

**COMMITTEE ON THE  
RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

**WRITTEN REPLIES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE CONCERNING THE LIST  
OF ISSUES (CRC/C/Q/BLZ/2) RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS  
OF THE CHILD RELATING TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE  
SECOND PERIODIC REPORT OF BELIZE (CRC/C/65/Add.29)**

**[Received on 13 December 2004]**

CRC/C/RESP/76

Convention on the Rights of the Child  
First Periodic Report 2002  
Addendum December 2004  
Belize

List of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the second periodic report of Belize \*CRC/C/65/Add.29)

**PART I**

**Under this section the State party is requested to submit in written form additional and updated information, if possible, before 25 November 2004.**

**A. Data and Statistics, if available**

1. Please provide disaggregated statistical data (by gender, age groups, ethnic groups, urban or rural areas) covering the years 2001, 2002, and 2003 on:
  - a. the number and percentage of children under 18 living in the State party;
  - b. the number and percentage of children belonging to minorities and indigenous children, non-national children including immigrant children.

a. The age structure of Belize as reflected in Table 1 indicates that Belize has a very young population with children making up almost a half of the total population of Belize (2002: 46.2%; 2003:46.3%; 2004:45.3%). This situation is attributed to rather high levels of fertility that contributed to an average annual growth rate of approximately 3.2% between 2000 and 2004. The sex ratio for children stood at 1.03 in 2002 and at 1.01 in 2003 while that of the overall population remained at 1.02 during the three-year period under consideration. The distribution of children by district, as indicated in Table 1, reflects the pattern of distribution of the overall population. Administratively, Belize is divided into six districts with the Belize District being the most populous and the Toledo District being the least populated. Belize City, the largest urban center, is located in the Belize District and is the area with the most economic opportunity due to the concentration of businesses located there. As such it attracts migration of entire families from the other districts. The urban areas of the other districts are small and the larger part of the population for those districts tend to be distributed in the rural areas. This is confirmed in the Table 1 by the fact that more than a half of children reside in what Belize considers to be rural areas.

Table 1 Belize: Population Under 18 Years by Selected Characteristics						
Group	2002		2003		2004	
Country (TOTAL)	265,200		273,700		282,600	
Male	133,900		138,300		142,700	
Female	131,300		135,400		139,900	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Population &lt; 18 years</u>	122,496	100.0	126,785	100.0	128,115	100.0
<u>Sex</u>						
Male	62,287	50.8	64,472	50.9	64,505	50.3
Female	60,209	49.2	62,313	49.1	63,610	49.7
<u>Age group</u>						
0-4	32,799	26.8	33,639	26.5	33,224	25.9
5-9	36,253	29.6	36,178	28.5	37,681	29.4
10-14	35,455	28.9	37,367	29.5	37,064	28.9
15-17	17,988	14.7	19,602	15.5	20,147	15.7
<u>District</u>						
Corozal	15,361	12.5	15,200	12.0	15,461	12.1
Orange Walk	18,933	15.5	20,306	16.0	19,977	15.6
Belize	32,038	26.2	33,489	26.4	34,686	27.1
Cayo	28,794	23.5	29,370	23.2	29,804	23.3
Stann Creek	13,069	10.7	13,343	10.5	13,019	10.2
Toledo	14,301	11.7	15,077	11.9	15,168	11.8
<u>Region</u>						
Urban	52,942	43.2	56,043	44.2	58,428	45.6
Rural	69,553	56.8	70,742	55.8	69,687	54.4
<u>Ethnicity</u>						
Creole	29,540	24.1	29,644	23.4	33,576	26.2
Garifuna	5,317	4.3	7,478	5.9	6,944	5.4
Maya	16,699	13.6	16,773	13.2	15,992	12.5
Mestizo/Spanish	58,265	47.6	59,236	46.7	60,339	47.1
Other	12,511	10.2	13,424	10.6	11,164	8.7
Dk/NS	163	0.1	231	0.2	101	0.1

Source: Mid-year population estimates 2002, 2003, 2004, Central Statistical Office

b. Generally the term indigenous is used to refer to a group of people, in Belize's case, residing within what are now its boundaries before being colonized by the British.<sup>1</sup> According to this definition the Maya are indigenous to the region where Belize is located and have had a continuous presence within the country before and after colonization. As indicated in Table 1, Maya children comprise approximately 14% of all children less than 18 years of age. The Garifuna, descendants of intermarriage between Africans and Caribbean Indians, can also be considered indigenous by self-definition<sup>2</sup> and since theirs does not include European ancestry. Numerically they are also a minority comprising only around 5% of all children. It

<sup>1</sup> Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization

<sup>2</sup> Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization

should be noted that the status of these two groups are not regulated wholly nor partially by special laws or regulations but tend to be, particularly in the case of the Maya, as a result of conformity with traditional social, economic and cultural institutions.

There is no data available on non-nationals. However, estimates of the foreign born children can be made using the 2000 Census distribution assuming no change in migration patterns since then. These estimates are included in the Table 2. From these figures the foreign born children would comprise approximately 6.7% of all children living in Belize.

<b>Table 2</b> <b>Belize: Foreign Born - Population Under 18 Years</b>			
<b>Group</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Country (TOTAL)	265,200	273,700	282,600
Population < 18 years	122,496	126,785	128,115
Foreign born < 18 years	8,170	8,456	8,545

Source: Estimated based on data from the 2000 Population Census and mid-year population estimates 2002, 2003 and 2004, Central Statistical Office

2. In light of Article 4 of the Convention, please provide disaggregated data on budget allocations and trends (in percentages of the national and district budgets) for the years 2002, 2003, 2004 regarding the implementation of the Convention evaluating also the priorities for budgetary expenditure given to the following:
  - a. education (different types of education, i.e. pre-primary, primary and secondary education);
  - b. health care (different types of health services, i.e. primary health care, vaccination programmes, adolescent health care, HIV/AIDS and other health care services for children, including social insurance);
  - c. programmes and services for children with disabilities;
  - d. support programmes for families;
  - e. support for children living below the poverty line;
  - f. the protection of children who are in need of alternative care including the support of care institutions;
  - g. programmes and activities for the prevention of and protection from child abuse, child sexual exploitation and child labour;
  - h. programmes and services for children belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples;
  - i. programmes and services for abandoned children, including street children;
  - j. juvenile justice

a – j. The Ministries of Education, Health and Human Development comprise most of the Social Sector spending by the Government of Belize and are the key ones that contribute to the implementation of the CRC. Most of the Ministry of Human Development's budget focuses on programmes that address the concerns of children. The main exceptions are the Women's Department and the homes for the Elderly, whose financial allocations together amounted to approximately 22% of the Ministry of Human Development's budget. However, it can be argued, although it would be difficult to quantify, that some of the Women's Department budget does indirectly address the well-being of children. The Official Charities Fund should also be included here since most of the organizations receiving assistance from this source provide directly or indirectly to children through their programmes. Again, exceptions to these charities include those specifically targeting the elderly, women and men. As indicated in Table 3 Belize's overall

budgetary allocation to this sector increased from 34% to 38% of its recurrent expenditure between 2002 and 2004. Specifically, the amount spent on *basic* social services which would directly respond to the implementation of the CRC ranged between 24% and 27% between 2002 and 2004. This translates to around 6% of GDP for 2004.

