

# Gap Analysis Report

## Citizen Security in Belize

Prepared for the Innovation in Citizen  
Services Division by:

Jennifer Peirce

**Institutions for  
Development Sector**

**Innovation in Citizen  
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## **Abstract**

This paper presents updated information about crime and violence in Belize, and about current and recent initiatives that address these issues, with an emphasis on youth and on Southside Belize City. The findings complement the 2013 IDB Technical Note on citizen security in Belize and the analysis of the completed Community Action for Public Safety Program (CAPS). The report reviews factors contributing to crime and violence in Belize, and then identifies opportunities to consolidate progress and gaps in services. It makes recommendations for future programs, including a potential second phase of CAPS. The first key area is in juvenile justice: diverting more youth away from the criminal justice system and expanding mental health and foster care resources. The second key area is at the community level: further integrating social services and violence prevention efforts for families in Southside. The hardest-to-reach youth groups who are gang-involved are a priority, and strengthening targeted interventions for them, including conflict mediation, could make a difference. Third, it is important to apply a gender lens to this sector, notably by building gender-disaggregated data and addressing masculinity issues. For monitoring and evaluating interventions, new indicators—in addition to crime and recidivism rates—will help to create a more comprehensive picture of change.

JEL codes: H4, I3, K4, O2

Keywords: Belize, Caribbean, Central America, citizen security, crime, crime prevention, corrections, diversion, foster care, homicides, institutional capacity, justice system, juvenile justice, legal aid, police, public policy, risk factors, violence, youth development

## Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2. Crime and Violence in Belize.....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1. Crime and Violence Data.....	13
2.1.1. <i>Homicide</i> .....	14
2.1.2. <i>Focus on Southside Belize City</i> .....	14
2.1.3. <i>Other Crimes: Police Data</i> .....	17
2.1.4. <i>Victimization Data</i> .....	18
2.1.5. <i>Gender-Based Violence and Gender Analysis of Crime Data</i> .....	18
2.1.6. <i>Gangs</i> .....	20
<b>3. Identified Gaps.....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1. Criminal Justice System: General.....	22
3.2. Juvenile Justice.....	23
3.3. Diversion, Especially for Juveniles.....	24
3.4. Legal Aid, Especially for Juveniles.....	25
3.5. Juvenile Justice Detention Facilities: Youth Hostel and Wagner Youth Facility.....	27
3.5.1. <i>Core Correctional Practices: Training and Implementation</i> .....	28
3.5.2. <i>FamCare Case Management Data System Expansion</i> .....	28
3.5.3. <i>Programming and Treatment Needs</i> .....	29
3.6. “Crossover”: Juveniles in Foster Care and the Justice System.....	30
3.7. Non-Criminal (Status) Offenses: “Uncontrollable Behavior”.....	30
3.8. Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Post-Traumatic Treatment Needs.....	32
3.9. Foster Care (Child Protective Services).....	33
3.10. Community-Based Services for Gang-Involved Youth.....	33
3.10.1. <i>Conscious Youth Development Program</i> .....	34
3.10.2. <i>Gender Dynamics</i> .....	35
3.11. Primary and Secondary Prevention Activities in Southside.....	36
3.11.1. <i>Gateway Youth Center</i> .....	37
3.11.2. <i>Multi-Purpose Social Services Center</i> .....	37
3.12. Services for Victims of Gender-Based Violence.....	38
3.13. Education.....	40
3.13.1. <i>Positive Youth Development</i> .....	40
3.13.2. <i>Post-Secondary Education and Professional Qualifications</i> .....	41
3.14. Data.....	42
3.14.1. <i>Inter-Agency Public Sector Management Information System and FamCare</i> .....	42
3.14.2. <i>Belize Crime Observatory</i> .....	43
3.14.3. <i>Gender-Disaggregated Data</i> .....	43
3.14.4. <i>Victimization Survey</i> .....	44
3.14.5. <i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i> .....	44
<b>4. Current Programs and Interventions in Citizen Security.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5. Strategic Policy Alignment.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6. Key Actors.....</b>	<b>52</b>

<b>7. Recommendations</b> .....	<b>53</b>
7.1. Education, Skills, Professional Training.....	54
7.2. Services for Gang-Involved Youth in Southside Belize City.....	55
7.3. Primary/Secondary Prevention and other Social Services (including on GBV).....	56
7.4. Juvenile Justice: Institutional Reforms.....	57
7.5. Juvenile Justice Facilities: Youth Hostel and Wagner Youth Facility .....	58
7.6. Data Systems.....	59
<b>References</b> .....	<b>61</b>
<b>ANNEX 1: INTERVIEWS</b> .....	<b>64</b>

## Acronyms

BCP	Belize Central Prison
BDF	Belize Defense Force
BPD	Belize Police Department
CAPS	Community Action for Public Safety Program
CARSI	Central America Regional Security Initiative (US Government)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CYDP	Conscious Youth Development Program
FamCare	FamCare Case Management System
GBV	Gender-based violence
GOB	Government of Belize
GSU	Gang Suppression Unit (Police)
JICC	Joint Intelligence Coordinating Committee (Police)
ICB	International Competitive Bidding
ICF/ICS	Institutional Capacity of the State Division
IPSMIS	Interagency Public Safety Management Information System
IPV	Intimate partner violence
ITVET	Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
MED	Ministry of Economic Development
MF	Ministry of Finance
MH	Ministry of Health
MHDSTPA	Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
MNS	Ministry of National Security
MoEdY	Ministry of Education and Youth
MPPS	Ministry of Police and Public Safety
NCFC	National Committee for Families and Children
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RB	Restore Belize
RNR	Risk-needs-responsivity
SIB	Statistical Institute of Belize
SECI	Institutional Capacity Assessment System
SICA	Central America Integration System
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women
WHO	World Health Organization
WYF	Wagner Youth Facility
YC	Youth Cadet Corps
YH	Youth Hostel

## Executive Summary

This report presents updated information about crime and violence in Belize and about government and internationally funded projects meant to address these problems. It builds on previous analysis which reviewed the trends in crime and violence in Belize and the government's policies and programs in the section, and proposes short and medium-term actions to strengthen the government's ability to prevent and reduce crime and violence (Peirce and Veyrat-Pontet, 2013). The findings complement the analysis conducted at the completion of the Community Action for Public Safety (CAPS) program in late 2015, a \$5M five-year, multifaceted intervention funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). As the Government of Belize (GoB) and the IDB consider the potential for a second phase of CAPS, there is an opportunity to continue and consolidate the progress achieved in Southside Belize City (the target area of CAPS I) and to adjust and add new elements for future projects. The goal of the report is to identify gaps and needs in programs and services which will serve as a basis for developing a plan for the second phase, as well as to inform policy and program development by the GoB and other national and international actors more broadly.

Crime and violence remain a major problem for Belize. Despite advances in the last five years, there is a clear need for ongoing work in this sector. Most notably, the concentration of crime and violence in Southside Belize City among young people, especially those with prior exposure to violence and incarceration, remains steady and serious. The phenomenon of crime and violence in Belize—as in other Central American and Caribbean countries—is complex and enmeshed in overlapping social, political, and economic factors. It ranges from organized crime that reflects the geopolitics of drug law enforcement in the region, to local gang retaliations, to economic crimes by people struggling to survive, to family violence behind closed doors and amid a certain degree of social “normality.” There is no single intervention that can fully respond to or prevent all types of crime and violence. Rather, multifaceted and sustained actions that target specific individual, family, and community risk factors show promise. Still, these alone are insufficient; they should be combined with major institutional reforms aimed at minimizing youths' contact with the criminal justice system and improving relations with law enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

In Belize, a crucial challenge is that the criminal justice system is overloaded and overutilizes incarceration, for both adults and juveniles, at the pretrial detention and sentencing phases. The presumed benefits of incarceration—incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation—are likely outweighed by the negative effects: exposure to more severe

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<sup>1</sup> The evidence supporting the positive results of diversion and noncustodial treatment and supervision of youth charged with crimes is strong. Juvenile justice systems should focus on strengthening youth's positive assets and



criminality, acquisition of antisocial views and skills, experiences of deprivation and violence, and a lack of treatment and support services. This imbalance is more serious at the juvenile level, given that research shows that early contact with the criminal justice system, especially detention, increases the likelihood of future involvement in crime. Belize has made significant progress in shifting its juvenile justice system away from harsh punishment and toward more rehabilitation and treatment—including through CAPS activities. There is room to strengthen this progress, as well as to build more housing, prevention, treatment, educational, and reentry services outside of detention settings.

The identified gaps include issues addressed and not addressed by CAPS I. Broadly, they fall into two categories: (i) institutional, legal, and programmatic aspects of the juvenile justice and foster care systems; and (ii) community-based social services and violence prevention efforts (primary, secondary, and tertiary). This list is not exhaustive; it does not, for example, fully address needs for better policing or those in the adult judicial and prison systems. Still, no single program has the resources to cover all the gaps listed.

