UNICEF and Government of Belize
End of Year Meeting, 22 November 2017
UNICEF’s annual meeting in 2017 was held with implementing partners in Belize to review results and lessons learned from the first year of implementation of the Government of Belize-UNICEF Country Programme (2017 – 2021) and provide recommendations to improve implementation and delivery of results for children in Belize. The meeting was opened and chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs whose ministry signed the current Country Programme into effect on behalf of the government of Belize. In his opening remarks, the Minister noted the value of the partnership with UNICEF in supporting the Government of Belize and partners to take global lessons and transform local action and decisions to ensure accelerated yet efficient and inclusive, sustainable growth and child-sensitive development.

In attendance in the meeting were senior government representatives, the leadership of the National Committee for Families and Children, representatives of implementing partner organizations in civil society, the United Nations system, academic, media representatives and youth.

As noted by the Country Representative, UNICEF’s Country programme was designed to respond to a range of social indicators marking vulnerability to regional economic trends and climate change as well as regional political dynamics and population movements. The effect of these manifests currently in Belize in the form of significant social and economic inequality, geographic, age and gender-based disparity in access to services, and high levels of vulnerability including to widespread exposure to violence in children.

The UNICEF Country Programme therefore focuses on three outcomes:
2. Lifelong learning
3. Safety and Justice for Children

Key results highlighted from joint work in 2017 as well as lessons and recommendation for improvement in 2018 - 2021:
Outcome 1 - Child Rights Monitoring and Multiple Dimensional Poverty:

**National social protection system**
- Finalization and launch of National Framework for Action for Children and Adolescents (Children’s Agenda) 2017-2030
- Social Protection policy recommendations provided and management response acted upon
- New Cash Transfer Programme piloted in BOOST+: 170 poor households supported through intensive and holistic social work
- Initial steps to develop a Multidimensional Poverty Index in Belize
- Mechanisms for child and adolescent participation
- Children’s Advisory Bodies (CABs) established to support the sustainable Child-Friendly Municipality initiative (SCFM), as a critical mechanism for child and adolescent participation;

**Challenges:**
- Sustainable Child-Friendly Municipalities (SCFM): lack of secretariat for the initiative; maintaining diversity in CAB participants (children with disabilities, age, gender, socio-economic background)
- BOOST+: quality, human resources, insufficient coverage and availability of services for onward referral
- Need to strengthen national single registry & information system
- Lessons learned and best practices:
  - SCFM: willingness of municipalities to commit, good practice of including children in decision making processes
  - Importance of building on strategic partnerships including government and civil society
  - Social Protection: evidence based decision making
Recommendations:

- Main recommendations for 2018 and beyond

- Support the Government to convene a brainstorming session around Sustainable Child-Friendly Municipalities to inform scale-up and sustainability

- Continuous support for the development of a Social Protection Strategy and strengthening of BOOST+, including exploring fiscal space to support increase in coverage for Social Protection programmes

- Strengthen partnerships with Ministry of Economic Development (SDG Unit in particular) and Ministry of Finance

- Support information generation and dissemination on child-focused public expenditures

- Support evidence based action for Care for Children (CCD) with a view for scaling up and sustaining this approach guided through implementation research
Outcome 2 - Lifelong Learning, inclusive child and adolescent development and access to services:

Main results achieved in 2017:
- Strong interagency programme for improvement of Early Childhood Development.
- Key data provided on the most underserved children and adolescents to inform targeting of ECD and school-based support services.
- Efforts to support improved water, sanitation and hygiene have combined infrastructure strengthening, evidence generation and communication for behaviour change in schools and for improved public awareness.
- Partnership development and planning initiated to strengthen medical laboratory services in the southern region for improved diagnosis and health service delivery.
- Partnership with NEMO has reinforced capacity for emergency preparedness for response to trauma in children through training on Return to Happiness methodology.

Main recommendations for 2018 and beyond:
1. Document, develop and implement a strategy for dissemination of the lessons learned from the multi-sectoral collaboration on ECD to influence joint programming for other outcomes for children and adolescents.
2. Document and evaluate the WASH programme, strengthen partnerships with the media and private sector and ensure continued engagement and evidence generation involving diverse communities to ensure relevance of the behaviour change communication and faster, cost-effective scale-up of best practice.
3. Continue investing in strengthening capacity for rapid response to trauma and complementary support towards emergency preparedness (planning and communication) as it relates to children as these needs remain essential as illustrated by the experience in the Caribbean following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.
4. Continue investing in capacity building for ECD and developing data collection and reporting mechanisms for services provided at the household level.
Outcome 3 - Safety, Violence Prevention and Access to Justice:

Main results achieved in 2017:
Access to justice has been supported through infrastructure and capacity strengthening through the Child Friendly Courts, Diversion programme for vulnerable children and adolescents in conflict with the law, and public awareness on Legal Aid

1. Child Friendly Courts: Video link introduced in Punta Gorda and refurbishment of Family Court initiated in Belize City

2. Legal Aid Clinics held: Seven (7) by the end of 2017 in Stann Creek, Toledo and Belize districts. A further nine (9) scheduled between January and April 2018.


Successful and innovative approaches to school and community based prevention and response to violence have been implemented in collaboration with civil society partners.

1. Psychosocial and legal support provided to children through partnerships with community-based civil society actors

2. Awareness raised through community services targeting children, parents, and teachers focused on child abuse and reporting procedures

3. Positive alternatives to violence through the integration of communication based programmes which includes music, sports, art, & dance.
Main recommendations for 2018 and beyond:

1. Complement current investments in safety and access to justice with appropriate investment through partnerships to increase human resources for service delivery, accelerate legal reform and public education measures. This will more rapidly address bottlenecks in both delivery and demand for these services and programmes.

2. Document, evaluate and better integrate school and community approaches used for violence prevention and response into national programmes so that they are scaled-up and benefit from provision of complementary services (e.g. trauma support to vulnerable families, parents and or children) to achieve greater impact.

3. Scale up training in schools to address ending violence against children;

4. Provide training for police officers on violence prevention in children and effective support to children and families

5. Invest in sports for development and arts/music for development to create opportunities for engagement of children and adolescents to develop skills and complement violence prevention efforts.

6. Increase number of counsellors available to schools and teachers.

In closing the meeting, the Chief Justice of Belize congratulated the partners for the groundbreaking work that was being supported through the Country Programme in Belize. He urged the partners to continue to serve as “champions for children” and to use the knowledge that the partners across sectors have a shared commitment to building a better place and opportunities for children to convene and share knowledge regularly to improve impact. And he stressed the need to continue to make children’s rights central to advocacy and implementation in Belize.