Budgets are centralized although they should take into consideration the needs of the six districts at the time of planning. There is no systematic criteria by which the budget is distributed at the district level. A partial exception to this is the Ministry of Health whose administrative budget, only, is decentralized at the district level. However, due to the manner in which services are delivered to the public medical supplies and other key budget lines are still controlled centrally.

<b>Table 3</b> <b>Belize: Government of Belize Expenditure on Social Services</b>			
Description	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05 (Approved Estimates)
Total Recurrent Expenditure	\$371,991,231	\$385,308,493	\$424,423,780
Ministry of Education and Sports <sup>1</sup>	\$84,661,003	\$94,077,370	\$107,932,196
Education Services (Pre-Primary, Primary, Special Ed. Secondary including Toledo Technical, and Truancy)	\$72,339,323	\$80,450,637	\$91,971,077
Ministry of Health and Communications	\$37,964,174	\$41,706,113	\$47,466,265
Primary Health Expenditure	\$13,024,153	\$14,324,227	\$17,472,197
Ministry of Human Development	\$2,844,226	\$3,289,570	\$3,937,739
Official Charities Fund	\$2,018,155	\$2,069,025	\$2,360,050
Total Social Services as percentage of Recurrent Expenditure	34.27	36.63	38.10
Total Basic Social Services – Education up to Secondary School, Primary Health Expenditure, Human Development, and Official Charities Fund	\$90,225,857	\$100,133,459	\$115,741,063
Total Basic Social Services as percent of Total Recurrent Expenditure	24.2%	26.0%	27.3%
Government Expenditure on Housing	\$4,776,224	\$5,914,664	\$3,007,532
Total	\$71,560,345	\$79,973,061	\$87,695,648
GDP (in billions BZ)	-	\$1.950	\$2.032

Sources: Caribbean Development Bank, Social Protection and Poverty Reduction in the Caribbean: Belize, September 2004;  
Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for Fiscal Year 2004/2005, GOB, February 2004

<sup>1</sup> Includes funding to government aided schools

Table 4 highlights the budgetary expenditure of the Ministry of Human Development in specific areas such as Child Care Centers, Disability Services Division, Youth Hostel, Community Rehabilitation Department and Family Services Division. Together these five areas in conjunction with Human Services provide support to children living below the poverty line as well as those living in difficult circumstances such as in abusive situations of any nature. Since programs and services should not discriminate according to race or ethnicity, there are no specific programs and services designed to target minorities and indigenous children. The concern still exists that the greater part of the services provided are centered in the major urban areas and the service providers experience difficulties when attempting to address the needs of the rural child population.

<p align="center"><b>Table 4</b>  <b>Belize: Recurrent Expenditure of Ministry of Human Development, 2002/2005</b></p>			
Programme	Actual 2002/03 (\$)	Revised Est. 2003/04 (\$)	Approved Est. 2004/05 (\$)
General Administration	390,737	471,136	731,941
<b>Human Services</b>	<b>712,329</b>	<b>816,419</b>	<b>967,480</b>
<b>Child Care</b>	<b>160,108</b>	<b>212,654</b>	<b>228,959</b>
Golden Haven Rest Home <sup>1</sup>	100,588	123,396	146,459
Population Unit	86,899	121,885	144,954
<b>Disabilities Services Division</b>	<b>42,565</b>	<b>77,558</b>	<b>108,720</b>
<b>Youth Hostel</b>	<b>428,540</b>	<b>454,050</b>	<b>461,983</b>
Women's Department	273,658	301,045	306,726
Sister Cecilia's Home <sup>1</sup>	214,500	245,700	255,528
Octavia Waight Centre <sup>1</sup>	77,989	81,900	85,176
<b>Family Services Division</b>	<b>163,219</b>	<b>161,571</b>	<b>210,956</b>
<b>Community Rehabilitation Department</b>	<b>193,094</b>	<b>249,655</b>	<b>288,857</b>
<b>Total Recurrent on MHD</b>	<b>2,844,226</b>	<b>3,289,570</b>	<b>3,937,739</b>

Sources: Caribbean Development Bank, Social Protection and Poverty Reduction in the Caribbean: Belize, September 2004

<sup>1</sup> Refer to homes for the Elderly

3. With reference to children deprived of a family environment and separated from parents, please provide disaggregated data (by gender, age group, if possible ethnic groups, urban and rural areas) for the years 2001, 2002, 2003 on the number of children:
  - a. separated from their parents;
  - b. placed in institutions;
  - c. placed with foster families;
  - d. adopted domestically or through inter-country adoptions.

a-d. Figures from the Ministry of Human Development<sup>3</sup> indicate that at the end of 2003 there were 272 children distributed across 179 foster homes nationwide. Of the 179 foster families only 33 receive some form of allowance from the MHD. During 2003 the Department of Human Services (DHS) worked with four childcare institutions that housed a total of 109 children at the end of that year. Table 5 below indicates that a total of 79 adoptions took place during 2003. At the end of 2003 there were approximately 62 children countrywide available for adoption, a half of them were living in institutions and the balance in foster-to-adopt homes.

During the same year, an average of 23 males and 12 females were housed per month at the Youth Hostel, a residential custodial center for minors.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Human Development, Local Government and Labour, Human Development Section, Annual Report 2003

<b>Table 5</b> <b>Belize: Adoptions 2003</b>	
Type of Adoption Services	No. of Cases
Direct services provided by DHS	28
DHS approved adoptions (ward)	4
Private adoptions (local)	19
Private adoptions (international)	5
Coordination of services by DHS	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>

Source: Human Services Department

4. Please specify the number of children with disabilities up to the age of 18 disaggregated by gender, age groups and, if possible, ethnic groups, urban and rural areas, covering the years 2001, 2002 and 2003:
- living with their families;
  - living in institutions;
  - placed in foster care;
  - attending regular schools;
  - attending special schools;
  - not attending schools.

a-c There is currently no system in place to conduct screening and early detection of children with disabilities on a national level. Therefore, there is no comprehensive data available on children with disabilities. A situational analysis on children with all types of disabilities is currently being conducted by CARE-Belize, an NGO that provides screening and rehabilitation services to physically challenged children from birth to age six. A cross-sectoral committee has been established and is presently in the process of developing a national policy to address the requirements of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is in the process of developing a ten-year education plan that includes a section on disabilities. The Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI), another NGO, does keep a rudimentary database on visually impaired children who are their clients, however it was unable to provide updated information at this time.

The matter of screening, early detection and overall services for children and adolescents with disabilities has been highlighted as an area for action in the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children and Adolescents in Belize, 2004-2015 and is addressed in three of its six main areas of concern. Refer to B5.

d-e. The number of children enrolled in Special Education programs provided by the Ministry of Education more than doubled between 2001 and 2004 increasing from 82 during the 2001/2002 school year to 171 during the 2003/2004 school year. The increase came from all age groups implying that growing awareness among the public is contributing to children being diagnosed and to parents being more receptive to the idea of sending (reluctant) the children to school. The Ministry of Education is focusing on integrating children with disabilities into the regular school system. A Special Education Unit has been established which includes some specialist staff. The unit provides support for teachers in special schools and units and those working with children with special needs in mainstream schools. Training of resource teachers and establishment of model schools has been undertaken. However, although some teachers

have been trained in special education there is need for more to be trained to enable a wider distribution across the dispersed child population and primary schools. Additionally, many of the trained teachers struggle to help these children in the classroom due to constraints imposed by class size and resource availability.

