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Draft country programme document for Belize (2007-2011)*

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* The compilation of data required to present the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of the present document.



Introduction

1. The resident United Nations organizations in Belize – UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) – voluntarily opted, in the latter part of 2005, to embark on a common country programming process. This country programme document, prepared by the UNDP sub-office in Belize, is based on the United Nations common country assessment (CCA) 2005¹ and the subsequent United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2007-2011².

I. Situation analysis

2. *General.* Belize, independent from the United Kingdom since 1981, has strong historical and socio-political links to the Caribbean region and is a full member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Since the mid 1990s, it has increasingly presented itself politically and economically as part of the Central American region, resulting in full membership of the Central American Integration System in 2000. The influx of over 40,000 Central American refugees and immigrants during the late 1980s – equivalent to close to 15 per cent of the estimated population at that time – resulted in a major demographic shift from majority African-descendant to mestizo. About 40 per cent of the population is currently below the age of 15; 51 per cent reside in rural areas and are twice as likely as the urban population to be living in poverty.

3. *Economy*³. Belize has an open economy that continues to be characterized by a small productive base, resulting in a high level of imports. Until the start of the new millennium, the macro-economic performance of Belize ranked with that of the higher scoring countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region and Belize was placed in the category of middle-income countries. Based on 2003 data, Belize ranked 91 on the global Human Development Index (HDI) scale, i.e., in the mid-level range of countries with medium human development. The average economic growth rate over the past decade stands at 4 to 5 per cent, while gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has grown 18 per cent since

2000 to \$3,664 in 2005. Women’s share in the national income remains far below that of men. Changes in economic and fiscal performance in the most recent years, partly aggravated by the impact of a number of hurricanes and the imminent loss of global preferential markets for the main export commodities, appear to constitute a watershed mark. Economic growth strategies based on fiscally driven expansion featured increased Government spending and borrowing, privatization of major State-owned enterprises and tax reforms. This strategy is now placed within a tighter policy framework aimed at addressing the fiscal challenges of high public indebtedness (93 per cent of GDP in 2005), budget deficits and downturns in international financial markets. The discovery of high-grade oil in commercial quantities in late 2005 has rapidly provided new horizons and dimensions to the national development debate.

4. *Poverty.* Disaggregated key data for Belize indicate that the overall economic growth experienced might have failed to translate into a more equitable distribution of wealth and well-being. The 2005 CCA stresses that the 2002 Country Poverty Assessment⁴ demonstrates that 33.5 per cent of the population continues to live below the poverty line, with 10.8 per cent of the population being indigent and 22 per cent of female-headed households living in poverty. The CCA states that “inequality is therefore the manifestation of the central structural problem, which development policy in Belize must address”. The Belize Millennium Development Goals report, 2004,⁵ rates the overall progress since 1990 in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as reasonably good and notes that key elements of success are to be found in “increased levels of investment and deliberate attempts to improve the supportive and protective environments”.

5. *Poverty reduction.* The Government of Belize continues to put the primary focus of its strategies on the fight against poverty – foremost through intended improvements in the education, health and productive sectors – and is, with the support of UNDP, in the process of updating its National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (NPESAP) and Medium-Term Economic Strategy. The Government has also taken the lead in

¹ CCA: see <http://www.undg.org/content.cfm?id=317>

² UNDAF: see <http://www.undg.org/content.cfm?id=179>

³ Budget speech 06/07: see <http://www.belize.gov.bz>

⁴ CPA: see http://www.cso.gov.bz/publications/poverty_asses_rep2002.pdf

⁵ MDG report: see <http://www.undg.org/content.cfm?id=79>

developing an umbrella national development strategy. The main multi-sectoral policy advisory body, the National Human Development Advisory Committee, is a key development partner for UNDP in the areas of poverty reduction and human development and has produced several pieces of policy advice. The Committee encounters certain challenges in trying to maintain a results-based dialogue with decision-makers and include sustainable development concerns in its policy scope.

6. *Natural resources.* With the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UNDP technical assistance, close to 50 per cent of Belize land and marine territories are under legal protection. This has facilitated the expansion of the tourism industry – arrivals of cruise ship tourists have quadrupled over the past years – which has demonstrated its potential to provide substantial economic benefits to the country. However, the impact of the growth-driven expansion of human activity and the possible impact of climate change have started to create serious demands for further rationalization of natural resources management. In addition to climate change-related threats, key sustainable development challenges remain in the areas of over-exploitation of marine resources, solid waste management and sustainable land management practices. A special case is the national energy sector, which is expected to benefit from a national energy policy that is being developed within the context of national development strategies.

