3: Strengthening Governance for Development

Discussants: Mr. Kevin Herrera Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Dr. Geraldo Flowers, University of Belize

## SUMMARY OF THE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION AT ROUNDTABLE 1 ON THE THEME: INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF RELIANCE FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

### **Sub-Topic 1 - Small business/enterprise development**

1. There is an need for increased support to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs], which can be provided in the following ways:
  - Providing technical and financial support for capacity-building in entrepreneurship focusing on those groups which are more vulnerable to poverty and its negative effects, e.g. women and youth.
  - Making BELTRAIDE or an institution of its kind, more accessible to the local citizenry by providing their services, nationwide, as opposed to a centralized location.
  - Making adequate credit available for prospective entrepreneurs, so that they can realistically bring their business from a concept to a full fledged participant in the formal economy.
2. The GST legislation should be re-examined with a view to focusing on output rather than input.
3. Opportunities/environment for employment could be enhanced by gathering information on small and medium sized enterprises' contribution to Belize's GDP in an effort to make better decisions on products and how much the market requires.
4. The general public should be empowered to participate - more frequently and meaningfully - in the nation's democracy through public education and awareness of rights and responsibilities through government and non-government agencies.
5. Modernization, innovation and the upgrade of technology should be encouraged in traditional sectors to improve competitiveness in the wake of liberalization and globalization.

### **Sub-Topic 2: Human Resource Development**

1. The minimum wage should be reviewed

2. Government should ensure that a high quality of education is provided to both rural and urban populations and that those populations have the opportunity to participate in the development of their particular community.
3. Government should ensure that proper infrastructure is in place (potable water, schools, parks, drainage, etc.) before land is opened up for occupation.
4. Incentives should be provided for businesses to train their employees.
5. GST should be removed from a greater number of essential products.
6. The Social Investment Fund needs to make a paradigm shift from focusing on infrastructure to make possible more capacity building

**Sub-Topic 3: Tourism and Community Development**

1. There is a need to develop a work force in tourism industry that meets international standards. A facility, like the Belmopan Hotel, should be allocated to the University of Belize for the development of a proper hospitality training institute.
2. Facilitate Private sector involvement in financing training of personnel for the industry (e.g. provision of scholarships and endowments).
3. The entire tax regime of the tourism industry should be reviewed to ensure a more broad-based system to support infrastructure and marketing.
4. Support should be provided for tourism safety and security programs, rather than only investment focused on crime alleviation.
5. Support is needed for destination marketing in order to remain competitive. In addition, assistance for promotion and marketing, especially after a disaster or threat of a disaster, should be available from government.
6. Appropriate incentives should be provided for local and foreign investors in such a way as to ensure that local investors have the same access. Financing should be secured for the improvement of small tourism properties and surrounding communities, so that the destinations can meet international standards.
7. Government must create the environment for the development of the industry. There is need for a Development Policy for the tourism industry. There is a need for proper planning of communities with proper infrastructure, access to potable water and other utilities that enable tourism growth.
8. Introduce/encourage/support housing cooperatives.
9. Linkages between tourism, agriculture and community-based programmes and initiatives should be expanded thus creating alternative livelihoods that will support further tourism development.
10. Establish an education campaign so that the public is more responsible for the upkeep of the environment.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION AT ROUNDTABLE 2 ON THE THEME: HUMAN SECURITY – FOOD SECURITY, PUBLIC SAFETY