The itinerant teachers and localized trained teachers provide special supplementary activities to these children in the normal school system. As such there is only one Special Education School located in Belize City and it caters only to cases that cannot be dealt with in the normal school system. The statistics presented in Table 5 do not allow for disaggregating by attendance at regular schools and at the special school. An issue of concern is that the number of boys almost doubles the number of girls. This may imply that lesser importance is placed on diagnosing disabilities among girls and/or addressing the issue of schooling for them.

<b>Table 6</b>						
<b>Belize: Special Education Enrollment by Age and Sex - Population Under 18 Years</b>						
<b>Age</b>	<b>2001-2002</b>		<b>2002-2003</b>		<b>2003-2004</b>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Population &lt; 18 years</u>	122,496	100.0	126,785	100.0	128,115	100.0
Male	62,287	50.8	64,472	50.9	64,505	50.3
Female	60,209	49.2	62,313	49.1	63,610	49.7
<u>Special Education Enrollment</u>	82	100.0	126	100.0	171	100.0
Male	53	64.6	83	65.9	113	66.1
Female	29	35.4	43	34.1	58	33.9
Age 3 – 4	1	1.2	2	1.6	1	0.6
Age 5 – 9	47	57.3	55	43.7	90	52.6
Age 10 – 14	27	32.9	50	39.7	60	35.1
Age 15 – 17	7	8.5	19	15.1	20	11.7

Sources: Planning and Information Unit, Ministry of Education, 2001 - 2003

5. Please provide disaggregated statistical data (by gender, age groups, if possible ethnic groups, urban and rural areas) covering the years 2001, 2002 and 2003:
  - a. rates of infant mortality;
  - b. rates of immunization;
  - c. rates of malnutrition;
  - d. children infected with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS;
  - e. adolescent health, including early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), mental health and suicide, drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse; and
  - f. number of health professionals working in the health care services for children.

a. Statistics on infant and child, births and deaths are collected at the district level and accumulated for country level estimates. Official infant and child mortality rates are generally low however, there is the impression that this is due to under-reporting rather than efficient health care delivery. This can be observed from the statistics in Table 6 that indicate considerable fluctuations and no identifiable trends by



district. The IMR remained under 20 for the three-year period under consideration and in 2004 varied from around 12 deaths per 1,000 births in the Cayo district to around 25 for the Toledo district. It should be noted that the lowest IMR for the year 2001 was 4 for the Orange Walk District and the highest was 24 for the Stann Creek. It is generally agreed that there is considerable variation by district although this cannot be confirmed from the data in the table below. The variations by district is usually attributed to some communities having easier access to better health care than other communities due to the location of the hospitals and health centers that comprise the health delivery network. With this in mind it is difficult to comment further other than to say that the mechanisms for the collection of data need to be strengthened and that Belize, while having relatively low IMR compared to other developing countries, still needs to keep this health area as a priority.

<b>Table 7</b> <b>Belize: Infant Mortality Rates (IMR) and Child Mortality Rates (CMR)</b>						
Indicator	2001		2002 (revised)		2003 (preliminary)	
	IMR	CMR	IMR	CMR	IMR	CMR
Country	16.6	4.4	19.2	4.0	16.0	3.2
Corozal	12.3	5.6	20.1	5.0	31.7	2.3
Orange Walk	3.7	3.7	15.4	4.0	14.1	0.0
Belize	21.0	4.7	19.6	6.2	13.4	4.8
Cayo	19.3	2.3	23.2	1.7	11.8	3.1
Stann Creek	23.9	8.0	22.3	3.5	18.4	3.9
Toledo	14.7	4.0	11.9	2.7	25.1	4.4

Source: Registrar General's Office and Ministry of Health, 2001-2003

b. Table 7 indicates that immunization levels are usually well above 90% in the four key areas for the three-year period under observation with preliminary figures for 2003 being above 95% for vaccination coverage for the major areas.

<b>Table 8</b> <b>Belize: Immunization Rates</b>			
	2001	2002 revised	2003 preliminary
Measles, Mumps & Rubella	93.2	88.3	95.8
Diphtheria, Whooping Cough & Tetanus	96.3	88.7	95.8
Poliomyelitis	96.2	93.0	95.1
Tuberculosis	97.9	96.2	98.9

Source: Planning Unit, Ministry of Health

d. Data on HIV/AIDS is not readily available on the age group 0-17, however from Table 8 it can be observed that most AIDS cases (around 84%) are diagnosed in persons over the age of 19 years with the Belize District having close to 60% or more of the diagnosed AIDS cases. As expected the number of diagnosed HIV cases far exceed the number of diagnosed AIDS cases and it is expected that the distribution patterns are the same. According to the National AIDS Commission women between the ages of 14 and 44 are the group with highest infection rates. Over time this factor will undoubtedly influence the infection rate among newborns as infected mothers pass on the HIV virus to their unborn child during pregnancy.

Table 9 Belize: Confirmed AIDS Cases Among the Total Population						
Group	2001		2002		2003	
Country (TOTAL) - AIDS	72		109		102	
Country (TOTAL) – HIV	330		431		447	
AIDS	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Sex</u>						
Male	41	56.9	64	58.7	54	52.9
Female	31	43.1	45	41.3	48	47.1
<u>Age group</u>						
<1	2	2.8	8	7.3	1	1.0
1-9	3	4.2	6	5.5	3	2.9
10-19	3	4.2	3	2.8	2	2.0
20-49	54	75	78	71.6	75	73.5
50+	10	13.9	13	11.9	18	17.6
Unknown	-	-	1	0.9	3	2.9
<u>District</u>						
Corozal	2	2.8	1	0.9	3	2.9
Orange Walk	9	12.5	5	4.6	4	3.9
Belize	42	58.3	73	67.0	62	60.8
Cayo	5	6.9	11	10.1	14	13.7
Stann Creek	13	18.1	17	15.6	19	18.6
Toledo	1	1.4	2	1.8	0	0.0

Source: Ministry of Health's Central Medical Laboratory & Planning Unit, 2001-2003

6. With reference to child abuse, please provide disaggregated data (by age, gender, ethnic groups and types of violations reported) covering the years 2001, 2002, and 2003 on the:

- number of child abuse cases reported;
- number and percentage of reports which have resulted in either a court decision or other types of follow-up;
- average duration of the case from the time of reporting to a court decision;
- number and proportion of victims that have received counseling and assistance in recovery.

a. Previous to 2002 only data for the Belize District<sup>4</sup> was compiled and tabulated. Refer to Table 9. With the growing awareness of child abuse due to the work of both government and non-government agencies there continues to be an overall increase in the number of reported cases. However, further training and resources need to be dedicated to the data collection process to ensure reliability and completeness as well as disaggregating according to important categories. This will better guide the decision-making process of the NCFC and the MHD.

As can be observed the Belize District accounted for around two-thirds of all reported cases of child abuse with the Toledo District accounting for less than 4%. While the Toledo district is the least

<sup>4</sup> A total of 601 cases were reported for the Belize District in 2001.

populated district the distribution of the population and the terrain would make it difficult to follow-up on reported cases and to detect unreported ones. In all three years under consideration *neglect* was the most common type of abuse reported followed by *sexual* abuse and *physical* abuse in that order. Cases of emotional abuse are far fewer probably due to fact that it is more difficult to detect and confirm.