In terms of recommendations aimed mainly at a possible second phase of CAPS, this report suggests that three overarching elements should be developed. First, the program should focus on minimizing juveniles' interaction with the criminal justice system, by supporting diversion, legal aid, and alternative spaces for residential and nonresidential mental health and other treatment interventions. Second, the program should focus more on the most at-risk youth in Southside, including those already actively involved in gangs and/or those with multiple serious risk factors (especially exposure to trauma and violence). This includes expanding and strengthening existing work with gangs—notably mediation of disputes by CYDP—and conducting more robust outreach and assessments to target the most difficult and hardest-to-reach young people.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it is crucial to connect this work with new and expanded support services for youth in conflict with the law, especially those reentering communities after incarceration. Third, the program should integrate a gender analysis throughout its activities. This is not a discrete activity. It includes issues of violent masculinities, gender-based violence (GBV), and gender-specific treatment considerations in both institutional reforms and new or stronger services. In addition, it involves collecting qualitative and quantitative gender-disaggregated data and conducting analysis and new research with a gender lens.

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<sup>2</sup> This approach aligns with gang violence mediation and intervention models (sometimes called “interruption”), such as CureViolence (United States, Trinidad and Tobago, and others: [www.cureviolence.org](http://www.cureviolence.org)) and Peace Management Initiative (Jamaica), which are based on nonviolent conflict resolution and relationships of trust with gangs. It also builds on Belize’s past successes—albeit short-lived—with gang negotiations and truces.

This report also identifies gaps that are consistent with actions already underway through CAPS I, that is, areas that need ongoing, expanded activities through a second phase of CAPS. In the education and primary prevention realm, there is a need for expanded and ongoing training of teachers who implement the Positive Youth Development curriculum in schools.<sup>3</sup> In community-based violence prevention, services in Southside, such as literacy, remedial education, vocational training, and counseling, therapy, and treatment (especially for serious mental health issues), should be strengthened. This could include a new one-stop shop for services and reducing geographic, financial, and other access barriers. Within the juvenile justice facilities (Youth Hostel and Wagner Youth Facility), the implementation of core correctional practices, treatment and education classes, and risk assessment tools is going well and requires ongoing, robust training, resources, and technical assistance. In both community-based and facility-based programs, the most urgent need is for more mental health and trauma treatment professionals. Finally, the technological platform for improved data collection and management is well established, both across agencies and for case management. Additional training and resources are necessary to help all agencies harmonize and upload data and to produce cross-agency analysis reports.

Some of the needs identified in this report relate more to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) than to the specific types of activities required. A central finding from the CAPS I Project Completion Report is that, due to the scope of activities, using the youth-involved violent crime rate of Southside Belize City as the primary or only indicator of project success is not meaningful, even though it is important to track this trend more broadly. Therefore, additional and alternative indicators that are closer to the institutions and youth involved in activities are necessary, such as shifts in practices, behaviors, resources, and attitudes.

With regard to the juvenile justice system, the most common indicator is the recidivism rate of juveniles leaving the system. Though there is a positive trend here, as noted in the PCR, it is measuring readmission to facilities more than reoffending. At the most basic level, there is a need to track the various categories of readmission (e.g., remand versus conviction, or by charge). At the conceptual level, recidivism in general should not be the primary or sole indicator for juvenile justice projects, as this can create misleading interpretations and incentives (Butts, 2014). When a program or system successfully reduces the overall amount of incarceration of juveniles (as CAPS II could propose to do), this leaves the most serious individuals in the system (i.e., those being tracked); these youth are likely to have worse or

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<sup>3</sup> The Gateway Youth Center, set up under CAPS I in Southside, is running smoothly and is integrated into Ministry of Education operations.

more volatile reoffending patterns. Given this, there is a need to track multiple indicators for juveniles in conflict with the law, including for those who are diverted to noncustodial settings and those who reenter communities after detention. Furthermore, numerous projects and agencies use very similar indicators for their M&E frameworks, and there is a clear opportunity to build a joint database of such information, to reduce duplication and to generate a system-level view of change.

## **Gaps Identified**

### ***AREA 1: Juvenile Justice System***

- **Legal and policy reforms to the juvenile justice legal framework:** Some current elements contravene international standards (UN CRC, UN Havana Rules (for youth deprived of liberty) and UN Beijing Rules (for administration of juvenile justice)) and best practices. The following issues require adjustment: allowing life without parole and mandatory life imprisonment as sentences for juveniles; allowing criminalization of acts by juveniles that are not criminalized for adults (in particular, “uncontrollable behavior”); no mandatory expungement of juvenile criminal records; no mandatory legal representation and social work advocacy for juveniles in contact with the law. *(Not covered by CAPS I.)*
- **Diversion:** There is work underway by the Supreme Court, the Attorney General’s Ministry, and UNICEF/UNDP to develop and implement a full juvenile diversion policy and program, modeled on those of other Caribbean countries. The key needs are comprehensive training for justice officials and programs and organizations to receive juveniles diverted at all stages (arrest, prosecution, sentencing, and detention). *(Not covered by CAPS I.)*
- **Legal Aid:** Many youth end up with criminal charges, convictions, and custodial sentences because they have no lawyer to represent their interests in court. Legal Aid is not currently mandatory for juveniles. There is a clear opportunity to provide government-funded defense counsel (and paralegal and administrative support) for all juveniles. The Attorney General’s Ministry has already conducted a feasibility and cost-benefit analysis for this plan and is coordinating with the Bar Association. Funds are needed to expand the existing office and staff capacity (which addresses only adult capital cases) and to provide training on juvenile justice issues. *(Not covered by CAPS I.)*
- **Crossover between detention and foster care:** A significant portion of youth in juvenile detention centers are caught in a revolving door between foster care and juvenile justice. The GoB places them in detention when their behavioral and/or mental health problems become too severe to be managed by foster families or group homes. This means that very

vulnerable juveniles with no criminal involvement live in close proximity with those who have committed serious crimes. Conversely, foster homes are not equipped to receive juveniles reentering after a detention sentence. There is a need for facilities—separated by gender and with adequate treatment and security staff capacity—to treat (i) juveniles with severe behavioral challenges; (ii) juveniles with serious mental illness; (iii) girls requiring high-security custody (rather than the adult women’s prison); and (iv) housing for boys and girls exiting custodial sentences who cannot return to family settings. *(Not covered by CAPS I.)*

- **Youth Hostel and Wagner Youth Facility:** Both juvenile justice facilities (medium and high security, respectively) have implemented significant new management and treatment approaches, via support from CAPS and technical assistance from a Canadian youth corrections expert. There is a need for ongoing training and implementation support, especially to integrate the new strategies across all categories of staff, including the Belize Central Prison (BCP) (adult prison). The key needs in both centers are quite pragmatic: there are insufficient staff for (i) educational and vocational programs, especially outside of weekday hours; and (ii) social work and therapy, especially those with advanced qualifications for handling youth with more serious trauma and challenges. For the latter group, there is a lack of such staff in Belize in general, so substantial training of entry-level social workers and therapists, plus incentives for recruiting qualified staff to the juvenile justice system, are necessary. *(Begun under CAPS I.)*

## **AREA 2: Community-Based Violence Prevention Services**

- **Direct interventions with gang-involved young adults:** There are quite a few projects offering primary and secondary violence prevention services—mainly job training and sports/arts programs—for young people in Southside Belize City, but many are not accessible to youth already involved in gangs. Moreover, there is a clear need for intervention and mediation in ongoing gang conflicts that can escalate to violence. These cases are beyond the reach of general prevention strategies. The Conscious Youth Development Program (CYDP), under the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation (MHDSTPA) is the one organization working directly with gangs, but it lacks physical space, confidentiality, and low-visibility security capacity (e.g., plainclothes police), and separate areas for active gang members versus youth seeking to avoid recruitment. *(Not covered by CAPS I.)*
- **Violence prevention and other social services – accessibility in Southside:** The emphasis on youth in Southside can have the unintended consequence of social services

projects neglecting a family-oriented focus. This is evident among families who are clients of multiple MHDSTPA services (e.g., conflict resolution, nutrition, parenting, violence prevention, welfare) but must access each separately, for each young person, at different offices. This creates inefficiencies and access barriers for both the institution and beneficiaries. There is also a need for collective space in Southside for trainings, classes, workshops, and community events, both for the MHDSTPA and for other partner organizations. A single facility with multiple areas—administration, client visits, communal space—would address many of these challenges and help to integrate the social services and violence prevention wings of MHD’s work (often involving the same clients). *(Not covered by CAPS I.)*