7. *Risk management.* Belize remains prone to the devastating impact of natural disasters, mainly hurricanes and flooding in the low-lying coastal zone, where most of the population resides. It is feared that climate changes could aggravate that impact, with the more vulnerable and poor populations suffering disproportionately highly. Belize has not been directly impacted since October 2001, which has somewhat diminished alertness and preparedness on the part of the population and institutions. The new national disaster management systems have not yet been put to the test. The country has reported its severest levels of dryness and drought over the recent past, resulting in lack of safe drinking water in communities and reduced agricultural production, for which no emergency response strategies are in place.

8. *HIV/AIDS.* The HIV prevalence rate of 2.4 per cent keeps Belize at the highest level in Central America and at fifth position in the Caribbean region. Recent data show increasing feminization of the spread of the virus, and AIDS is the leading cause of death among women of childbearing age (15 to 49). A new

HIV/AIDS policy has become operational in 2006, when the Global Fund initiated its programme of assistance. Data show, however, that current impact levels might not lead to the achievement of MDG 6. The low resource absorption, coordination and implementation capacities of many of the stakeholders are in need of strengthening.

9. *Democratic governance.* In the first part of 2005, the country experienced manifestations of social unrest, which have resulted in greater prominence of the themes of democratic governance and public sector management reform in the government agenda. The Government initiated a governance dialogue with trade unions and private sector representatives and in September 2005 established the Office of Governance, which seeks to strengthen public sector management practices and design improved mechanisms for access to information and meaningful participation in policy formulation dialogue. The newly established Council on Good Governance and Public Sector Modernization is tasked with providing policy advice in these matters. The Government of Belize has expressed its desire to strengthen social justice mechanisms and provide better enabling environments for a more equitable distribution of the national wealth and for the achievement of the MDGs.

10. *Decentralization.* Historically, policy formulation and decision-making power in Belize has resided with the central Government, with only limited powers assigned to city and town councils. Village councils were legally recognized and empowered in 2000 but continue to lack capacity to operate within the relevant legislation. The central Government has cautiously embarked on a gradual decentralization effort but is confronted with a lack of adequate governance capacity at the municipal and village levels. Over the past two years, an increasing number of donor organizations have focused on strengthening local governance practices as a co-driver promoting equitable and sustainable development.

II. Past cooperation and lessons learned

11. Delivery in the *MDGs and poverty reduction* area was financed by regular resources and included the launch of the first MDG report (2004). The fourth Belize national human development report (NHDR) is to be launched in the latter part of 2006. In addition, support has been provided

for an updated Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. A pilot project in youth enterprise development has been delivered, which has attracted continued funding from an Inter-American Development Bank-sponsored regional programme.

12. Delivery in the *democratic governance* area was financed by the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund and included a project for decentralized access to justice and legal advice via the establishment of district-based legal information bureaux. Support was also provided to Government and civil society organizations, resulting in a number of policy recommendations for improved civil participation in public policy dialogues.

13. Delivery in the *energy and environment* area (90 per cent of total delivery) was financed by GEF, and a series of projects have been delivered that have contributed to improving the national strategies in the areas of bio-diversity, sustainable land management, organic pollutants and adaptation/mitigation strategies to climate change. In the area of energy, the country programme delivered the first national assessment, which is awaiting further follow-up.

14. *HIV/AIDS* support focused on improving the scaling-up of the national response via a regional project that targeted migrating and mobile populations and a project that delivered the national HIV/AIDS policy. In addition, support has been provided to the strengthening of the National AIDS Commission.

15. *Lessons learned*. The major lesson learned is the need to further prioritize the allocation of limited (regular) resources to enhance UNDP programme efficiency and effectiveness in view of the outstanding MDG agenda. The *environment* portfolio will continue its current course with a focus on creating clear links with poverty reduction efforts. In the area of *HIV/AIDS*, the UNDP comparative advantage will be most effective in governance-related issues of strengthening the national response. The balance between programme outputs in the areas of *poverty reduction* and *democratic governance* needs to be better aligned with the current national parameters by delivering better policy debate-enhancing products (the NHDR and derivatives) at the central and decentralized levels of the State. In the area of democratic governance, the Government decentralization strategy has provided new opportunities for articulated support and advice. *Programme management* parameters of UNDP Belize remain vulnerable, owing to the continued small programme and operations resources base.

Within the purview of United Nations reform, a radical amalgamation of programme support functions exercised by the resident United Nations organizations will need to be explored.

III. Proposed programme

16. The outline of the proposed UNDP Belize country programme 2007-2011 is directly derived from the Belize UNDAF 2007-2011 (see annex). The implementation strategy remains based on 'down-stream' interventions and 'up-stream' policy advice.

UNDAF outcome 1: *Poverty elimination by investing in people*. 1.1 "By 2011, democratic governance practices are improved at all levels with Government and non-State actors."