Observations made on the Belize District data indicate that more cases of abuse are reported for boys than for girls. The difference was more pronounced in 2003, and 2004 seems to be following the same trend. Further investigation would need to be carried out in order to determine whether there is under-reporting of abuse of female children or whether the statistics truly reflect what is happening. According to the available data, abuse is more likely to be reported for children in the age groups 5-9 and 10-14. This makes sense since children of this age are more “visible” being less likely to be confined strictly to the home.

Table 10 Belize: Child Abuse Cases – Under 18 <sup>1</sup> Years by Selected Characteristics						
Group	2002		2003		2004 <sup>2</sup>	
Population < 18 years	122,496		126,785		128,115	
Male	62,287		64,472		64,505	
Female	60,209		62,313		63,610	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Child Abuse Cases (Country)</u>	1140	100.0	1269	100.0	826	100.0
<u>District</u>						
Corozal	70	6.0	98	4.7	n/a	n/a
Orange Walk	67	6.3	60	7.7	n/a	n/a
Belize	760	66.1	815	64.2	826	100.0
Cayo	135	12.1	185	14.6	n/a	n/a
Stann Creek	66	5.9	65	5.1	n/a	n/a
Toledo	42	3.8	46	3.6	n/a	n/a
<u>Type of Abuse<sup>3</sup></u>						
Sexual Abuse	284	25.4	336	26.5	217	26.3
Physical Abuse	206	18.4	278	21.9	165	20.0
Neglect	437	39.0	475	37.4	265	32.1
Emotional Abuse	51	4.6	36	2.8	31	3.8
Abandonment	119	10.6	126	9.9	141	17.1
Wandering	23	2.1	18	1.4	7	0.8
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Child Abuse Cases (Belize District Only)</u>	760	100.0	815	100.0	826	100.0
<u>Sex</u>						
Male	393	51.7	474	58.2	484	58.6
Female	367	48.3	341	41.8	342	41.4
<u>Age group</u>						
<1	40	5.3	33	4.1	37	4.5
1-4	148	19.5	179	22.0	145	17.5
5-9	181	23.8	199	24.4	228	27.7
10-14	191	25.1	225	27.5	219	26.5
15-17	50	6.6	84	10.3	81	9.8
Unknown	150	19.7	95	11.7	116	14.0
<u>Type of Abuse</u>						
Sexual Abuse	171	22.5	214	26.3	217	26.3
Physical Abuse	122	16.1	161	19.8	165	20.0
Neglect	324	42.6	324	39.8	264	32.0
Emotional Abuse	33	4.3	21	2.6	32	3.9
Abandonment	100	13.2	84	10.3	141	17.1
Wandering	10	1.3	10	1.2	7	0.8

Source: Child Protection Services, Ministry of Human Development, Unpublished data

<sup>1</sup> Data includes a small number of cases referring to persons 18-24 years old that could not be separated out (2002 includes 6 cases, 2003 includes 9 cases, 2004 includes 7)

<sup>2</sup> Ending October 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Excludes 20 cases not categorized

n/a - not available

b. Although the Department of Human Services indicated that the majority of cases do not go to court, they cautioned that the data below does not include cases that are still open. Examples of how cases not going to court could have been resolved are through referrals to other agencies, development of care plans such as parenting classes, and assistance in job seeking in instances where the economic situation of the home is the main concern. Supervisory and interim care orders are instances in which the court gave the Department of Human Services the authority to visit and monitor the progress of victims and their families. Full care orders refer to where the child is physically removed from the home and placed in foster care be it with a relative or institution. Full custody refers to when parental rights are terminated and steps are taken to provide a permanent alternative.

Unlike family court cases where the social worker takes the victim through the system, cases heard in the Magistracy courts are considered criminal in nature and are dealt with by the police. The Department of Human Services of the Ministry of Human Development only provides support. One of the weaknesses in this system is that there are no systematic links between the Magistracy and Department of Human Services hence feedback on the outcome of cases heard in the Magistracy has to be actively sought by Department of Human Services.

<b>Table 11</b> <b>Belize: Child Abuse Cases Resulting in a Court Decision or Other Type of Referral</b> <b>(Belize District)</b>			
<b>Group</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004<sup>1</sup></b>
Child Abuse Cases (Belize District)	760	815	826
<u>Type of Order – Family Court</u>			
Interim Supervisory	0	2	6
Supervisory	2	9	2
Interim Care Order	1	9	13
Care Order	16	16	4
Full Custody	23	5	4
<u>Disposition – Magistracy</u>			
Bail	7	14	12
Remanded	3	5	7
Dismissed	3	3	-
Acquittal	2	0	-
Guilty	1	6	-

Source: Source: Child Protection Services, Ministry of Human Development

<sup>1</sup> Ending October 2004

c. According to Child Protection Services of the MHD the court allows a maximum of three years to work with a family but the actual time spent on each case varies considerably. Supervising of children in the

home is generally under a one year Supervisory Order while unsubstantiated but suspected cases are normally monitored 3-6 months. Criminal cases are subject to the police and prosecutors and generally take between one and two years to be heard. Data to substantiate the implementation of policies on this subject is not readily available and would require further investigation and cross-referencing with police and judiciary records.

d. The Ministry of Human Development operates a Counseling Centre however, statistics are not available on how many of those helped were child abuse victims. During 2003 some of the severe constraints under which the Centre was operating was relieved by the addition of a trained counselor and the relocation of the center itself. As a result it was able to provide training provided to social workers, schools and organizations involved in this type of activity.

7. With reference to the right to education, please provide disaggregated statistical data (by gender, age groups, if possible ethnic groups, urban and rural areas, immigrant children) covering the years 2001, 2002, 2003 in percentage of the relevant age group on the:

- a. rates of literacy, below and over 18 years;
- b. rate of enrolment in pre-primary schools, primary schools and in secondary schools;
- c. percentage of children completing primary and secondary education;
- d. number of children in private schools;
- e. ratio teacher per children and number of children per class.

a. Literacy data is not available for 2001 –2003, however given that literacy rates are not expected to vary from one year to the next to any significant extent, the years available (1991, 1996 and 2000) may provide a better indication of the literacy rates of the Belizean population. Furthermore, literacy rates are only calculated for the population 14 years and over since compulsory school age is up to age 14. A school dropout of age 14 or over is not likely to return to the formal academic school system. As indicated in Table 11, Belize's literacy rate increased from 70.3 to 76.5 in 2000 with no substantial difference by sex at any point in time.

However, the disparity by district is considerable. The Belize District has maintained the highest literacy rate for the nine-year period under consideration with the Toledo maintaining the lowest. The difference in rates in 1991 for these two districts was approximately 25 percentage points and in 2000 this difference was almost 29 percentage points. A combination of high availability and accessibility to primary schools and immigration from the other districts of the better-educated population for employment reasons would contribute to the Belize District's high literacy rate. The Toledo District with its high dependence on subsistence agriculture and lack of alternative employment requiring higher levels of education would experience difficulty retaining its educated population. The remaining four districts have experienced more improvement in their literacy rates than the Toledo District, however, there is still a wide gap to be closed between the Belize District and the rest of the country.

Literacy rates by age-group for 2000 confirm that the importance placed on education has increased and that more persons are exercising their right to an education as indicated by the gradual increase in literacy rates from the younger age groups to the older age-groups for that year.