**Sub-Topic 1: Agriculture – food price increases, long term solutions**

**Sub-Topic 2: Crime and social stability**

**Sub-Topic 3: Environment protection and development constraints**

1. Government should strengthen policy and planning to promote successful and sustainable policies by:
  - implement results based program budgeting and ensure that monitoring and evaluation systems are integral to all processes. Consideration should be given to the setting up of an investment evaluation team to ensure that investments have positive impacts on human development
  - Government policies should address sustainable land use and risk management should be integral in development plans to reduce negative impact on vulnerable people and on the environment.
  - Investment in research is necessary to inform public policies and programmes.
  - Enforcement mechanisms should be strengthened.
  - Long term sustainability of programs, particularly those externally funded, should be carefully considered.
  - Most important: all policies and programmes must focus on the family as the basic unit of society – see programmes in the social sector as investments rather than expenditures
2. Agriculture should be promoted, including through programs such as REAP in schools and out of school
3. Extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture be revisited to ensure that they serve to promote agriculture, offer practical demonstrations on farms and offer much needed support to small farmers as was done in the past
4. Small farmers should be subsidized through tax breaks and other incentives
5. Cooperatives should be promoted, for example, women's groups engaged in agro-processing.
6. Efforts should be focused on involving young people in agricultural activities.
7. Self sufficiency should be promoted: focus on local production and build capacity of farmers.
8. Farmers should be seen as entrepreneurs, not only as producers.
9. Funds to small farmers should be accessible and affordable.
10. Government should ensure that its investments are directed to benefit people.
11. Consider the issues of men and boys – recruit male teachers and increase role models in education .
12. Engender the budget to ensure that the gender impact is understood and considered when

preparing the budget.

13. Explore the concept/tool of conditional cash transfers as a means of lessening the economic burden on families
14. Move away from band-aid approaches – approaches should focus on the holistic development of families and programs should be directed at community level, for example, South Side programs to reach the most vulnerable

#### SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION AT ROUNDTABLE 3 ON THE THEME: CREATING THE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

##### **Sub-Topic 1: Public Finance and Public Debt**

1. Government's debt position is extremely high and fiscal policy will therefore be constrained by debt service needs for some time.
2. External debt at March 2008 stood at \$1.9 billion or 76.7% of GDP, domestic debt at: \$362.1 million or 12.5% of GDP and contingent liabilities of \$130.0 million or 5.2% of GDP.
3. The "superbond" makes up 55.9% of external public Debt with interest payment of \$46 million yearly at this time.
4. Fiscal priorities are: salaries and wages; other operating expenses and debt servicing.

##### **Sub-Topic 2: Economic Competitiveness and production for export**

1. Belize has some comparative advantages where food production is concerned including land and technological know-how. Current pressures on the agricultural sector include: price cuts in the commodities we produce, high freight rates and high domestic fuel costs.
2. Given the advantages, scope exists for providing enough for local market and expanding exports into CARICOM. We can convert the pressures into opportunity.
3. The agriculture sector asks for basic support:
  - Road improvement to reduce the cost of transportation in terms of wear and tear of equipment and of consumption of fuel.
  - Address the constraint of a lack of a deepwater port. This results in inefficient port which is manifested in a turnaround of 8 days for a small ship in Belize to 2-3 days for large ships in Jamaica
  - Reduce taxation on agricultural inputs. Inputs should be zero rated for GST and subject to lower import duties.
  - Address the land tax structure so that the regime caters toward the use of land for agriculture.
4. For tourism and small and medium enterprises [SMEs]:
  - Signature branding is key. We should be sure that "Made in Belize" is accurate.

- A buy in Belize campaign/sensitization is recommended.
  - Financing for SMEs is critical, as well as training for handling of cash and finances and quality control, which is key for consistency.
  - Regional marketing should be pursued. Caribbean products are on shelves in Belize but not the reverse. Opportunity is there. Bananas found on shelves in Barbados at \$1.00 each compared to 8 for \$1.00 for in Belize.
5. Identified needs for business development and competitiveness include:
- Clear priorities on which commodities should be targeted
  - Affordable Financing
  - Appropriate technologies
  - Market infrastructure
  - Marketing Strategy, include futures activity
6. Generally, given the constraints on public financing, resources should be channelled to private sector expansion so that needs such as foreign exchange and employment can be met by expanded private sector.
7. The current crisis presents an opportunity for us to realize that we need not depend on the WTO, etc. for our solutions.
- Look at alternative approaches such as organic farming and renewable energy
  - We need education system that focuses on entrepreneurship and self reliance, promoting the idea that everyone makes a job for themselves rather than looking for a job
8. Other Human Resource Development needs:
- Need good technicians on the ground. Extension services as well as organization of stakeholders within the agricultural sector
  - Need to reorient the public service, at all levels, to the realization that the priority is to play a support role
  - Teaching of Spanish
9. Foreign exchange leakage
- Need for a strategy to ensure foreign exchange earnings are brought into Belize.
  - One suggestion is to tie requirements to Incentive Regime since the support needed has a cost. The quid pro quo
10. Perspective on food security
- Primary focus not on meeting domestic market, but rather on meeting regional demand then siphoning for domestic needs.