17. UNDP recognizes that poverty is linked to other social concerns, such as youth unemployment, crime and violence, gender inequity and HIV/AIDS, as well as to economic issues such as globalization and lack of economic opportunity. External cooperation programmes are ultimately targeted at improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable populations. The UNDP country programme seeks to focus on the improvement of governance practices at the State and non-State levels as necessary investments and means to reduce poverty and attain the MDGs.

18. In addition to continued policy support to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of long-term participatory social planning of poverty reduction strategies, as well as the dissemination of information critical to human development, the programme aims – in collaboration with other United Nations organizations – to provide technical assistance in sustainable human development policy formulation, so as to empower government entities with regard to effective practices of policy development, programming, budgeting and social investments.

19. Through joint programmes with other United Nations organizations, the programme seeks to generate capacity-building initiatives in the areas of research, data collection and analysis. This will ensure a higher quality of future national MDG reports.

20. The current demand for improved national capacity to execute and manage poverty elimination programmes, including projects in both urban and rural areas, provides opportunities for UNDP to accompany and reinforce efforts by the

Government to decentralize and reform public administration. Initiatives are designed to strengthen local capacity and the local social fabric by promoting local economies, natural resources management, equitable coverage and quality of social services, and promoting the role of women as heads of households. Special attention will be given to lower-income groups, such as youth and female heads of household, both at the policy-formulation level and with respect to improving the services that are actually provided.

21. Both the CCA and UNDAF stress the need to strengthen the national culture of human rights and responsibilities. The programme intends to create enhanced levels of awareness and application of human rights standards and principles and to establish solid foundations for improving the processes of meaningful dialogue and equitable participation in the articulation of national development strategies. Through ongoing collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other United Nations organizations, the programme will seek to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the national entities involved in human rights education and monitoring.

22. Focusing on poverty elimination through community development, the government strategy for the national fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic is based on enhancing the capacity of local leaders to build democracy through local governance. The country programme will make strategic contributions to strengthening the coordination and monitoring capacity of the country coordinating mechanism of the Global Fund and the National AIDS Commission. The delivery strategy will entail providing technical assistance through the mechanisms of the United Nations theme group on HIV/AIDS.

UNDAF outcome 3: *Improving sustainable development practices.* “By 2011, national frameworks and capacities are in place, enhancing the ability to adequately address adaptation to and mitigation of the impact of disasters as well as the comprehensive, effective, equitable and sustainable management of the natural resources of the nation.”

23. The UNDP track record with regard to energy and the environment allows the programme to build on the previous assistance strategies, which enjoy full ownership by the Government. Previous efforts to strengthen national capacities in developing and managing regulatory frameworks under the multilateral environment agreements will continue,

with an emphasis on the creation and maintenance of implementation synergies, highlighting the poverty-reducing potential of sound natural resource management practices. The programme will, in addition, take advantage of the widespread acknowledgement of the need for evidence-based policy dialogue and will strengthen mechanisms for knowledge management and information sharing.

24. Specific attention will be given to features that have been identified as growing threats to current and future environmental parameters. Guided by reported high levels of land degradation and negative pressures on the availability and quality of water resources, innovative approaches will be supported that will create effective, adequate responses and will be connected to parallel strategies for socio-economic activity.

25. In collaboration with the GEF Small Grants Programme, the programme will put special emphasis on strategies to involve non-State actors in the dialogue for and practice of sustainable development. The involvement and empowerment of communities is a cross-cutting programme strategy.

26. Although in its early stages, it is expected that the emerging oil industry will create new horizons for development assistance. Development of the oil industry will provide opportunities to re-investigate possible windows for continued follow-up to the development of a national energy policy.

27. Given the continued vulnerability of Belize to the impact of natural disasters – likely to be aggravated by the effects of climate changes – the programme will continue, in close collaboration with all other United Nations organizations, to assist the central emergency management authorities to increase their capacity to develop, mainstream and implement adequate risk reduction and disaster response measures. Special attention will be given to empowering communities in local risk reduction strategies. Results from these activities are expected to have a positive impact on local poverty reduction strategies and governance practices.

IV. Programme management, monitoring and evaluation

28. Resource mobilization represents an ongoing task. UNDP is an important partner for the

Government, donor countries and civil society and new opportunities for development services will arise. However, UNDP forecasts no major variations from current funding levels in the near future. Programme management parameters will require an appropriate balance between the ambitions of the programme portfolio, the resource requirements for management activities and the expected available resources. The administrative management of the proposed programme is feasible in the present setting under the vital assumption that operational support budgets remain appropriate. In addition, the programme seeks to deepen operational collaboration with other resident United Nations organizations to optimize resources.