<b>Table 12</b> <b>Belize: Literacy Rates<sup>1</sup> - Population 14 Years and Over by Selected Characteristics</b>			
<b>Group</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2000</b>
Country (TOTAL)	70.3	75.1	76.5
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	70.3	74.9	76.1
Female	70.3	75.3	76.9
<u>Age group</u>			
Age 14	N/a	n/a	69.1
15-19	N/a	n/a	84.4
20-29	N/a	n/a	82.3
30-39	N/a	n/a	74.4
40-49	N/a	n/a	74.4
50-59	N/a	n/a	69.4
60-69	N/a	n/a	61.1
70-74	N/a	n/a	55.4
75+	N/a	n/a	49.3
<u>District</u>			
Corozal	62.7	63.2	72.0
Orange Walk	65.0	71.7	74.6
Belize	85.9	91.9	89.6
Cayo	63.1	68.3	69.8
Stann Creek	63.0	70.4	75.0
Toledo	60.6	58.9	61.9

Source: 1996 National Literacy Survey and 1991 & 2000 Population Census

<sup>1</sup> Definition based on formal education where persons are considered literate if they have a minimum of seven years of primary level education.

n/a- not available

b. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) plays a strong regulatory and monitory role through its Preschool Unit. This unit is responsible for developing and improving the preschool curriculum and offers in-service training for managers of the preschools and teachers. The MOES does not provide substantial financial assistance to the preschools leaving most of the funding for teacher salaries, teaching aids, and infrastructure to the schools making funding a major problem for most existing preschools. It should be noted that on joining, most preschool teachers have no formal teacher training and experience. Undoubtedly this affects the quality of the teaching even though the Preschool Unit does try to offset this by providing some in-service training. Most pre-schools continue to operate in the Belize District, 44 out of a total of 102 during the school year 2003/2004, and the least, four, operating in the Toledo District which has the largest number of villages located in remote and inaccessible areas. Around a half of all preschools are private and the balanced classified as community based. As Table 12 indicates less than a quarter of all pre-primary age children attend school. The MOES, with funding from UNICEF, runs summer preschools for children who would be entering primary in the upcoming school year. Areas with the lowest coverage such as the Toledo district are targeted. For the preschool coverage to increase significantly the MOES will have to expand its definition of basic education to include preschool level and so undertake a larger role in financing the provision of the service and improvement in its quality.

Primary school enrollment has been maintained around 90% for the three years under observation compared to secondary enrollment that has been around a half of that figure for the same time period. Well over a half of the Ministry of Education's total budget is allocated to primary school education although around 90% of recurrent expenditure goes towards salaries for teachers and education personnel leaving little for materials, equipment, in-service training and regular supervision of schools. There is an extensive network of primary schools throughout the country with only a small percentage being completely private. Over half of the primary schools are located in rural areas due to the fact that around a half of Belize's primary school population is scattered over many small communities in rural areas of the country. In contrast, high schools are mostly located in urban areas and can only accommodate a limited number of students. It is not possible to calculate enrollment rates at the district level since mid-year population estimates by age group are not available at the district level. However, enrollment rates by sex for secondary schools reveals that girls are more likely to be enrolled at that level than boys. This contrasts with pre-primary and primary enrollment rates that indicate no difference in rates by sex.

Table 13 Belize: Enrollment Rates – Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary (Country)			
Group	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
<u>Preschool</u>	23.2	23.9	23.1
Male	22.8	23.1	23.0
Female	23.5	24.8	23.2
<u>Primary</u>	89.3	91.5	91.6
Male	89.9	91.9	92.1
Female	88.6	91.0	91.1
<u>Secondary</u>	44.4	45.6	46.3
Male	42.9	43.8	43.8
Female	45.9	47.4	48.9

Source: Estimated for this document based on Ministry of Education Gross Enrollment Data and Central Statistical Office Mid-year Population Estimates

c. Both gross and net primary school completion rates are presented since only gross completion rates are available at the district level. It can be assumed that net completion rates at the district level will follow the same pattern as the gross rates. As can be observed from Table 13 the Belize District has significantly higher completion rates than the other five districts. While all districts need to improve the gross completion rates special attention needs to be given to the Toledo, Stann Creek and Orange Walk Districts. Table 13 also indicates that net secondary completion rates are higher than net primary. Data at the district level would help to show if any geographical disparities exist at this level as well.



Table 14 Belize: Completion – Primary & Secondary (Country)			
Group	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Primary (Net) <sup>1</sup>	32.7	35.1	39.7
Sex			
Male	23.8	32.2	36.4
Female	42.2	38.5	43.6
Primary (Gross) <sup>2</sup>	66.4	66.3	69.5
Sex			
Male	63.6	63.7	67.5
Female	69.5	69.2	71.6
District			
Corozal	65.7	68.4	72.1
Orange Walk	59.6	64.4	69.2
Belize	79.3	82.3	84.9
Cayo	66.4	69.7	78.5
Stann Creek	66.0	61.6	62.5
Toledo	50.0	56.2	56.9
Secondary (Net) <sup>3</sup>	45.5	44.1	52.5
Sex			
Male	42.4	39.5	49.9
Female	48.4	48.7	55.1

Source: Ministry of Education

<sup>1</sup> Figures represent the proportion of students entering primary school who completed their primary education within the prescribed eight (8) years.

<sup>2</sup> Figures represent gross completion rates i.e. the percentage of children who eventually complete primary school regardless of repetition.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated using UNESCO's reconstructed cohort method.

f. The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) does not vary much by district with an average of four students more per class in the district with the highest PTR, Cayo with 26.3, and the district with lowest PTR, Toledo with 22.0. It should be remembered, however, that multi-grade teaching still takes place in the rural areas and fewer teachers are trained. As a consequence of these multi-grade classes and less trained teachers, the quality of teaching may be more seriously compromised in the Toledo District. Hence PTR does not reflect any significant advantage for rural schools.

Table 15 Belize: Primary School Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Country)			
Group	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
Country	24.9	24.2	23.4
Corozal	24.8	23.2	22.9
Orange Walk	25.1	23.2	22.4
Belize	25.8	22.3	22.3
Cayo	23.5	28.0	26.3
Stann Creek	28.6	25.1	24.5
Toledo	22.1	24.5	22.0

Source: Ministry of Education

8. Please provide disaggregated statistical data (including by gender, age and type of crime) covering the years 2001, 2002 and 2003, in particular on the number of:

- persons below eighteen, who allegedly committed a crime, reported to the police;
- persons below eighteen who have been charged with a crime and of them those who are sentenced, and the type of punishment or sanctions related to offences including length of deprivation of liberty;
- detention facilities for persons below eighteen in conflict with law and their capacity;
- persons below eighteen detained in these facilities and persons below eighteen detained in adult facilities;
- persons below eighteen kept in pre-trial detention and the average length of their detention;
- reported cases of abuse and maltreatment of persons below eighteen occurred during their arrest and detention;
- percentage of recidivism cases.

a. It is unclear what caused the dramatic decrease in juvenile cases report in 2002 and 2003 when compared to 2001. It is doubtful that any intervention program would have completely decimated juvenile offences in one year and the abrupt drop in the numbers may probably be attributable to poor record keeping. Further investigation is necessary to clarify the data made available from the Police Department.