- **Positive Youth Development (PYD) curriculum implementation:** The initial rollout of the PYD in schools shows promising results and complements other community-based youth services. To consolidate implementation, more schools and teachers need training and materials, as well as ongoing technical assistance. *(Begun under CAPS I.)*
- **Gender-Based Violence: Services, Data, and Research:** Across all sectors and topics, there is a dearth of information and services that are disaggregated by or tailored by gender. Within social services—violence prevention, parenting, gang education, and others—there is a need for more content that addresses the pressures and vulnerabilities faced by boys and those faced by girls. Very few social workers and counselors have sufficient training to provide services for girls and boys who have experienced sexual violence or exploitation. The juvenile justice facilities do not have adequate specialization of treatment for gender-specific needs, or for legal aid, diversion, and/or reentry support services. In general, there is a lack of data and knowledge about the numbers, characteristics, and experiences of women and girls as victims and perpetrators of crime and violence. *(Minimally covered by CAPS I.)*
- **Data Systems:** There is marked progress on information and data systems under CAPS I: the interagency information system and the FamCare case management system are fully operational in terms of technology and licenses. The remaining needs are in human capacity development and political and institutional integration. There is a need for staff in other ministries with the skills to harmonize and upload data to both systems, on an ongoing basis, as well as to work together on interagency analytical reports. The two most serious gaps are between the police information systems (CIMS, CompStat) and the Inter-Agency Public Safety Management Information System (IPSMIS), and between the judicial records (adult and juvenile), which do not currently have an electronic management system. Other

ministries and agencies—notably the Wagner Youth Facility (WYF) and the juvenile justice system—should adopt FamCare as a single platform for integrated case management. The gender-specific data needs discussed above should also be integrated into both existing systems. (*Begun under CAPS I.*)

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an updated analysis of the citizen security sector in Belize, including data, policies, research, and current projects and interventions related to crime, violence, the criminal justice system, youth at risk, and community violence prevention. This builds on analysis in the IDB Technical Note on the sector (Peirce and Veyrat-Pontet, 2013). One significant intervention in these areas in recent years has been the Community Action for Public Safety (CAPS) program, a \$5 million, five-year intervention by the Government of Belize (GoB), with a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). At project completion, the GoB and the IDB noted numerous achievements and outcomes, as well as areas that require further work. More broadly, overall crime and violence in Belize remain severe. Developing a second phase of the program (i.e., CAPS II) is a priority for the GoB.

The IDB commissioned this gap analysis report to ensure that the next phase of the program builds on CAPS I achievements, addresses current needs, complements the current work of other government, nonprofit, and international entities in the sector, and is based on precise and up-to-date data. It identifies key gaps in services, capacity, and resources within these sectors, and recommends policies and interventions that could contribute to meeting some of these needs. This report is not exhaustive; rather, it aims to address the sector as a whole, beyond the parameters of what a second phase of CAPS could potentially include. In this sense, it is meant to be useful for the design of other interventions by other organizations. Moreover, the analysis and recommendations are meant to inform the design of CAPS II, and so the emphasis is on issues that could fit within these parameters. One aspect of this focus is geographic: CAPS I and II focus on Belize City, specifically Southside. Thus, more attention is given in this report to data and projects in this geographic area.

This report is based primarily on data gathered through interviews with interlocutors in Belize (government, international, and nonprofit organizations, as well as project beneficiaries), conducted in June 2016.<sup>4</sup> The interviews include the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation, and Poverty Alleviation (several sections),<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education, Ministry of National Security, Belize Police,<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Economic Development, Chief Justice of Belize, the Kolbe Foundation (which runs the prison and youth prison), the National Women's Commission, RESTORE Belize, the United Nations Development Program, UNICEF, and the U.S. Embassy, as well as several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It also includes data, reports, and

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<sup>4</sup> See list of interviews in Annex I.

<sup>5</sup> Community Rehabilitation Department, Child Protection Services, Conscious Youth Development Program, Planning and IPSMIS.

<sup>6</sup> JICC, Interview with Southside Commander and with Gang Suppression Unit Superintendent, June 2016.

background material provided by these organizations, as well as publicly available documents. The main limitation of the report is that the timeframe for interviews and data collection was limited, and therefore the scope and diversity of interviews is somewhat constrained. In addition, some of the more precise data, particularly regarding resources and key statistics within specific interventions, were not immediately available, and so more general figures are presented.

## **2. Crime and Violence in Belize**

Belize has faced relatively high crime and violence rates for over a decade, with rising trends similar to those in some neighbouring countries in Central America and the Caribbean. Several comprehensive analyses have identified crime and violence as a primary negative influence on growth and competitiveness (Carneiro, 2016). While crime and violence are generally lower and more limited in geographic reach in Belize than in countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, and Jamaica, the small population of Belize means that the impact of the violence may be more dramatic. One sociological analysis estimated that the vast majority of Belizean youth (99 percent) are exposed to some violence, compared to 58 percent in Jamaica, where the official crime statistics are higher (Gayle et al., 2010).

### **2.1. Crime and Violence Data**

Data collection for crime in Belize has improved significantly in recent years, with the implementation of a Crime Information Management System (CIMS) within the Belize Police (Joint Intelligence Coordinating Committee) and a CompStat data analysis system. In general, violent crime rates in Belize are relatively high, placing the country in the global top ten for homicide rates and third in Central America (after El Salvador and Honduras).<sup>7</sup> Other major crimes, such as robbery and assault, reflect similar trends. Nonetheless, it is important to note that because of Belize's small population (estimated at 358,000<sup>8</sup>) and therefore relatively low number of total crime incidents, small changes in the number of incidents can appear as significant changes in overall rates. For example, when considering homicides within Southside Belize City—an area of disproportionate concentration of violent crime—a change of a few reported cases amounts to about 10 percent of the total.

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<sup>7</sup> Within the Central America region, Belize's homicide rate in 2015 was higher than Costa Rica (11), Panama (11), and Guatemala (30), but much lower than El Salvador (103) and Honduras (57), as well as Jamaica (45). See Insight Crime (2015).

<sup>8</sup> 2014 SIB estimate, according to Huggins (2016).



### 2.1.1. Homicide

The homicide rate in Belize for 2015 was 32.2 per 100,000 inhabitants, which represents nearly a return to the rate in 2009, 30.8 per 100,000 inhabitants (InfoSegura, 2015; JICC, 2016) (Figure 2). Notably, the 2015 rate is nearly the lowest in years, particularly compared to the highest rate in this period: 42.5 homicides per 100,000 people, in 2012. There were 119 homicides in Belize in 2015, according to police data (JICC, 2016). This amounts to an average of ten homicides per month, in a country with a population approximately the size of the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (300,000). About 60 percent involved firearms. Homicides occurred most frequently on Saturdays, and with variation by month ranging from a low of five to a high of 18.

Of the homicides in 2015, the vast majority of the victims (92 percent nationally) and perpetrators are men. More than half of all homicide victims (53.8 percent) were between 18–35 years old (JICC, 2016). Notably, male victims are disproportionately younger, with 10 percent between 15–19 years old; no women in this age group were homicide victims in 2015 (InfoSegura, 2016a). In contrast, the largest concentration of female homicide victims was in the 25–29 year-old category (33 percent) (InfoSegura, 2016a). Although the overall concentration of homicides is in Belize City, there is a gender difference in geographic distribution: half of the homicides of women occurred in Cayo, whereas the majority of homicides of men (57 percent) took place in Belize City (InfoSegura, 2016b). This could suggest different types of vulnerabilities specific to women (e.g., trafficking and intimate partner violence) in rural/border areas compared to vulnerabilities that mostly affect men in urban areas (e.g., gang or drug market violence).

### 2.1.2. Focus on Southside Belize City

According to Belize Police data, 34 of the 119 homicides in 2015 occurred in Southside Belize City, which means that 28 percent of homicides occurred in an area containing only 11.5 percent of the population.<sup>9</sup> This suggests a concentration of homicides in this geographic area. Indeed, the proportion was even higher in previous years: 33 percent in 2013 and 40 percent in 2014 (Figure 1).