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**Sub-Topic 3: Strengthening Governance for Development**

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1. Governance: management of resources and organization of resources for the benefit of the population.
  - There is a paradox. Each time the matter of governance is revisited, it may appear to be with a focus on containing government's power rather. But this is not the objective. Rather, it is to streamline its functions especially with respect to the management and use of funds. We are obligated to ensure that the required processes are followed.
  - There is need for some "teeth" in Finance and Audit Act so that spending conforms with approved budget. The audit process needs to be strengthened and one option may be to empower the senate to suspend the approval of the budget until the audit is completed
  - More Capital 2 and Capital 3 resources are needed to promote productive sector development and expansion of private sector activities to achieve better livelihoods and quality of life
  - We want a government better able to plan, identify programmes and projects, allocate resources adequately and deliver effectively to ensure the desired impact for all stakeholders. The point, therefore, is that we want to strengthen rather than curtail government.
2. Governance and the Budget
  - Since the budget is the tool for governance, it must reflect principle of inclusion. People are owners.
  - It should rest also on principle of autonomy, so that each person's contribution is recognized and built upon and the principle of Universality, working together for a common interest.
3. Institutional Strengthening needs:
  - Strengthening of Audit Department must be one of the main mechanisms for ensuring good governance
  - Enhancing of the Budget process so that public officers know peoples' needs and let that guide their budget proposal
  - Empowering the senate - more legislative teeth - to ensure that expenditure is done in accordance with the approved budget, audits can be pushed and papers laid on the table
  - Creation of a development plan for Belize to identify where we want to go and then have government streamline the systems to ensure the support for the strategy generated and, therefore, get support from the private sector.
  - Strengthening the role and participation of rural sector, which represents 49% of the population. With meagre resources, this sector is expected to monitor activities and produce reports. Fiscal management is purview of rural government as well as central government.

## ADDRESS BY HON. PRIME MINISTER DEAN O. BARROW TO THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ONE-DAY SYMPOSIUM

Ministers,  
Mayors,  
Representatives of the International Agencies in Belize, especially UNDP and UNICEF  
Representatives of the University of Belize  
Representatives of the Private Sector and Labour Unions  
Members of the NGO Community representing Women, the Environment and the Micro-  
enterprise sector  
Village Leaders, Farmers, Fishermen,  
Government Officials,  
The National Consultation Team  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is truly a pleasure for me to be here at this Symposium which brings to a symbolic end, the first ever national consultations on the government's budget. As you have heard, over the past month, a team comprising representatives of the Government of Belize, through the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Finance, and representatives of the University of Belize, have been meeting with a diverse range of persons and groups to discuss issues surrounding the preparation of the annual budget, economic policy and specific concerns of the sector they represent. The team has met with the private sector, labour unions, women's organizations, environmental organizations, agricultural producers, fishermen's cooperatives, rural communities and the tourism industry. Many of you who are here today were a part of those meetings.

The national consultation process signals that we, in government are changing the way that we make policy. This is a fundamental change in approach. The policy and planning processes will be open and transparent. They will not be shrouded by mystery or secrecy. We are embracing inclusiveness and seeking mechanisms to institutionalise that inclusiveness. We are doing this because we want government policy to be directly relevant to the needs and desires of the people.

I am advised that the discussions were open, positive and forward looking. There were criticisms and there were suggestions for improvement. We welcome both.