<b>Table 16</b> <b>Belize: Juvenile Cases<sup>1</sup> Reported – Population Under 18 Years</b>			
<b>Group</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
<u>Total</u>	3,357	109	261
<u>District</u>			
Corozal	11	n/a	19
Orange Walk	70	n/a	87
Belize	3,226	n/a	122
Cayo	25	n/a	24
Stann Creek	9	n/a	7
Toledo	16	n/a	2
<u>Nature of Crime</u>			
Against Lawful Authority	10	0	3
Against Public Morality	76	0	8
Against the Person	598	48	88
Against Property	2,667	59	152
Other offences	6	2	10

Source: Police Department, Crime Statistics

<sup>1</sup> Cases could include repeat offenders

c. An average of 23 males and 12 females were housed per month at the Youth Hostel, a residential custodial center for minors.

9. With reference to special protection measures, please provide statistical data (including by gender, age, if possible ethnic group, urban and rural area) for the years 2001, 2002, 2003 on the number of children:

- involved in sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography and trafficking and the number of children provided with access to recovery and other assistance;
- involved in substance abuse and the number of children who received treatment and rehabilitative assistance;
- involved in child labour;
- unaccompanied asylum-seeking, refugees and displaced children.

a. There are no reported cases of sexual exploitation, trafficking and prostitution.

c. Child labour is not routinely monitored and the annual labour force surveys conducted by the Central Statistical Office only include activities of the population 14 years and over. A special survey was conducted in 2001 and a summary of the information compiled in the 2001 Child Activity Survey is presented in Table 17. A total of 5,061 cases of child labour were documented of which almost three fourths comprised males. It is not certain whether the undercounting of females due to the traditional types of work they are most likely to engage would explain this difference. The figures also indicate that the most vulnerable to child labour are the 15 – 17 year olds, children residing in the Toledo District and Maya and Mestizo children. Almost a half (44.6%) of all the child labour cases were found in the Toledo District. The

Maya reside predominantly in the Toledo District and rely heavily on subsistence farming. This economic activity may facilitate early entry into the labour force. Although the Mestizos make up almost the same proportion of the total they are presumably not concentrated in any particular district.

According to a report prepared by researcher Leopold Perriot (In-dept Analysis of Child Work and Education in Belize, 2003) an estimated 15% of child labourers between the ages of 5-14 were not attending school even though school is compulsory during those ages.

Table 17 Belize 2001: Child Labour – Population 5-17		
Group	Number	%
<b>Population – Country (5 to 17 years)</b>	79,061	100.0
Male	40,191	50.8
Female	38,870	49.2
<b>Child Labour Cases (6.4% of 5-17 year olds)</b>	5,061	100.0
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	3,735	73.7
Female	1,326	26.2
<u>Age group</u>		
5-11	1,768	34.9
12-14	1,449	28.6
15-17	1,844	36.4
<u>Area</u>		
Urban	1063	21.0
Rural	3998	79.0
<u>District</u>		
Corozal	536	10.6
Orange Walk	667	13.4
Belize	471	9.3
Cayo	818	16.2
Stann Creek	301	5.9
Toledo	2,258	44.6
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
Creole	583	11.5
Maya	2,107	41.6
Mestizo	2,042	40.3
Other	329	6.5
<u>Employment Sector</u>		
Primary Sector	2,963	58.5
Secondary Sector	565	11.2
Tertiary Sector	1,533	30.3

Source: Central Statistical Office. Child Activity Survey 2001

d. There have been no cases of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, refugees and displaced children during this reporting period.

## **B. General Measures of Implementation**

1. The Committee would appreciate receiving detailed information on concrete and time bound activities related to recommendations contained in the Committee's previous concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.99 of 10 May 1999), which have not yet been fully implemented, in particular those related to the priority of adequate budgetary allocations to ensure implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of children (para.12), the prohibition of corporal punishment (para.19), the protection against domestic violence, ill-treatment and sexual abuse (para.22), the equal enjoyment of all human rights by children with disabilities (para.26) and the juvenile justice system (para.30). Please explain the obstacles to implementation and how the State party envisages overcoming them.

### **Paragraph 12 - Priority of adequate budgetary allocations to ensure implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of children:**

An investment project being developed presently includes a component on *Rights-Based Budgeting*. The process includes the analysis of present expenditure on which recommendations for changes in the budgeting process and for the earmarking of expenditure on children will be based. The Ministry of Finance is a part of this study and is expected to spearhead its implementation with the support of the National Human Development Advisory Committee (NHDAC) and the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC). The recommendations stemming from this project are expected to be completed in 2006 and to be implemented during the process of developing the 2007-2008 Fiscal Budget. This component of the overall project is being developed within the context of larger project that includes, among other aspects, public education, good governance, and the improvement of the information system. It is based on the principle that social investment in children's issues is the safest form of investment in development. It is further strengthened by the gender based budgeting initiative already began.

### **Paragraph 19 - Prohibition of corporal punishment:**

Progress has been made with the passage of the statutory instrument that regulates children's residential care facilities that serve as alternative care systems. These regulations prohibit corporal punishment of children in both institutions for victims of child abuse and juvenile justice institutions (youth hostels). A crime and violence study was also recently completed by the Community Rehabilitation Department of the Ministry of Human Development. The study examines the way children experience violence and crime and one aspect analyzed is corporal punishment. This study will be used to raise awareness and for recommending measures to deal with this issue. Constraints to progress in this area include the fact that corporal punishment is entrenched in our culture, hence the norms and values of adults present the greatest barrier to implementation of any measures prohibiting this form of punishment, particularly in the home. Another constraint is that budgets prohibit the continuous monitoring of public institutions particularly schools. Awareness raising campaigns for alternative measures of discipline are ongoing but are not systematic and sustained.

### **Paragraph 22 - Protection against domestic violence, ill treatment and sexual abuse:**

A *Vulnerability Analysis of the Child Abuse Protection System* was completed in 2004. This study, along with other relevant existing documents, has been used to look at reform in the child protection system in the areas of legal reform, policy changes, public education, infrastructure changes, training and capacity building. There is multi-sectoral team that is leading the reform with representation from key stakeholders such as the Human Services Department, the Police Department, the Ministry of Education, the Court

including the Family Court and the Magistracy, and the Office of the Public Prosecutor. This approach has resulted in a coordinated effort and facilitated a gathering of momentum for the project. Gaps identified will be systematically addressed, examples of this happening are the proposed amendments to the Criminal and the Evidence Acts. Policy development and training and capacity building are considered priority areas. A draft of protocols for management of child abuse cases and sexual violence against adults has been developed and is awaiting final approval. This macro level protocols will be used to inform the development of procedures at the organizational level. This process will be completed by the end of 2005.

The Ministry of Health and PAHO are spearheading a review of the Family Violence Surveillance System with the intention of recommending that reporting be mandated by law. Additionally, all relevant institutions will be included in its implementation to ensure a more efficient referral system and that the accuracy of the data is improved. The surveillance system review should be completed by March 2005.

Currently an advocacy campaign spearheaded by the Youth Enhancement Services is putting pressure on government for appropriate reform in areas affecting girls and young women. GOB is responding to this pressure and this is adding to the momentum.

It is estimated that the entire process of closing the gaps in the child abuse protection system will take around five years to complete.

#### **Paragraph 26 – Equal enjoyment of all human rights by children with disabilities:**

A draft policy on disabled children has been developed and is being reviewed. It is expected to be ready for presentation to the House of Representatives by the end of 2005.