Estimating a homicide rate per 100,000 residents is difficult given that population statistics are not precise for the Southside area, which is not a formal administrative district. Using an estimated population of 40,000 (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014), the homicide rate for Southside would be approximately 86 per 100,000 residents for 2015, down from 128 per

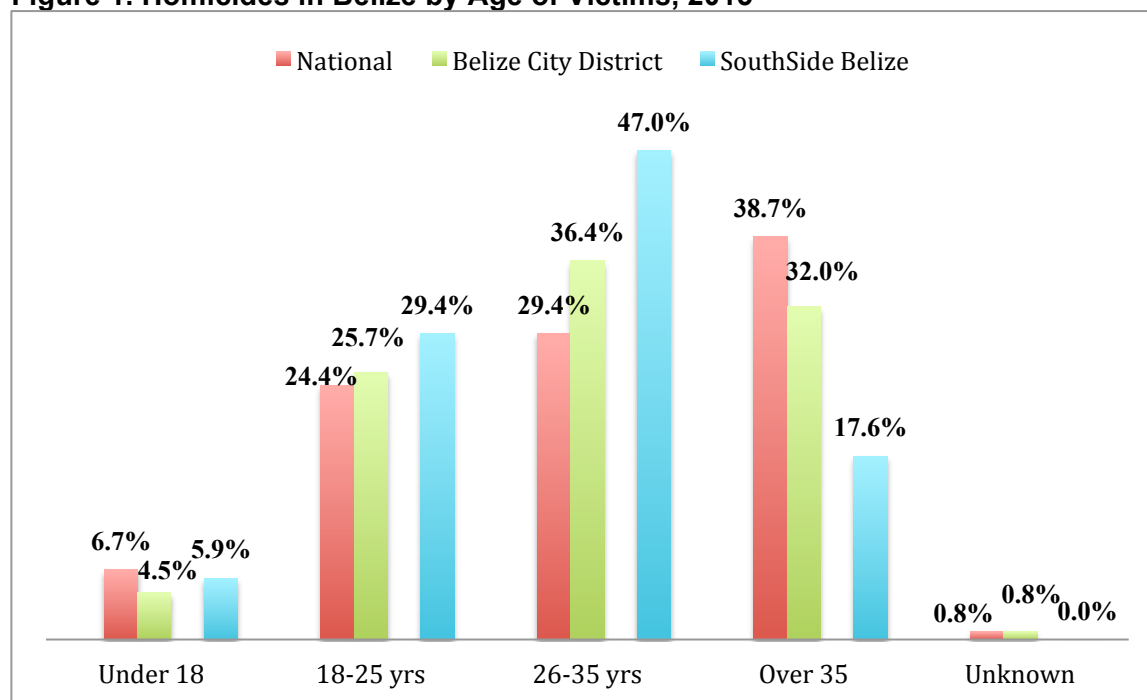
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<sup>9</sup> According to 2010 Census population figures.

100,000 residents in 2014. This is much higher than in the Belize City District or the national rate. Data specifically for Southside are not available prior to 2013, when national homicide rates were at a peak (Table 1). As illustrated in Figure 1, homicides in Belize in 2015 were generally concentrated among young people under 35. Some contrasts are evident in the age distribution at the national level, the Belize City District level, and the Southside Belize City level. (Belize City District includes surrounding rural areas, and so it is not simply the other part of the urban area outside of Southside.) Whereas between 60 and 66 percent of the homicide victims in Belize nationally and Belize City District were age 35 and under, in Southside, this age group accounts for 82 percent of all homicide victims in 2015 (JICC, 2016).

Of these 34 homicides in Southside, for cases with identified perpetrators, at least 13 were male (many cases do not have identified perpetrators). Twenty-six of the homicide victims were ages 19–35 (76 percent), and two were under 18. Of the 14 cases in which the age of the perpetrator is known, four perpetrators were age 16–18, three were age 19–25, three were age 26–35, and three were older than 36. Notably, in three cases of Southside homicides, the perpetrator is known to be between 12 and 15 years old.

**Figure 1. Homicides in Belize by Age of Victims, 2015**



Source: Data from JICC (2016).

**Table 1. Homicide Rates in Belize (2009–14)**

<b>Rate (per 100,000 inhabitants)</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
National rate	32.2	34.2	28.3	42.5	37.3	39.9	30.8
Rate in Belize City District	17.8	21.5	16.6	25.7	24.1	25.6	--
Rate in Southside Belize City (Est.)	~86	~128	~84	--	--	--	
Percent of homicides that occurred in Southside (11.5 percent of total population)	29 percent	40 percent	33 percent	Not available	Not available	Not available	

Source: Data from JICC (2016), using population estimates from 2010 Census.

The overall human development indicators for Southside Belize City are lower than for other areas of the city and than national-level indicators. For example, one study finds the employment rate in Southside to be 43 percent among women and 62 percent among men (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014), whereas the Belize District in general has an unemployment rate of 22 percent (Caribbean Development Bank, 2012). Indicators for other socioeconomic factors (e.g., single-parent households, school dropout patterns, and HIV infection rates) are also worse in Southside than in the rest of Belize City or the country (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014).

It is important to note, however, that this concentration of crime and violence is not uniform within Southside Belize City. Even though most families in this area live in relatively low-income and low-employment settings, some children are more exposed than others to drugs, gangs, guns, and the deaths of family members due to violence than others. Because multiple generations of families are involved in gangs and the drug trade, family affiliations can shape a young person’s options for managing the social and economic challenges of living in Southside. This can lead to compounded or accumulated risk factors. One project that screened for and selected a cohort of teen boys with the most severe combinations of risks found that by age 12, the 24 young people chosen had already experienced three or four severe traumas. Other youth in the same neighborhoods, meanwhile, experienced poverty and some exposure to violence, but not nearly as severe.<sup>10</sup> In other words, simply residing in Southside and experiencing socioeconomic marginalization, while a disadvantage, does not constitute a blanket “at-risk”

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Restore Belize, July 2016. Supplemented by Catzim-Sanchez (2014).

category for youth, families, or the community overall, nor does it mean that residents necessarily opt for crime and violence as the first or only strategy for survival.

### **2.1.3. Other Crimes: Police Data**

The Belize Police JICC tracks five major crimes: homicides, robberies, assaults, thefts, and rapes (JICC, 2013). The trends, nationally and within Southside, for the four other crimes show significant variation. This is, of course, in part influenced by the fact that (i) property crimes often occur in the geographic area of the victim, not the perpetrator; and (ii) reporting of crimes to police is inconsistent and depends on victims' and witnesses' level of trust in police, access to police, sense of potential consequences of reporting, and others. Nonetheless, the JICC data from 2010 to 2015 provide trends at the national and district levels and provide numbers specific to Southside Belize City (which covers more than one police precinct) since 2013.

Robberies have dropped dramatically since 2010, from 147 per 100,000 to 57.1 per 100,000 in 2015. The concentration in Southside Belize City has remained relatively steady, at around 25 percent of reported incidents, since 2013. Assaults have increased since 2010, with the rate rising from 266 per 100,000 to 311 per 100,000 in 2015; the concentration in Southside, however, dropped over two years, from 21 percent to 13 percent of incidents, between 2013 and 2015. The per 100,000 rate (nationally) for theft dropped from 300 to 277 from 2010 to 2015, while the Southside concentration increased from 18 percent to 25 percent from 2013 to 2015. The number of reported rapes is smaller, and the barriers to reporting incidents to police are more significant; both of these factors can affect official data. The rate in 2010 was 12.9 per 100,000 people (21 cases), and this increased to 21 in 2015 (40 cases). It is quite possible that this reflects more an improvement in reporting and documentation, given government outreach efforts, than an increase in actual incidents. Substantiating this hypothesis, though, would require more detailed research on reporting practices.

Given that part of the challenges in youth crime and violence relate to negative or disproportionate contact with law enforcement, it is also important to track arrest numbers, separately from crime incident data. Even though at the moment the JICC does not have arrest data disaggregated by reason for arrest, age group, or gender, the general numbers show a drop: total arrests fell from 4,668 in 2010 to 1,974 in 2015 (despite a population increase). This drop could indicate a change in actual incidents of crime, a change in police tactics and discretionary decisions, a change in data collection and documentation, or a combination of all of these. Though arrest numbers in the intervening years were all higher than in 2015, on

superficial analysis, the trends do not seem to match annual homicide or other crime rate variation.

Further analysis would be necessary to determine any more subtle associations between arrest patterns and actual incidents of specific types of crime. It is more plausible that such a notable change in arrest numbers mostly reflects changes in policing tactics and use of discretion in arrest decisions, with actual delinquency rates remaining steady. For example, if police were diverting people to social programs or mediation options instead of arresting them, this would likely reduce arrest numbers in the short term. Such a shift could indicate traction on a progressive, positive police strategy, since any formal contact with the criminal justice system generally leads to worse outcomes for the affected young person. In contrast, a drop in arrest rates could be due mainly to a change in police data and documentation categories or practices. For example, if arrest quotas were dropped, police may respond by conducting fewer arrests, particularly for minor incidents. This could indicate a positive shift in internal incentive structures. However, a change in reported arrest numbers could also be due to problems with reporting or data systems, which would suggest an internal capacity issue. Each of these potential explanations would require a more in-depth analysis of both the data and the police institutional dynamics. Broadly speaking, though, insofar as community policing and diversion efforts expand, arrests should be falling independent of actual crime patterns, but the difference between a prosocial police interaction and zero police response needs to be identified and tracked.

#### **2.1.4. Victimization Data**

There is little victimization data in Belize, given the lack of a complete victimization survey. A partial picture is available through questions included in the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), which was conducted by Vanderbilt University in 2010, 2012, and 2014. The most recent data from this survey show that first-time victimization (ranging from assault to extortion or threats) dropped from 59.5 percent in 2010 to 46.6 percent in 2014. However, the multi-victimization (having been a victim of more than one crime in the past year) rate increased, from 40.5 percent in 2010 to 53.4 percent in 2014 (LAPOP, 2014). This could suggest a greater concentration of crimes among a certain sector of the population, although the survey is limited by its small sample (100 people).