The truth is, when we set out to engage in this process of National Consultations on the budget, we did not know what to expect. We knew what we wanted to achieve, but we could not anticipate the response of the groups. We thought that we would see some wariness, some uncertainty about where the process was going. And that turned out to be the case. Many of you were not sure why we were doing this and were also uncertain about what to expect. That was understandable.

Some of us wondered whether the meetings would be about wish lists of projects that government would be asked to fund. However, from a brief look at the Draft Report of the Consultations, this was not so. The discussions were mostly about issues in development, priorities for action, strengthening governance and accountability, planning for the future. That is truly heartening. It convinces me more than ever that Belizeans are focused on building a future that is strong and resilient.

We believe that the problems we face as a country are so great that we need to forge, within a consultative, consensus building process, innovative approaches to policy development and implementation.

The economic and social challenges we face today are huge. The unprecedented rise in the price of food and fuel is creating economic and social havoc not only in Belize but also in the rest of the world.

Since the elections just 4 months ago we have seen oil price increases well beyond expectations. The price of gas at the pumps, butane gas for cooking, diesel for farm and industrial production equipment, have all skyrocketed. Government has absorbed a significant portion of the increase in acquisition cost of fuel by reducing Revenue Replacement Duty, but this strategy is limited because RRD is now nil or very low.

There is upward pressure on prices, at the same time that there is uncertainty in supplies, of flour, rice, corn, and other staples of the Belizean diet. The source of these pressures is largely outside of Belize in global changes that are taking place in such things as the demand for petroleum products in rapidly developing economies such as China and India and the increased use of grain for the production of bio-fuels in developed countries like the USA. These problems are global in scope but they require responses at the national level. We are challenged to respond to ensure supplies of basic foods while at the same time allowing our farmers to survive.

We are struggling with poverty and other social ills such as crime, violence and high levels of unemployment.

Our young people cry out for the opportunity to live meaningful lives, get good jobs, or create their own businesses.

Our environment is under pressure from development.

The heavy debt burden and the weak fiscal position which the government inherited constrain government's ability to act.

Our rural communities suffer high rates of poverty, less than satisfactory supplies of potable water, inadequate access to education and health services.

In this very challenging environment, the national consultations provide a unique and valuable opportunity to seek solutions for the short, medium and long term.

This morning, I want to talk a little about some of the issues and suggestions that were made in the course of the consultations.



### **Micro, small and medium enterprises**

The consultations have zeroed in on the important role that micro, small and medium enterprises play in creating jobs and generating sustainable economic growth. Concrete and useful suggestions have been made on providing strategic support to the development of enterprises.

More than that, we in Government agree that the key gap to be addressed to promote the development of small and medium enterprises is that of financing. If we get everything else right and do not fix the problem of development financing, we will not have addressed the single most critical constraint to the development of small and medium enterprise. In the years before the demise of the DFC, these kinds of enterprises had access to development funds at reasonable rates of interest. They no longer do.

The Government is committed to seeking a solution to this problem. We have already commenced discussions with the Caribbean Development Bank with a view to accessing low cost financing which can be on-lent to small and medium enterprises in the productive sector. We know that it is possible for us to manage a development financing institution transparently, effectively, and efficiently with the highest standards of accountability. We have done so in the past. We can do it again. Over the next few months we will be reviewing and deciding on the possible ways in which we can make financing for development available to small and medium enterprises.

### **Agriculture sector development**

Government is paying keen attention to the developments in the agriculture sector. There is an urgent need to promote development of the agriculture sector, not only to increase domestic food production but also as part of a strategy to reduce rural poverty. While the high food prices are a serious difficulty for consumers, they also present an opportunity for agricultural producers to increase production levels. But to take advantage of the opportunity, critical issues need to be addressed.

Several groups have noted the need to repair and maintain rural roads to facilitate the transportation of produce to markets. Government has already begun to do repair work on agriculture feeder roads and this work is expected to continue as financing and weather allows. In this particular regard, we expect that the Ministry of Works will develop a comprehensive road development plan to guide the development of road infrastructure, including agricultural feeder roads.