#### **Paragraph 30 – Juvenile Justice System:**

Progress in this area has been made with institutional strengthening and capacity building through the training of professions on the international standards for juvenile justice. Thirty-five social sector agencies have received some trained in this area. The National Committee on Community Sentencing is planning to do further training of professionals that will include relevant parts of the international standards for juvenile justice.

An issue of concern still exists in that parents can go to the Courts and use the Certified Institutions Act to have their children committed to juvenile institutions for the status offense of “uncontrollable behavior” Hence the child is deprived of his or her liberty without investigation of circumstance and for periods of time at the discretion of the magistrate. Without the benefit of legally sanctioned case review the child could languish in juvenile institutions until the age of majority. In 2004, the Chief Justice issued practice directions to magistrates that children should not be committed under the Certified Institutions Act and that magistrates should use the Families and Children’s Act to deal with children who are beyond parental control. This means children can now benefit from a range of options to deal with “beyond parental control” including supervision orders where children stay at home and the family are given support and assistance, and care orders that would commit the child to institutions but with mandatory periodic reviews of the children’s cases. The Families and Children’s Act also mandates that a social inquiry report be conducted prior to the placement of the child.

The Community Rehabilitation Department has been working on reforming the practices of the Youth Hostel by complying with the new residential care facilities regulations, which are a lot more child-centered and focused. A case management system is presently being put in place and these should be put in place sometime in 2005. .

The general constraints to full implementation in all the above discussed areas include lack of coordination and limited technical resources. The NPA is seen as a means of addressing the problem of coordination

with sector wide planning and coordination, and systematic and targeted resource allocation. Efforts are being made to put social sector professions on the national human resources priority list to facilitate the financing of the training and capacity building of technical resources.

2. Please provide more information on the efforts undertaken by the State party to harmonize domestic law with the provisions and principles of the Convention.

A complete review of the Laws of Belize was undertaken by the National Committee for Families and Children in 2003 to ascertain what laws needed to be reformed to ensure that domestic legislation comes into compliance with the provisions of the Convention. This review is complimented by a vulnerability analysis of the child abuse protection system, which included the Department of Human Services, the Police Department, Ministry of Health and the Courts, completed by the Ministry of Human Development in 2004 that highlights similar concern in the area of legal reform. These two documents are being used to guide the legal and policy reform process in Belize.

Specific proposals have been prepared for legal reform of the Criminal Code and the Evidence Act. The Evidence Act, Chapter 95, Revised Edition (2000) of the Substantive Laws of Belize makes provision in connection with the giving of evidence for the purpose of criminal proceedings and the amendments proposed make provision for alternative methods of giving evidence in criminal proceedings for children and other vulnerable witnesses. Specifically amendments are proposed for Sections 2, 53, 54, 74, 91, 96, 103. The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act proposes to make amendments to reform the law in relation to making sexual offences against children gender neutral and to strengthen provisions on abduction and kidnapping, procurement, incest, the age of criminal liability, and to establish a national sex offender database.

3. Please provide information on cases, if any, where the Convention has been directly invoked in courts.

There have been no such cases. While the CRC is integrated in the law as a guiding principle for the Families and Children's Act personnel are trained that the laws of Belize are required to gain entry into the court system. Hence the CRC is used to strengthen a case, such as in the preparation of the inquiry report, but is not used on its own to make an application.

4. Please describe measures undertaken to strengthen data and statistics collection mechanisms and procedures with regard to the implementation of all provisions of the Convention.

Constraints in data collection have been identified and acknowledged by most social sector organizations both governmental and non-governmental, and possible solutions have been put forward. Financial and human resources limit the extent to which solutions can be implemented. The Social Indicators Committee (SIC) formed in 1996 has now been established as an arm of the National Human Development Advisory Committee (NHDAC) and is mandated to expand its role in monitoring social sector commitments made by the GOB. While it is accepted that the SIC still needs further strengthening it is required to continually review statistical requirement for monitoring and decision making and to incorporate the indicators needed, albeit at a achievable rate, to its existing list of social indicators. There is a concerted effort by the SIC to put in place a national database system using the United Nations DEVINFO software

5. Please provide information on the content of a National Plan of Action for children and adolescents prepared in response to “A World Fit for Children” following the 2002 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children. Please also explain implementation processes, particularly in terms of priorities and budget allocations, and modalities of monitoring and evaluating its implementation.

The *National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children and Adolescents in Belize, 2004-2015* provides a comprehensive framework for actions that aim to ensure that ALL children in Belize live in conditions that are favourable to their optimum physical, intellectual, psychosocial and spiritual development.

It was developed through a bipartisan process that commenced in November 2002. The leaders of the two major political parties appointed three representatives to a Working Group to actively engage in a process of achieving consensus on the NPA. The Working Group also includes representatives from National Youth Council, UNICEF, PAHO/WHO and the National Committee for Families and Children. There was substantial input from technical experts from the public and private sectors, civil society, and academia. The National Committee for Families and Children facilitated the process.

Consensus was achieved on the NPA in June 2004. On September 7, 2004, the Hon. Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition endorsed the Plan in a public ceremony.

The development of the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents was guided by Belize’s national development priorities, as well as by key international instruments that speak to the development of children and adolescents including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Education for All and the outcome document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children “A World Fit for Children.” The document outlines six main areas of attention and their specific objectives:

Education: To provide accessible and affordable quality education that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for moral, mental, and physical development and self-fulfilment so that they can become creative and productive citizens. This area of attention includes targets and strategies to address accessibility and affordability, quality of education, repetition and dropout, literacy, gender equity and equality.

Health: To provide conditions that ensure the optimum health of children and adolescents. Targets and strategies in the area of health address infant and child mortality, nutrition, disabilities, public health and hygiene, adolescent health and mental health.

Child Protection: To safeguard the rights of children and adolescents, especially those at risk. The area of child protection outlines targets and strategies to address abuse, abandonment, child labour, adolescent parenthood, disabled children and juvenile justice.

HIV/AIDS: To combat the spread of HIV/AIDS and minimize its effects on children and adolescents. This area of attention includes targets and strategies to prevention (mother to child transmission, infections among adolescents), care to orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, stigma and discrimination.



Family: To promote the right of children and adolescents to grow up in a nurturing family environment. Targets and strategies under the area of family are intended to address poverty and economic survival, and family strengthening and support.

Culture: To provide accessible and affordable programs that enable children to develop a sense of self and a healthy respect and appreciation for the diverse culture in Belize. This area of attention includes targets and strategies to address creative arts, cultural exposure and expression.

The National Committee for Families and Children is currently spearheading an implementation planning process for the first five years of the Plan. This process brings together all the relevant government and non-government organisations to prioritize the targets, strategies and actions that will be addressed during that time period. This implementation plan will be cost with a view to advocating for the needed budget allocations by the government. The plan will also be used to develop a resource mobilization strategy targeting international development partners.

A Monitoring and Evaluation Subcommittee of the NCFC has been established to monitor the progress of the NPA.

6. Please provide information on the content of the new Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan 2004 – 2009, in particular about the extend to which children will benefit from this Plan.

At this time no Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action has been formulated for the period 2004 – 2009. In 1998, the Government of Belize through the National Human Development Advisory Committee (NHDAC) developed a National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan 1998 – 2003. It was partly based on the findings from what was then the last comprehensive Poverty Assessment Survey (PAS) conducted in 1995. To complement the statistical data, a large-scale consultation process was carried out. Consultations took place at the national and district level and cut across all sectors of society and the various levels of decisions makers, technical personnel and civil society. Areas identified as priority, and which affect women and children in particular, are sustainable livelihood, access, quality and equity in the provision of education at the primary and secondary school levels, nutrition, and support and protection for families.