#### **2.1.5. Gender-Based Violence and Gender Analysis of Crime Data**

It is important to consider both gender differences in crime data overall and specifically data on GBV. In the first topic, the Belize police data show that men, on the whole, are more frequently

victims of major crimes other than rape—that is, homicide, robbery, theft, and assault—but a significant proportion of victims of major crimes other than homicide are women. The current police data do not indicate clearly when these events include clear GBV (identifying the sex of the victim is not sufficient). The fact that the number of rapes reported has increased since 2010 could also indicate greater willingness by victims to report and/or greater capacity by police to document cases.

Another dimension of crime and violence affecting women disproportionately is human trafficking. Interlocutors from the juvenile justice and child protective services agencies in the GoB noted that numerous adolescent girls enter these systems when police or other agencies identify them as victims of trafficking, sex tourism and prostitution, or severe family abuse—not because they have perpetrated a crime.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the heavy criminalization of sex work—motivated in part by attempts to control sex tourism—puts sex workers (mainly women and girls, but also boys and men, who face a double stigma) in vulnerable situations, as they cannot access health or justice services (Huggins, 2016).

Several key actors interviewed for this report in June 2016 suggested that more gender-disaggregated crime data and more emphasis on mixed-methods gender-sensitive analysis of crime information (qualitative and quantitative) are needed to build a fuller picture of how gender dynamics and crime patterns interact in Belize. This aligns with a recent analysis of gender mainstreaming in Belize, which finds that government officials indicate a lack of understanding, resources, and budget to conduct gender analysis, despite a mandate to do so (Huggins, 2016). A key area for applying this kind of gender-based analysis to crime and violence issues is on the topic of gangs. There is almost no information on the gender dimensions of gang activity and context in Belize, other than the Gayle report's emphasis on how notions of "tough" masculinity are highly influential (Gayle et al., 2010). In the United States and other parts of Latin America, this kind of analysis has uncovered important factors about women's experiences and about gender roles (Interpeace, 2013).

With regard to GBV more directly, the rates in one major 2015 survey, commissioned by the Ministry of Human Development, suggest that it is prevalent (Young and MacFarlane, 2015). Twenty-two percent of women respondents report physical and/or sexual abuse by a current or former partner;<sup>12</sup> 31 percent of these cases resulted in injury. Fifty-four percent of women

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<sup>11</sup> Interviews with the Community Rehabilitation Department and the Department of Human Services (child protection services), Ministry of Human Development, June 2016.

<sup>12</sup> For comparison, 19.6 percent of women in Jamaica (2008 survey) and 27.6 percent of women in Guatemala (2008 survey) report physical and/or sexual violence by a partner (Bott et al., 2012).

reported physical abuse or discipline by a family member prior to age 16.<sup>13</sup> Women who reported childhood abuse were significantly more likely to report abuse by a partner in adulthood (Young and MacFarlane, 2015). Social attitudes contribute to a normalization of violence against women in the family setting: 12 percent of Belizeans believe a husband is justified in beating his wife (Huggins, 2016).

According to the GoB's National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (2015–2020), the arrest rate for reported incidents of gender-based and sexual violence is relatively low. Out of 620 known offenses (e.g., rape, assault, indecent exposure) reported from 2008–2013, only 354 cases had an arrest. Regarding domestic violence in general, the Belize Ministry of Health (Epidemiological Unit) reported 417 cases in the first six months of 2015; the majority were from Corozal and Cayo Districts (disproportionate to these districts' share of the population), with only 15 cases in Belize District (which includes Belize City). Of course, barriers to awareness and reporting of domestic violence may influence these numbers. In contrast, nearly half of all reported cases of femicide—43 out of 96 from 2006–2014—occurred in Belize District. This suggests that other factors, potentially related to firearms and/or gangs, exacerbate fatal violence against women in Belize City, while other forms of GBV are more common elsewhere (GoB, 2015).

Services for GBV victims and survivors in the public and the nonprofit sector are relatively scarce. Though the Belize Police have established a Sexual Offenses Unit, there is low forensic capacity and ongoing institutional and cultural reluctance to present such evidence in court (Huggins, 2016). Another example is an anger-management program for men convicted of GBV. However, as of 2015, the court had referred only seven men (Huggins, 2016). The National Women's Commission has identified a shortage of counselors with specialization in GBV and trauma, as well as a shortage of NGOs working in this topic. There is only one shelter for women fleeing intimate-partner violence (Haven House), and it is quite small and with few resources. The National GBV Committee is working with other agencies and stakeholders to improve information and services.

#### **2.1.6. Gangs**

Gangs are a serious problem in urban areas in Belize, and are responsible for some of the crime and violence occurring, including several high-profile recent shootings. The urban gangs in Belize City originated in the early 1990s when deportations of Belizeans from the United States inadvertently exported gang dynamics to Belize (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014). Current crime

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<sup>13</sup> Data are only available for women. It is important to track childhood abuse against boys also, as this increases men's likelihood of both perpetrating and being victims of violence.

data do not provide clear details on what proportion of different crimes are attributed to gang activity.<sup>14</sup> The Belize Police estimate that there are about 1,300 gang members in the country, mainly in Southside, operating in about 21 identified groups. These increasingly include youth and juveniles.<sup>15</sup> Anecdotally, numerous interlocutors express concern about gangs recruiting increasingly younger children, as young as 8 years old. Another dimension is that gangs are often family-based, and so when one leader is killed, the teen sons or brothers are expected to take on the vacant role in the gang. This puts significant pressure on young men who grow up in these families, even if they have access to other services and resources (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014). Women also take on significant roles, though these are less visible and less documented.

The Belize Ministry of National Security and the Belize Police Gang Suppression Unit both cited rising concerns about the presence of Central American gangs (MS-13 and Barrio 18) in Belize, particularly in the Western and border zones, but noted that there is minimal concrete data on this element. One study on juveniles in conflict with the law in Belize estimated that of a sample of adolescents who had been incarcerated more than once (2006–2010), about 13 percent had an affiliation with two major U.S. gangs (Bloods and Crips), but does not identify affiliations with local Belize City crews (Guzman, 2011). There is no comprehensive study on the nature and dynamics of gangs in Belize City. A landmark report on the experiences of violence of young urban men in Belize, by Herbert Gayle (Gayle et al., 2010), addresses gangs, guns, and hyper-violent masculinity ideals as major issues, but does not map out gangs themselves in detail.

There have been numerous interventions aimed at reducing gang violence, beginning with the National Crime Commission in 1992. At times, government actions have focused on improving community development and human rights, while other times more repressive enforcement tactics have predominated (particularly since the 2009 National Security Strategy). In past years, temporary truces and reductions in gang violence occurred when certain programs and incentives reached the key players in the gangs. However, these were rarely sustained beyond a year or two, due to project funding cycles and changes in political leadership, among other reasons (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014). A recent analysis of citizen security approaches in Belize City argues that the cumulative effect of repression-based anti-gang strategies in Southside—particularly by police—have had net negative consequences, and that

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<sup>14</sup> Police data on gang-affiliated crimes are not currently available. The classification is based on the time, location, victim and perpetrator characteristics, and post-incident investigations. For example, gangs may recruit juveniles to carry out hits on rival groups.

<sup>15</sup> Data provided by the Superintendent of the Gang Suppression Unit, BPD, June 2016.



a shift to a more balanced approach, through different tactics and incentives within the police institutions, is required (Diamint, 2016). One well-established model for addressing youth gang violence in the United States is the Comprehensive Gang Model (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2009), which applies a multifaceted strategy that emphasizes socially oriented actions—community mobilization, employment and education opportunities, connections with community organizations—and also includes criminal justice system suppression mechanisms and institutional capacity building.

Although there is no single solution to gang violence in Belize, the first step must be a more detailed, mixed-methods assessment of the nature and dynamics of gangs and their interactions with state agencies—that is, a picture of gang violence that goes beyond crime data alone. Importantly, this includes a closer analysis of gender dynamics within gangs, both the roles and experiences of women, which are not well understood, and questions of how gender roles and concepts of violent or “tough” masculinity shape gang behavior.

### **3. Identified Gaps**

#### **3.1. Criminal Justice System: General**

One of the overarching challenges of the criminal justice system is that it is overloaded with cases and with individuals under various types of state supervision and therefore often lacks the necessary organizational, human, and logistical resources to fulfill all its functions. The strains on the system can be reduced in part by addressing some of the underlying factors that contribute to crime, but this is a long-term effort. Other adjustments to the system could reduce the total number and frequency of cases and custodial detentions, regardless of crime patterns. Moreover, because incarceration can worsen recidivism prospects, reducing the number of Belizeans involved in the criminal justice system may also have indirect benefits to crime reduction beyond just institutional efficiency.