It was suggested during the budget consultations that the Ministry of Agriculture is not adequately resourced to take on the challenge to significantly expand support for the development of agriculture. In particular, there is a suggestion that there needs to be an increase in the number of Agriculture Extension Officers to provide better support services to farmers. We will consider if and how quickly this can be done.

### **Rural development**

We acknowledge that enough has not been done in the past to support the development of our rural communities. While support for agriculture can be expected to benefit the rural areas, we now know that there is a need for a broader more holistic approach to rural

development that acknowledges the requirement of additional resources for education, health, village roads, potable water systems, solid waste management etc. The villages have been given authority and responsibility to address some of these issues, but we acknowledge that they do not have the resources to do so effectively. We, therefore, agree that the time has come to revisit the functioning of the Village Councils Act with a view to empowering villages to better exercise the authority that they have been given under the Act.

Yes, there is a lot to be done to promote development of our rural communities and government is working on ways to achieve this. We have heard the suggestions made by village leaders during the consultations and we are paying due regard.

### **The environment**

Our government supports the position that we need to balance environment and development by promoting sustainable development practices. This does not mean that we will not make use of our natural resources to promote development of our country and people. What it means, is that our natural resources will be used in a way to ensure that benefits will flow to future generations of Belizeans. We do not want development to destroy the environment on which so much of our economic activities depend. That would be short-sighted.

The implementation of a proper national solid waste management plan is a critical issue of concern that has to be addressed early and properly in the interest of good environmental health. This is a matter that is already engaging the attention of the government and we hope to make demonstrable progress soon.

We also take note of the suggestions that we revisit the financial arrangements for co-management of protected areas and increase allocations for the provision of security for those protected areas that are contiguous with our borders. We will review these suggestions with care and will seek further discussions on them as may be required.

### **The public finances**

This new government shares many of the concerns expressed, during the budget consultations, about the integrity of public financial management.

On the matter of taxation and revenues, we agree with the suggestions that have been made to strengthen the revenue management process. This means that we will be promoting greater collaboration among the revenue departments now as we move towards strengthening, streamlining and restructuring revenue administration to achieve greater efficiency.

At the general policy level, we agree with the suggestion that we have to continue the review and reform of the tax system to make it more fair and equitable in its impact on the Belizean public. Taxes must not only be relatively easy to collect, they must also be equitable and appropriately progressive.

We need to review trade taxes and the impact on competitiveness. We should assess, for example, whether our progress in implementing the Common External Tariff is optimal. We will review the status of our commitments under the World Trade Organisation, so

we can plan better to implement the inevitable changes which will come in trade taxes and trade policy.

We also need to review the workings of the Income and Business Tax and assess its impact on the business sector and the economy as a whole.

The regime for fiscal incentives needs to be reviewed to determine whether it is having the desired impact of increasing investment, creating jobs, generating foreign exchange inflows and promoting sustainable growth in the economy. If so, good; if not, we will have hard decisions to make.

We agree with both the private sector and the labour unions that the fight against contraband activity must continue. Not only is it eating into government revenue and creating distortions in the local market, but it also exemplifies the general lawlessness in our society that we have to fight against. We fully support the fight against contraband and we look forward to continuing to sit down together and agreeing on how to make the fight against contraband activities more successful.

On the expenditure side of the budget, we hear the concerns loud and clear. There is a concern that government spending should be in keeping with the approved budget so that there is minimal resort to supplementary budgeting. We hear that and are committed to doing everything possible to abide by that principle.

We are planning our way carefully so that we are in a position to better manage both recurrent and capital expenditure. Programming of capital expenditures, in particular, will benefit from strengthening of management of the Public Sector Investment Programme.

The budget preparation process will also be strengthened to improve the prospects for achieving goals and results. In addition to the national consultation process, which will help government to ensure that its goals and objectives are in sync with the goals and objectives of the people, government is planning to shift to multiyear budgeting over the next several years. The thinking is to start on a pilot basis and then extend the process across the public service. This will be a major undertaking, but it will make the annual budget process more relevant and more conducive to programme budgeting. Indeed, we want to see ministries define their budget requests in terms of goals and outputs that can be measured.