The NHDAC identified the need for another comprehensive Poverty Study to update the 1995 information and began seeking funds in early 1999. The Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK Government agreed to fund the project and the study was carried out in 1992. Results have been made available and will undoubtedly form the basis for any future Strategy and Action Plan to address poverty.

7. With regard to the establishment of an Ombudsman in July 1996, please provide updated information on the mandate, financial, and human resources of this body. Please provide information on the number and nature of the complaints relating to areas covered by the Convention filed with this body and its responses to these complaints. In addition, please provide information on the Ombudsman's own initiatives taken to ensure the effective implementation of the rights of the child.

The Act creating the position of the Ombudsman was passed 1994 but it was not brought into force until 1999 by a subsidiary Act. The Ombudsman was appointed by the Governor General on the 8 July, 1999

and on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1999, the office of the Ombudsman was officially opened in Belize City. It took a while longer before the Office was assigned a civilian Prosecutor who started working as Investigator. Later on a secretary was employed. At the present the size of the staff remains at three, including the Ombudsman.

Financial resources are as follows:

Actual Expenditure 2002/2003 - \$132,261

Revised Estimates 2003/2004 - \$143,419

Approved Estimates 2004/2005 - \$166,560

The Ombudsman's main function is:

"... where the Ombudsman has reasonable cause to believe that an authority or an officer or member of an authority has been guilty of corruption or other wrong-doing or any person or body of persons has or may have sustained injustice, injury or abuse as a result of any action taken by an authority or an officer or a member of such authority arising out of concern of or connected with the exercise of the administrative functions of that authority, the Ombudsman may investigate the action so taken"<sup>5</sup>

Few cases were file with the Ombudsman in areas related to the Convention. What is noteworthy is the average length of time taken for resolution with Family Court cases taking an average time of 224 days and Department of Human Services taking an average of 145 days. According to the Ombudsman<sup>6</sup>, Family Court cases brought to him for redress involved mainly enforcement of child support. Cases lodged with him pertaining to Family Services were mostly dismissed cases of child abuse. His investigations found that in most instances the abuse cases had been dismissed due to lack of evidence resulting from failure to report the violation immediately after it happened or poor collection of evidence by police or medical personnel.

<b>Table 18</b> <b>Belize: Cases Relating to the CRC Filed With the Office of the Ombudsman – April 1, 2003 to March 30, 2004</b>				
Department	Cases Resolved	Cases Open	Total	Average Time of Resolution
Total Number of Cases Addressed by Ombudsman	231	42	273	-
Family Court	15	4	19	224 days
Family Services	11	1	12	145 days

Source: The Fifth Annual Report of the Ombudsman 2003-2004; Interview with the Ombudsman December 3, 2004

The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents calls for the exploration of the establishment of an Ombudsperson for Children.

8. With regard to the establishment of an Inspector of Social Services Institutions, in 2001, please provide information on the measures taken by the Inspector to enforce the child specific provisions of the Social Service Agencies Act.

The Inspector of Social Services Institutions is responsible not only for the development of the regulatory environment such as the drafting of legislation but also for the enforcement of these once they have become law.<sup>7</sup> Since the submission of the First Periodic Report in 2002, the Inspector of Social Services Institutions has drafted and submitted a Statutory Instrument that regulates children's residential care

<sup>5</sup> Ombudsman Act, No 7 of 1994

<sup>6</sup> Interview with the Ombudsman December 3, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Inspector of Social Services Institutions December 9, 2004

facilities. The Statutory Instrument was passed in April 2004. Since then the four existent facilities have been assessed and made aware of requirements necessary to meet the standards set in the regulations. However, a clear timeline for compliance has not been outlined as yet. The provision for daycare facilities was passed since 1998, however, it is only recently that the registration of these centers has been enforced. To date the bigger daycare centers have been registered but it is believed that there still exists some small ones located within the home environment that are difficult to detect.

9. Please provide further information on efforts to provide training, awareness and information on the Convention to various groups of professional working for or with children.

Although there are many sustained efforts by the NCFC, the COMPAR Unit of the Department of Human Services, and others to provide information to the general public, including children, about the Convention, currently, few programmes exist to systematically train professionals on the provisions of the Convention.

The national university has two human rights courses, one of which targets social work students, that both have a substantial CRC component. The NCFC, with its very small secretariat staff, responds to requests for CRC training for professionals. Three hundred and twenty (320) teachers, nurses, school wardens, social workers and university students were trained between 2002 to December 2004 through responses to these ad hoc requests.

Additionally, the NCFC is currently conducting an eighteen month institutional strengthening project for 35 social sector agencies on project management and a rights based approach to programming. The first three - session module of the training was dedicated to international human rights commitments, with an emphasis on the CRC.

In 2005 the NCFC will implement a CRC training of trainers project that will build a cadre of trainers countrywide with a view towards providing systematic and sustained CRC education to various target groups, including professionals.

10. Please indicate the issues affecting children that the State party considers to be priorities requiring the most urgent attention with regard to the implementation of the Convention using human rights based approach.

The areas identified are:

- Children with disabilities – services, access to technology, meaningful participation in the education system and public life.
- Legislation and policies to deal exclusively with commercial sexual exploitation and child pornography
- Data and information systems
- Bilateral and regional cooperation on child protection issues
- Reduction of the impact of poverty on children and adolescents and the guarantee of basic social services to all children
- Orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS
- Protection for migrant children
- Institutionalization of spaces for meaningful children and adolescent participation

## **PART II**

(Samples of synopses or child-friendly versions produced in Spanish and English will be couriered.)

## **PART III**

Under this section, the State party is to briefly (3 pages maximum) up-date the information provided in its report with regard to:

- New bills or enacted legislation;
- New institutions;
- Newly implemented policies;
- Newly implemented programmes and projects and their scope.

### Enacted legislation:

- 2003: Passage of the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act that includes provisions for children and adolescents
- 2004: Passage of a Statutory Instrument for regulating Residential Care Facilities for Children.
- 2004: Draft bill for Licensing and regulation of Health Facilities including hospitals, clinics and laboratories. It is expected that it will be presented to the House of Representatives in early 2005.

### Policies

- March 2004: Ratification of guidelines for media reports on child protection cases
- September 2003: endorsement of the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the opposition.

### Programmes and Projects:

- Administration of free anti-retroviral with a focus on women and children who are infected by HIV/AIDS
- 2004: Eighteen-month institutional strengthening project administered by the NCFC with technical assistance from the national university.
- November 2004: ILO funded pilot project aimed at the identification, withdrawal and rehabilitation of 75 child laborers working in the agricultural sector and at preventing an additional 200 children from entering the labour market. The project targets indigenous children in the poorest district of the country, Toledo. The project is administered by the Human Rights Commission of Belize but the funding was secured by the NCFC and the Ministry of Labour. A steering committee chaired by the Ministry of Labour will oversee the implementation of this eighteen-month project.
- Safe Motherhood Initiative was started in 2004 and is expected to pick up momentum in early 2005. This initiative seeks to improve the efficiency of maternal and child health services which should result

in reduction of infant and maternal mortality rates. Additionally it should ensure Belize's compliance with the Caribbean Perinatal Norms. The project will be implemented at the national level.