29. To give effect to the capacity-building paradigm, the main overall implementation strategy will be the national execution modality. Project capacity needs can partially be met by intensifying linkages with regional programmes and subregional resource facilities. In some cases, especially in the areas of emergency response and the production of policy debate-enhancing products, the programme will investigate managed implementation schemes more directly. As the first UNDAF for Belize becomes operational in January 2007, the UNDP in-country coordination agenda will likely expand.

30. Direct project-monitoring activities, driven by periodic progress reports and field visits when applicable, will occur on an ongoing basis, utilizing the corporate monitoring and evaluation systems. They will track the progress of separate projects and interventions against targets set at the level of project-specific output indicators. Corporate provisions and practices will ensure the periodic compilation of progress data against targets set at the outcome indicator level. Progress data at this level will feed into the tracking of progress at the UNDAF country programme level. To that extent, the summary monitoring processes will be aligned with the calendar of the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation framework, which prescribes the establishment of periodic programme and project reviews at the inter-agency level and will include the production of MDG reports. Depending on the thematic area covered, national human development reports can serve as a monitoring instrument, providing de facto programme impact data.

Annex. Results and resources framework for Belize (2007-2011)

UNDAF outcome 1: By 2011, the most vulnerable and excluded populations exercise their rights to more equitable and quality basic education, health and protection, guided by processes based on democratic governance principles. UNDP corporate goals: MDGs and poverty reduction (1); Democratic governance (2)				
Strategic areas of support	Intended outcomes	Intended outputs	Indicators for outputs	Resources (by strategic area of support/ outcome or programme area)
Service line 1.2 Pro-poor policy reform to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets	Strengthened universal capacity to formulate, budget, implement and monitor human and sustainable development policies and strategies	Improved data collection, disaggregation and analysis systems	- Percentage of baseline data established - MDG reports and national human development reports - Annual progress reports for Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper	Regular resources \$50,000 Other resources \$113,000
		Strengthened national and local capacities on planning, programming, budgeting and social investments	- Poverty rate - Percentage of national budget allocated to social investment	Regular resources \$137,000 Other resources \$250,000
Service line 2.7 Public administration reform	Public administration reform for efficient, effective, responsive, and pro-poor public services promoted	Increased public knowledge and application of human rights standards and principals	- Strengthened universal capacity for human rights-based programming - Public awareness of human rights principles and standards	Regular resources \$25,000 Other resources \$80,000
		Strengthened management and governance capacity at municipal and village levels	- National decentralization strategy and action plan - Disaggregated human development data for municipalities and villages	Regular resources \$20,000 Other resources \$100,000

UNDAF outcome 3: By 2011, national frameworks and capacities in place, enhancing the ability to adequately adapt to and mitigate the impact of disasters as well as the comprehensive, equitable, sustainable and effective management of natural resources UNDP corporate goal: Energy and environment for sustainable development (3); Crisis prevention and recovery (4)				
Strategic areas of support	Intended outcomes	Intended outputs	Indicators for outputs	Resources (by strategic area of support/ outcome or programme area)
Service line 3.1 Frameworks and strategies for sustainable development:	Sustainable management of environment and natural resource incorporated into poverty reduction strategies and key national and sectoral development frameworks and strategies	Strengthened national capacities in complying with the provisions of multilateral environment agreements, which are mainstreamed into national policies and strategies.	- Integrated natural resources management plan inclusive of poverty alleviation interventions - Enhanced environment information systems - Level of inclusion of sustainable resource management into national development plan	Regular resources -- Other resources \$1,000,000

		Innovative approaches and strategies established for improved sustainable land use and comprehensive water resources management and utilization knowledge and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated water resources management legislation, policy and plan - Improved national and local capacities for sustainable land management - Guidelines and best practice modules across agriculture, forestry, protected areas management and mining sectors - Percentage of area affected by land degradation 	Regular resources -- Other resources \$1,000,000
		Comprehensive regulatory and management mechanisms for energy sector established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive national energy policy (renewable and non-renewable sources) - Office of Energy established and operational - Renewable energy as per cent of capacity generation 	Regular resources -- Other resources \$300,000
		Increased national capacity to effectively address vulnerability and adapt to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vulnerability data of relevant sectors - Recorded economic losses due to climate change-related event 	Regular resources -- Other resources \$750,000
		Strengthened national framework for biodiversity management at the State and non-State levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pilot projects for landscape approach in watershed management - Communities engaged in protected areas and biodiversity management - Pilot projects for community management of forest resources 	Regular resources -- Other resources \$450,000
Service line 4.5 Natural disaster reduction	Reduced vulnerability of poor and excluded populations to the impact of disasters	Increased capacity of State and non-State actors to deal with risk reduction, hazard mitigation and response measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of gross domestic product loss due to disasters - Percentage of dwellings and development in disaster-prone areas 	Regular resources -- Other resources \$180,000