Many have expressed the view that government has to allocate additional resources to key ministries and programmes that are directly addressing the issues of poverty, the position of vulnerable groups such as single mothers and young people in difficult circumstances, and social ills such as crime and violence. The allocation of resources to the Ministry of Human development, for example, has been described as “woefully inadequate” and in need for augmentation. We agree with that and we will do our best to improve the situation, but the reality is that there is not a lot of scope for significant increases because of the state of the public finances.

Two interesting recommendations have been made in this regard. The first is to dampen the rising food prices through reducing import taxes and widening the range of basic food items that are zero-rated for GST. This is a matter that is already under review. The

second recommendation is to subsidize child care services in vulnerable communities to increase the scope for single women to become employed thereby improving prospects for their families and children.

The scope for fiscal expansion is limited. The revenue envelope has been reduced by loss of RRD. The scope for borrowing is limited by the existing high debt burden – there is no access to the capital market and borrowing from the multilateral financial institutions is limited. There are new sources of revenue that are coming on stream – such as the petroleum taxes – but these are new taxes and the extent to which they will offset the huge loss from RRD is yet to be seen.

### **Strengthening governance and accountability**

We also want to see strengthening of governance and accountability and are working hard to achieve improvements in several areas.

The first is open, transparent and accountable government. We are ensuring that persons have the right to information and must be afforded access to information requested, particularly on critical matters of “public” finance. The days of secret contracts are over. Public guarantees of private debt without parliamentary approval are a thing of the past. Not only will this government never attempt to do these things, but by changing to the law, we are making it illegal for these things to be done. And, by strengthening accountability processes, we will ensure that anyone who breaks these laws can be caught and punished.

But we do not only want to know that every penny of public funds is properly accounted for, we also want to know that every penny that has been spent has brought proper value to the people. We are therefore focusing on improving our public financial management process. This means introduction of proper planning processes and shifting to programme budgeting. It means establishing functional monitoring and evaluation processes. It means strengthening our procurement processes to ensure that contracts must be awarded on the basis of technical and financial capacity and in keeping with the legal requirements for the award of contracts.

In this regard, the strengthening of the Offices of Contractor General and Auditor General is important. These offices are fundamental to the financial accountability process and therefore we will be working towards strengthening their capacity to function well and independently.

We want to be sure that the Auditor General can do what is necessary to bring the financial audits of government accounts up to date. We also want to be sure that the Accountant General is doing all that is necessary to overcome any ongoing difficulties that are standing in the way of completing the financial statements. We are tired of hearing that the audits cannot be completed. They must be completed. If there are issues that cannot be reconciled, then the public has a right to know what these issues are.

Finally, we will also soon be working towards further modernisation of the public financial management system. Some months ago, the CDB approved a grant to Belize for Modernisation and Revision of Financial Regulations, that is the Finance Orders and Stores Orders. We will be moving ahead with that work in the very near future. We will

take the opportunity of the modernisation process to strengthen the financial management process as necessary, even revisiting the Finance and Audit Reform Act as may be required.

As you proceed with the discussion today, I would like you to consider, in addition to the budget or economic issues, the process in which we are engaged. This consultative process is an important part of the good governance framework. It fosters inclusiveness and participation and contributes positively to the environment for debate on public policy issues.

We are heartened by the openness of the discussions that have taken place during these consultations. Many issues were identified and many recommendations were made for the consideration of government in the budget process and government is committed to considering these recommendations as it prepares its budget.

It is interesting that many of the issues and recommendations were common across interest groups. That alone is an outcome worthy of note:— we - government, private sector, labour, NGO's and other stakeholders - are agreeing on the main issues and concerns to be addressed by government policy in the interest of Belize.

As many of the issues require a medium to long term planning perspective and in the context of scarce resources, the need for proper development planning is critical. We would, therefore, like to see this consultative process continue and expand as we move ahead with the longer term development planning process which will take place through the Horizon 2030 project.