Belize has a comparatively high incarceration rate—410 per 100,000 people, which is the third highest in Central America. Between 2005 and 2012, approximately 7,747 people were admitted to prison in Belize, and 920 of these were admitted more than once (Guzman, 2011). As of December 2016, there are currently about 1,340 people (adults) in the BCP, down from 1,562 in August 2015.<sup>16</sup> In 2015, 30 percent of people incarcerated in Belize were in pretrial

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<sup>16</sup> Data provided by the Kolbe Foundation, June 2016 and February 2017.

detention (remand) status; this proportion rose to about 34 percent at the end of 2016.<sup>17</sup> This proportion, though lower than some Central American countries, is nonetheless significant, in terms of institutional resources and the potential negative effects of imprisonment on these individuals. According to the BCP administrators, time in pretrial detention ranges dramatically, from a few weeks to more than ten years in some cases.<sup>18</sup> Of those currently on remand, over 200 have been in detention for over a year, even though a typical court order permits a maximum of three months of pretrial detention.<sup>19</sup> The GoB is attempting to address case backlog through a system of flagging cases that have exceeded the requested time in pretrial detention, especially if it is longer than two years, and pressuring prosecutors to expedite these cases.<sup>20</sup>

Given that the majority of the violent crime in Belize involves young people under 30, this age group is also overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Many people's first contact is with the juvenile justice system before age 18, after which they transition to the adult criminal justice system. The following sections will focus mainly on the juvenile justice system, in part because GoB interlocutors indicated nearly unanimously that it would be strategic to begin addressing the needs of the justice system among juveniles, before then expanding some of these efforts to the adult system. This analysis draws upon research findings that show that minimizing youths' interaction with the criminal justice system and that focusing on youths' assets, not offenses, have better results for reducing recidivism after release, as well as addressing other risk factors (Bright et al., 2013; Butts et al., 2010; Myner et al., 1998).

### **3.2. Juvenile Justice**

The Juvenile Offenders Act (2000) governs the juvenile justice system in Belize, but there is no single code that comprehensively covers the system. Elements of the Penal Code (alternative sentences), Crime Control and Criminal Justice Act (related to gangs), Criminal Code (legal representation parameters), Indictable Procedures Act (some sentencing issues), Families and Children Act (parental roles, child welfare), Social Services Act (oversight of the youth detention centers), and the Education Act (expulsion and school discipline issues) are also relevant. One aspect of this fragmentation is that the age of criminal responsibility is between 9 and 12 years old but depends on the discretion of judicial officials. A major report conducted by the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative in 2010 recommends that a single juvenile justice code be

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<sup>17</sup> World Prison Brief (2015 data), [www.prisonstudies.org](http://www.prisonstudies.org); 2016 data provided by the Kolbe Foundation, February 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Kolbe Foundation staff, June 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Kolbe Foundation staff, June 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Attorney-General Office staff, June 2016.

developed to bring more coherence to the structure and oversight of the system (ABA, 2010). More broadly, the assessment recommends that the laws and policies governing the juvenile justice system be brought in line with international standards, most notably the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The key changes include mandating legal representation and child welfare advocates for minors in court, removing any laws that criminalize minors for acts that are not criminal under laws for adults (i.e., “uncontrollable behavior,” discussed below, among others), ensuring confidentiality of juveniles’ names and photos when charged or during trial (including a publication ban), automatic criminal record expungement, prohibiting life without parole and mandatory life imprisonment as allowable sentences for juveniles,<sup>21</sup> reducing suggested length of imprisonment sentences, and generally using imprisonment only as a last resort. Some of these changes are outlined in detail in an assessment by the American Bar Association (2010) and by a GoB-commissioned study on diversion (ABA, 2010; Moore, 2013). A committee on juvenile justice reform, composed of government actors and UN agencies, is also formulating options for legislative and policy changes.

### **3.3. Diversion, Especially for Juveniles**

The GoB is taking seriously the challenge of implementing some of these reforms in the juvenile justice system. One of the most significant initiatives is the development of a legal and policy framework to expand and strengthen diversion of juveniles away from the criminal justice system. Experts in this area note that the laws in Belize already permit significant discretion for police, prosecutors, and judges to divert juveniles at multiple stages, from arrest to sentencing, but that this option is not exercised as often as it could be. It is difficult to obtain data on diversion pre-arrest, since these are not registered, and data on diversion at the prosecution are not readily available. While alternative sentences—fines, probation, and community service—are included in the relevant laws in Belize, there is a need to expand the range of options and the eligibility criteria. Furthermore, even when they exist in law, judges do not apply these alternatives as often as they could. According to leaders in the justice system, this is due to a lack of training on application of alternatives, a lack of concrete policies and protocols for referring to support services, and an attitude of risk aversion among justice operators.<sup>22</sup> One study found that there is broad support in principle for diversion among justice officials, but low awareness of options and low resources for implementation (Moore, 2013).

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<sup>21</sup> Mandatory life imprisonment sentences for juveniles convicted of murder has been challenged in court under *Bowen v. Jones*. See Moore (2013).

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Attorney-General Office staff, June 2016.

The U.S. program “Models for Change” links institutions and officials across states and sectors in building interventions for juveniles in line with developmental stages and evidence-based practices. The key principles are twofold: reducing criminal justice system supervision and control, while also offering more services and opportunities for the same youth through other channels (Models for Change, n.d.). Evidence shows that diversion programs at all stages of the criminal justice system lead to reduced recidivism among youth. A meta-analysis that includes studies of 73 different programs shows the recidivism rate for diverted youth at 31 percent, compared to 41 percent for those processed through the criminal justice system (Wilson and Hoge, 2013). A study on diversion prepared for the GoB Community Rehabilitation Department identifies several types of diversion programs that could be implemented in Belize: cautioning (instead of arrest); restorative justice; and conditions and interventions (Kary, 2015).

Belize has a few initial diversion initiatives underway: the First Offender Program with the Police, which emphasizes youth in school, and incipient drug courts that offer treatment in lieu of sentencing (Moore, 2013). The GoB is working with UNICEF to develop a comprehensive proposal for new and amended legislation, as well as protocols, policies, and programs, for diversion of juveniles in conflict with the law. The key partners in this effort are: UNICEF, UNDP, Restore Belize, the Community Rehabilitation Department (MHDSTPA), and the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC). The protocol will be implemented in stages, beginning with a pilot site, and will require integration with existing case management systems in both the justice and the social services sectors.<sup>23</sup> UNICEF and UNDP are working with GoB partners to secure financial and other resources for the implementation of this diversion program. Both UN organizations’ strategic plans for the upcoming five-year period have strategic priority areas related to juvenile justice. The recommendations for specific actions and initiatives outlined by consultants familiar with the Belize juvenile justice system (Kary, 2015; Moore, 2013) provide a concrete and complementary roadmap.

### **3.4. Legal Aid, Especially for Juveniles**

International standards—namely, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Havana Rules (related to juveniles in detention)—require that juveniles charged with an offense have access to legal representation, and that the state provide this if the juvenile cannot afford counsel. In practice, in Belize, attorneys are not available to juveniles through government-funded legal aid programs, as these attorneys are mandated only for adults charged with capital crimes (as per Section 194 of the Criminal Procedure Act). The American Bar Association

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<sup>23</sup> Interviews with Attorney-General Office staff and with UNICEF and UNDP, June 2016.

identifies this as the primary factor violating the due process rights of juveniles in conflict with the law in Belize (ABA, 2010). There are few attorneys working in the legal aid office, and their legal fee coverage is currently capped at \$2,500 BZD.<sup>24</sup> Even for adults requiring subsidized legal coverage, there are consultation fees and insufficient staff to meet demands (ABA, 2010). Beyond the fact that legal aid is required by international agreements, this gap in services likely contributes to the overuse of incarceration for juveniles. Without defense counsel, adolescents arrested and/or tried in Belize are unlikely to be able to challenge judicial decisions regarding pretrial detention, evidence, procedures in the trial, sentencing, and appeals, requests for clemency, and regular reviews of conditions of incarceration and/or alternative sentences. Legal aid, in combination with awareness campaigns and policy shifts, would also improve the complaint mechanism for youth in prison (and, potentially, for adults) (Moore, 2013).

According to the American Bar Association assessment, there are over 1,000 cases involving juveniles in Belizean courts each year. Not all juveniles in conflict with the law would necessarily require a senior-level attorney as defense counsel; paralegals or more junior attorneys could handle some cases, especially those eligible for diversion prior to trial. More serious cases require ongoing accompaniment that may exceed the existing caps on legal fees in place at the adult-system Legal Aid Office. Given this, the ABA assessment, other consultant studies (Moore, 2013; Shaw, 2007), and the key justice leaders in Belize<sup>25</sup> argue for a dedicated, holistic budget for an expanded Legal Aid Office staff for juvenile cases as the preferable option. An alternative scenario would be to cover a portion of the fees charged by lawyers working on a case-by-case basis and/or in a duty counsel model (Saunders, 2015). Currently, there is political will from the key actors—the Supreme Court, the Attorney General’s Office, and the Community Rehabilitation Department—to address the need for legal aid for juveniles. There is also substantial information on what this would entail in practice: estimates of case types and numbers, types and cost of legal assistance required, and a cost-benefit analysis that shows the relative efficiency of a publicly funded legal aid office model versus a pay-per-case model (Saunders, 2015). Given that the majority of juveniles in conflict with the law are from low-income families, the goal of juvenile legal aid, according to the Chief Justice, is universal coverage regardless of financial means, geographic location, or severity of charge. Implementation of legal aid coverage could begin with new incoming cases and gradually expand to provide coverage for juveniles already in detention and/or on a sentence.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Chief Justice of Belize, June 2016; see also Saunders (2015).

