

BELIZE

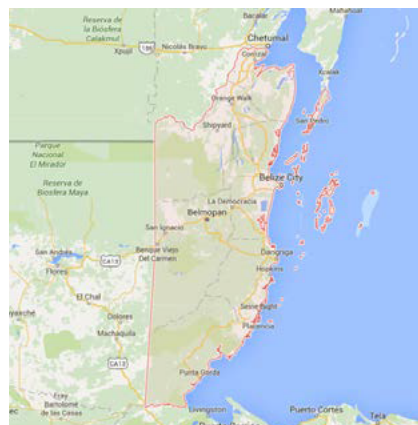
Partners in Brazil	Ministry of Health State Government of Ceará State and Municipal Government of Rio de Janeiro Government of the Federal District
Partners in Belize	Hand in Hand Ministries Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports National AIDS Commission Belize Family Life Association
Objective of Cooperation	Support the Government of Belize and partners to identify and adapt sustainable interventions to prevent and raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and support children and adolescents living with the virus
Component within Belize National Plan of Action	National Plan of Action 2004-2015 objective 2.5.4 to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS and minimise the impact on children and adolescents. ¹⁴

Situation of children

Belize has a relatively small population of 340,000 people but one which is characterized by a very high proportion of children. Children under age 18 account for 39 per cent¹⁵ of the population while adolescents account for 25 per cent.¹⁶ The country is culturally rich and diverse due to high levels of immigration. Belize has the highest HIV prevalence rate (2.1 per cent) in Central America.¹⁷ In 2004, a UNICEF study found that at least 14,000 children who had lost one or both parents to AIDS were at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The Government of Belize has implemented a number of policies to support the realization of the rights of children.¹⁸

Objective of cooperation

The Belizean Government has taken positive steps towards addressing HIV/AIDS, such as providing free HIV testing and establishing the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programme.¹⁹ Belize's National Action Plan for Children and Adolescents seeks to explore new partnerships and to identify innovative programmes and solutions that will help the country implement sustainable interventions for children and adolescents. The Brazilian successes in protecting and treating its population against the virus are internationally recognized. Reports indicate that there has been a significant drop in cases of mother-to-child transmission over the last two decades.²⁰ The implementation of Brazilian public policies targeted at HIV/AIDS was a focus area for cooperation, especially the coordination and participation at federal, state and municipal levels.



Basic Indicators to the top

Under-5 mortality rank	112
Under-5 mortality rate (U5MR), 1990	49
Under-5 mortality rate (U5MR), 2012	16
U5MR by sex 2012, male	18
U5MR by sex 2012, female	15
Infant mortality rate (under 1), 1990	42
Infant mortality rate (under 1), 2012	15
Neonatal mortality rate 2012	10
Total population (thousands), 2012	2,969.1
Annual no. of births (thousands), 2012	41.3
Annual no. of under-5 deaths (thousands), 2012	1
GNI per capita (US\$), 2012	3,720
Life expectancy at birth (years), 2012	74.5
Total adult literacy rate (%) 2009-2012	99.6
Primary school net enrolment ratio (%) 2008-2011	--

SOURCES: UNICEF DATA. <https://data.unicef.org/country/blz/>



'Sex Thing' Intervention

UNICEF, the National AIDS Commission (NAC) and the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) are making a concerted effort towards ensuring that adolescents in the Stann Creek District have increased knowledge of the prevention of HIV and early pregnancy. Through an initiative called 'Sex Thing', adolescents in the District will use 'edutainment' as a tool to reach other adolescents in a series of dialogues about the abovementioned issues. Street theatre will be performed as a participatory process, while delivering targeted messages for the reduction of high-risk sexual behaviours. The initiative will simultaneously offer sexual health services in a discrete location nearby. The services available include HIV testing, safe sex counselling, pap smears, testicular and breast check-ups. So far, the initiative is present in 5 communities and has reached 1,000 young people.

Cooperation activities

A Belizean delegation from the Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports, the National AIDS Commission (NAC) and local NGOs, travelled to Brazil in May 2014 and joined a Jamaican mission focussed on similar areas of interest. The delegation participated in field visits and meetings with Brazilian authorities and institutions in Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia and Fortaleza. They learned of the Brazilian experience and shared their own policies and programmes to overcome adolescent health challenges. Areas of interest throughout the mission included the degree of autonomy that Brazilian municipalities have when implementing policies, as well as the participation of civil society and young people in the implementation of programmes and public policies. Youth engagement emerged as a key theme to optimize government programmes, due to its proven ability to positively affect adolescents and their approach to sexual healthcare.

Progress to date

The Belizean Government strengthened its support for programmes to increase adolescents' knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS and used the lessons learned from Brazil to aid the NAC. Two cooperation agreements between the Government of Belize and civil society organizations have been signed. These organizations are working with young people and at-risk populations in the cities of Dangriga and Belmopan and are providing support programmes and information about HIV/AIDS. The NAC and the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) have also re-developed their strategy towards planning for young persons, which now includes a comprehensive prevention strategy for adolescents and young persons. Additionally, the NAC will use the lessons learned from Brazil and Jamaica to create a working partnership with civil society organizations and thus expand its outreach work across the country, ensuring that all children and young people have access to services, information and support.

The cooperation between Brazil and Belize brought an unexpected result as the collaboration between Jamaica and Belize strengthened. This outcome allowed the two countries to continue working together following the joint mission to Brazil, and has been praised by members of the BFLA as a key added value to capacity development and awareness-raising activities with young people.

2014

Formal request from Gvt. of Belize received

MAY: Joint study visit of Belizean ministerial representatives and NGOs to Brazil with Jamaica

JULY: Belize-Jamaica spin-off cooperation for HIV prevention strategy

Signed cooperation agreements between Gvt. of Belize and Civil Society to work with at risk Belizean adolescents

Children in South Belize benefitting from increased access to services

2015

¹⁴ Government of Belize, The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents in Belize 2004-2015.

¹⁵ UNICEF Data, Country Statistics: Belize, <http://data.unicef.org/countries/BLZ.html>

¹⁶ UNICEF Belize, The Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Belize 2011 – An Ecological Review, <http://uni.cf/1Xo0pa9>

¹⁷ UNICEF Belize Country Programme Document, 2013-2016, <http://uni.cf/1Ry2dyH>

¹⁸ UNICEF Belize, The Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Belize 2011 – An Ecological Review, <http://uni.cf/1Xo0pa9>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ministério da Saúde, Boletim Epidemiológico HIV/AIDS, 2014