We look forward to continuing our engagement.

Thank you.

## LIST OF REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS AT THE SYMPOSIUM OF JUNE 11, 2008

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Rancharan	National Association of Village Associations
Fidelmar	District Association of Village Councils
Filberto Penados	UNICEF
Anita Zetina	UNICEF
Rana Flowers	Representative, UNICEF
John Flowers	UNICEF
Phillip Castillo	University of Belize
Kiran Budhrari	Belize City Council
Pat Mendoza	UNDP
Dudley Heredia	Belize Audubon Society
Frank Mena	Belize Mayors Association
Diane Wade-Moore	UNDP
Hon. Gaspar Vega	Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment
Hon. Gabriel Martinez	Minister of Labour and Local Government
Joseph Hendrix	Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP
Dame Elaine Middleton	Y.W.C.A
Sylvia Cattouse	University of Belize
Belis Carballo Jr.	Belize Agro Productive Sector Group
Yvonne Hyde	CEO, Ministry of Economic Development
L. Ayuso	Reporter Newspaper
Artemio Osorio	Budget Director, Ministry of Finance
Mr. Joseph Waight	Financial Secretary
Kenrick Theus	Belize Hotel Association
Sonia Lenares	YWCA
Mel Auil	Belize Business Bureau
Flint Wagner	Belize Agro Productive Sector Group
Andre Vega	
Harold Arzu	Inter-American Development Bank
Godwin Hulse	Private Sector
Jacqueline Willoughby	Public Service Union
Janelle Chanona	Channel Five
Kevin Herrera	Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Andrew Godoy	Belize Tourism Industry Association
Israel Marin	Belize Diesel and Equipment
Adele Ramos	Amandala
Luis Constantino	University of Belize
Lourdes Smith	Belize Business Bureau
Natalie Bucknor	Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology

Dennis Jones	Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology
Marcelina Avila	Belize Rural Development Project
O. Dawson	National Association of Village Councils
F.E. Paco Smith, Jr.	University of Belize
L. W. Pandy	Barnett & Company
Elvis Requena	Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology
Elias Awe	Help for Progress
Yasin Dujon	Ministry of Tourism
Tracy Panton	Belize Tourism Board
Hon. Manuel Heredia	Minister of Tourism
Wilma Wright	University of Belize
Dale Mcdougall	Wave Radio
Alfonso Noble	Guardian Newspaper
Antonio Gonzalez	Christian Workers Union
Carlos Pol	Ministry of Economic Development
Sydney Campbell	Central Bank of Belize
Edilberto Romero	Program for Belize
Marion Palacio	Central Bank of Belize
Kathrine Mendez	Ministry of Economic Development
Rasiel Vellos	Christian Workers Union
Davide Danon	Ministry of Economic Development
Mariam Roberson	Belize Tourism Board
Martha Hendrikx	National Association of Village Councils
Emir Cruz	Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment
Ernest Banner	National Association of Village Councils
Caroline Clarke	IDB Representative
Edward Reimer	Belize Agro Productive Sector Group
Geraldo Flowers	University of Belize
Olivia Noralez	Love FM
Rene Gomez	National Trade Union Congress of Belize
Cecil Arnold	Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Zenaida Moya	Mayor of Belize City
Olga Herrera	Belaifa
Sheree Gabourel	Belaifa
Dylan Reneau	Public Service Union
Jaime Panti	Belize National Teachers Union
George Frazer	Belize National Teachers Union
Elito Puc	Belize National Teachers Union
Elsa PAZ	Mayor, San Pedro Town
Carlos Galvez	Mayor, Punta Gorda town
Hilberto Campos	Mayor, Corozal Town
Eugene Palacio	Ministry of Local Government
John August	Mayor, San Ignacio Town
Enrique Carballo	Executive Secretary – Mayor’s Association

Ravell Gonzales	Mayor, Orange Walk Town
Simeon Lopez	Mayor, Belmopan