<sup>25</sup> According to the Chief Justice, interviewed in June 2016.

### 3.5. Juvenile Justice Detention Facilities: Youth Hostel and Wagner Youth Facility

Belize has two facilities for juveniles with a custodial sentence and/or who are on remand: the Youth Hostel (YH) and the Wagner Youth Facility (WYF). The YH is for youth sentenced to shorter sentences, less serious charges, and/or with a lower security classification; it also holds youth on remand. The WYF is attached to the BCP, though its population is kept separately, since international standards require that juvenile prisoners not live with adult prisoners. The WYF holds minors who are charged and/or convicted of more serious crimes and those who have higher security classifications or serious discipline problems. As of February 2017, there were 35 adolescent men held at the WYF; about half were there on remand.<sup>26</sup> There were 93 admissions to the WYF in 2015, and 76 exits (MHDSTPA, 2016). Of all the adolescents who were detained at the WYF in 2015, the majority (72 percent) stayed fewer than 100 days, while 18 stayed between 100 and 200 days, and five stayed more than 300 days (MHDSTPA, 2016). According to WYF staff, when an adolescent turns 18 but has not completed his sentence, he typically remains in the WYF for the duration of his sentence rather than being transferred to the adult system, except on rare occasions when a transfer is necessary for disciplinary, treatment, or security reasons. But this is a discretionary decision by staff, not a requirement of a youth-oriented justice policy.<sup>27</sup> At the YH, of 100 youths admitted in 2015, more than half (56) stayed for less than 100 days, 26 stayed for 101 to 200 days, and ten stayed more than 300 days. The range of offenses for those residing at the YH is diverse: from riding a bicycle the wrong way up a street and driving without a license to murder.

One limitation of the WYF is that it does not have separate facilities for adolescent girls who require the custodial security level of the WYF. When adolescent girls, due to sentence or behavioral factors, cannot stay at the YH, they are sent to the WYF but reside with the adult women. Although there are few girls in this situation (in June 2016, only one), there is a clear need for a separate, appropriate secure detention space for adolescent girls.

The YH and WYF have undergone significant infrastructure upgrades under CAPS I, including improved dormitory and programming spaces, as well as more programs on evenings and weekends. In addition, the staff at both centers participated in extensive training on core correctional practices and risk assessment methods, led by a Canadian corrections consultant. As a result of this training, there is more knowledge, proactive engagement, coordination, and data among the social workers and administrators of both facilities. The application of the LSI risk assessment tool to all the juveniles in both systems has significantly improved staff's ability

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Kolbe Foundation staff, June 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Kolbe Foundation staff, June 2016.

to organize treatment, classes, and other services in accordance with the needs of the youth.<sup>28</sup> Three key needs remain, however: expansion and application of training and new practices; integration of case management data systems; and professional capacity for therapy, social work, and treatment.

### **3.5.1. Core Correctional Practices: Training and Implementation**

First, the core correctional practices training is underway, including a risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) approach, but there is a need for ongoing training for new staff and more advanced training for existing staff. For example, despite significant progress in reorienting the practices of the WYF, the use of segregation for discipline of adolescent inmates conflicts with international standards, particularly if it exceeds 15 days. Staff need alternative approaches and additional programming resources to maintain safety and order within the facility, particularly on evenings and weekends. In addition, the vision of the Kolbe Foundation for both the BCP and the WYF is that the security staff should share the principles of dignity, rehabilitation, and respect that are the basis of these new correctional practices. Therefore, there is a need for this training to be adapted for and delivered to the security staff as well as the social worker and treatment staff. At the BCP and WYF, there are about 230 security staff, all of whom rotate through both centers. Likewise, the 50 civilian staff work at both centers. The CRD provides social workers specifically to the WYF, and there are also part-time skills instructors from outside institutions. All of these staff would benefit from learning and implementing the core correctional practices. At the YH, there are fewer security staff, but the same need exists. Finally, training on these principles is also necessary for justice officials who work with juveniles but not directly at the facilities: magistrates, prosecuting and defense attorneys, and those who sit on parole committees.

### **3.5.2. FamCare Case Management Data System Expansion**

Second, information on youth in the system has improved due to the implementation of the FamCare case management data system in the MHDSTPA. This allows social workers to access and contribute information about assessments, treatments, other activities, and other social services involvement of youth in care and in the justice system. The technological platform, licenses, and necessary confidentiality and access controls are in place. At this stage, the expansion of the use of FamCare requires active collaboration with staff from other agencies. For example, currently there is a need to integrate access and case information

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<sup>28</sup> Interviews with CRD and Kolbe Foundation staff, June 2016.

sharing across the juvenile justice facilities,<sup>29</sup> so that staff at the WYF and the YH can receive updated information from one another when youths arrive or leave their facilities, as well as information from other MHDSTPA services, especially foster care and social assistance. This system also could serve as a central data source for indicators for M&E requirements for various projects (not just CAPS), as well as for GoB-wide indicator requirements related to youth.

### **3.5.3. Programming and Treatment Needs**

The WYF and YH have expanded the range and availability of programs at both facilities, including through CAPS resources. The frequency of social worker appointments has increased, but there is still an unmet demand for more regular social worker attention. Beyond this, some adolescents in the facilities have more serious mental health challenges, as well as experiences of severe trauma and abuse. Staff from both centers made the point that social workers are not trained to provide treatment for these more complex cases, and there are very few psychologists and therapists with sufficient qualifications in Belize. (One official commented that there is only one qualified psychiatrist in the entire country, and none with specialized experience in working with juveniles.) A further requirement is specialized training for providing counseling and treatment services to girls (and some boys) who have been victims of sexual abuse, by family members and/or by experiences of human trafficking.

There are also needs in other programs at the facilities. The director of the WYF noted that educational, vocational, sports, and art programs are only available on weekdays until 4pm, due to limited staff availability and security and logistical challenges for staff working outside these hours. When the youth have idle time, there are more behavioral and interpersonal conflict challenges. The WYF currently uses more experienced and trusted inmates (adolescents and adults) to deliver some vocational training and academic coursework and to lead discussion groups and other workshops. To formalize and deepen these programs, more staff capacity from formal outside institutions (e.g., TVET institutions) is necessary, including with predictable, multiyear funding, to reduce turnover. Moreover, a smooth transition in programming for youth who move from the juvenile to adult custody area is important, such as online high school courses. This would also enable more consistent course content planning and the possibility of providing recognized credentials to those who complete training.

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<sup>29</sup> Interviews with Kolbe Foundation and CRD staff, June 2016.



### 3.6. “Crossover”: Juveniles in Foster Care and the Justice System

The term “crossover” refers to juveniles who are involved in both the child welfare and/or foster care system and the juvenile justice system, with a “revolving door” pattern. In most countries this constitutes a relatively large group of youth (82 percent in one U.S. case).<sup>30</sup> In Belize, children and adolescents who are in foster care are disproportionately more likely to come into contact with the justice system. Interlocutors in the Belize juvenile justice system underline the urgency of this crossover issue between systems of care for adolescents. When adolescents, especially older ones, do not have placements in appropriate foster care settings or cannot access mental health and other treatments, they are sometimes placed in youth detention centers as a last resort. Some of these youth, especially girls, are victims of abuse or trafficking and present serious mental health consequences but have not committed a crime. Others enter the detention centers for committing a minor offense after struggling in foster care. Another group presents behavioral problems that are not manageable in their families, community settings, and/or foster care or group home but have not committed a criminal offense. The third group of crossover youth are adolescents who first enter into contact with the justice system on “uncontrollable behavior” charges and then become more seriously involved in delinquency. These three factors bring adolescents into contact with the juvenile justice system mainly because there are few alternative placement and treatment options. Therefore, besides considering alternatives to incarceration for youth with criminal charges, it is important to reduce the crossover of non-criminally involved adolescents into detention. One key lesson from crossover initiatives in the United States is that extensive and ongoing collaboration between the relevant institutions is both crucial and difficult.<sup>31</sup> The following sections expand on each of these, in reverse order. (Another category of juveniles who should not be in detention is Central American migrants (“unaccompanied minors”) who have been apprehended and are awaiting processing.)

### 3.7. Non-Criminal (Status) Offenses: “Uncontrollable Behavior”

A significant number of youth in detention in Belize have been charged with “uncontrollable behavior,” which is a status offense under Belizean law but does not involve committing a criminal act.<sup>32</sup> Rather, it is a disciplinary or behavioral problem that has reached a level of seriousness such that a parent, other authority, or police officer has referred the youth to be

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<sup>30</sup> Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (n.d.) Retrieved from: <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/our-work/crossover-youth-practice-model/>

<sup>31</sup> Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (n.d.) Retrieved from: <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/our-work/crossover-youth-practice-model/>

<sup>32</sup> Numerous studies, including the ABA (2010) and Moore (2013), recommend repealing this law entirely.

charged. Typically they are held in the YH. Some enter instead the day program Youth Cadets, which is a military cadet-style program that aims to build discipline, which a youth enters voluntarily without a charge. Although there is an effort underway to review and potentially remove this category of charge from Belizean juvenile criminal law, it remains in place. Anecdotally, Belizean officials say that police are shifting enforcement of this law and refusing to send juveniles to the YH, but there are no clear data on this change. As of June 2016, 21 out of 35 adolescents at the YH were under the “uncontrollable behavior” category (MHDSTPA, 2016). Of all the intakes in the juvenile justice system in 2015, 44 percent (232 out of 522 admissions) were for uncontrollable behavior (MHDSTPA, 2016).

There is no clear solution for how the GoB, community organizations, and families should best care for these adolescents with behavioral and discipline problems. Research evidence, however, unequivocally shows that when adolescents come into contact with the criminal justice system, especially custodial sentences, this can exacerbate their risk of future criminal behavior (Butts, Bazemore, and Meroe, 2010). This is evident in the trends among Belizean adolescents, many of whom originally enter the juvenile justice system on an uncontrollable behavior charge, are exposed to peers and conditions within detention centers, and then later commit more serious (criminal) offenses and reenter the criminal justice system with convictions. Current data do not allow a full analysis of these patterns, but the MHDSTPA does show that at least seven youth entered both the YH and WYF in 2015 alone. Staff at both centers commented that youth currently incarcerated on more serious charges had prior admissions for uncontrollable behavior.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to find alternatives for addressing the behavioral problems of these adolescents without resorting to using youth detention centers. U.S. research suggests that in general, status offenses should not be eligible reasons for incarceration and that, more broadly, residential placements should be reserved as a last resort, after community-based treatment, particularly when substance abuse is involved (Cocozza et al., 2005). According to interlocutors in Belize, government agencies could push police, justice officials, and social workers to ensure that these youth are channeled to other kinds of services, even in the absence of changes to the legal framework. What is needed is a menu of options, ranging from, at the most serious end, residential treatment and housing facilities that are secure but separate from those holding convicted adolescents, to, at the least serious end, community-based treatment and counseling programs for youth and their families.

### **3.8. Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Post-Traumatic Treatment Needs**

As in other countries, people with mental health challenges are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, including the juvenile justice system. In Belize, there is a lack of mental health services and treatment professionals in general, especially for adolescents and in the juvenile justice system. The CRD estimates that about 15 of the 35 current residents of the YH have serious mental health problems. The MHDSTPA has found an improvised solution for several girls who require more in-depth mental health treatment: it is paying for their placement at a residential mental health facility run by the Ministry of Health. This is a positive step for these girls, but it is not likely to be a sustainable solution for all of the youth who enter the juvenile justice system needing this level of treatment. Moreover, youth who are held on criminal charges and are required by the court order to remain in custody are not eligible for this arrangement. They require in-facility treatment by trained staff; neither the YH nor the WYF currently has sufficient staff with this level of qualifications.

Among the adolescents who enter juvenile justice facilities because their mental health challenges are so complex that they require residential supervision, some are victims of serious abuse and/or human trafficking-coerced prostitution. This group is primarily girls, and many present symptoms of post-traumatic stress. When other government agencies identify these victims, they may opt to place them at the YH for their protection. This is reasonable, given the lack of alternative facilities, but it carries the risk that these youth will be exposed to delinquent peers and to the conditions of a youth detention facility, rather than a more treatment-oriented environment designed for victims of serious abuse. There is a need for a separate facility with the capacity to provide intensive treatment for these individuals, including gender-specific and trauma-sensitive treatment and whose staff have the appropriate skills. This facility would not need to be large, since this group is relatively small (precise numbers for 2016 are not currently available).

One assessment of a group of 24 very high-risk young men (ages 12–14) in Southside Belize City found that symptoms of mental health and behavioral problems were widespread: a quarter had severe symptoms of mental illnesses, and most demonstrated high levels of anger, aggression, and impulsiveness. In addition, two were drug-dependent. None of these problems had been previously identified (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014). Though these youth were not in detention facilities, due to their risk factors and their gang involvement, they are the most likely group to have future contact with the law. This study demonstrates the importance of early intervention on mental health and substance abuse challenges, as well as ongoing treatment during any juvenile incarceration. In general, evidence suggests that juvenile justice systems

should attempt as much as possible to provide mental health treatment in noncustodial settings (Models for Change, n.d.).

### **3.9. Foster Care (Child Protective Services)**

The MHDSTPA, through the Department of Human Services, manages the foster care system in Belize, while the CRD (within the same Ministry) manages the juvenile justice system. The staff of both systems know that a significant number of young people interact with both systems. Overall, girls comprise the majority of referrals (58 percent) to Child Protective Services (Huggins, 2016). Frequently, young people struggle in foster families and/or group homes and, as their behavioral challenges escalate, they end up in the juvenile justice system through a placement by authorities on behavioral grounds or because they commit a crime. The other direction of “crossover” can also occur, though less often: when a young person who finishes a sentence or pretrial detention at the YH or WYF has no family to return to, he or she may be placed in foster care (or re-placed). Often, these residential settings are not equipped to help a young person who needs substantial reentry support, including employment and counseling. These two systems already coordinate on an ongoing and informal basis, and the implementation of the FamCare case management system—managed by the MHDSTPA—has streamlined information sharing. As of June 2016, there were 172 minors in the Residential Care Facilities for Children. There were also 18 young women in a group home. Officials from the foster care system emphasize that it is difficult to house older adolescents in care facilities designed for children. However, because there are few available facilities for adolescents, some are placed in the YH as a last resort. There is a need for a group home in the foster care system for adolescent males, and for more space in the girls’ home. Best practice suggests that these residences should remain relatively small to avoid the dynamics of institutionalization.

### **3.10. Community-Based Services for Gang-Involved Youth**

Since the concentration of crime and violence in Belize is most acute in Southside Belize City, especially among young men, there are multiple government and international or NGO projects offering services and interventions in this area of the city. Still, given the level of need, there is always more demand than available program spaces, particularly for programs that are geographically and financially accessible.<sup>33</sup> Many target youth who are at risk in various ways, most commonly those who are unattached to school or employment. Nevertheless, it is important to assess young people in Southside with more complex tools. The Metamorphosis Program, for example, implemented by Restore Belize in 2012–2014, assessed adolescents

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Restore Belize, July 2016. This is the Building Opportunities for Social Transformation format.

using more severe risk factors (child abuse, abandonment, multiple deaths, exposure to violence, cultural sensitivity in grieving processes, fear of death, and drug and alcohol exposure). It also assessed the needs of these teens' families, using the BOOST Intake form (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014).

Although police data showing violent crime incidents based on gang activity attribution versus other contexts are not currently available for Southside Belize City, both the police commander for the area precincts and the superintendent of the Belize Police Gang Suppression Unit note that crimes committed by gangs have different characteristics. For example, shootings are often in response to or retaliation for a prior shooting or perceived affront. Incidents are more likely to take place in certain blocks, at certain times, and involving certain individuals. Overall, the gang-involved people in Southside are a relatively small proportion of the total population, even among youth. However, none of this is systematically documented using multiple sources (e.g., police data, interviews, community knowledge); a comprehensive assessment would be useful here.<sup>34</sup> This would help to plan activities that aim to intervene in gang dynamics more directly. To do so, such interventions would likely need to focus on the people already active in gangs, not just on general prevention of crime or of joining gangs.

### ***3.10.1. Conscious Youth Development Program***

There appears to be only one organization working directly with gang-involved people in Southside: the Conscious Youth Development Program (CYDP), operated by the Ministry of Human Development. This program has had several names and forms over the past 20 years, reflecting cyclical changes that occur with changes in government and the tendency of Belizean political leaders to put new names and partisan stamps on prior policy initiatives. Through this initiative, staff work closely with community members to build trust and accessibility with gang-involved youth and adults. In the past few years, it facilitated a truce among several gangs, providing members with employment and conflict resolution support; this resulted in a significant but temporary reduction in homicides. Currently, it works out of a small office in Southside with a very small staff team. The CYDP staff have built trust with most of the local gangs and their leaders, as well as with community residents and police. With this foundation and local relationships, they maintain awareness of the day-to-day conflicts among crews, which allows them to intervene and prevent retaliatory violence. Often, the CYDP staff respond to shootings or fights and provide options for those involved to take space away from the area to grieve and

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<sup>34</sup> The United States provides one framework for such an assessment. See OJJDP (2009).

calm down. They also help mediate conflicts and provide guidance for building nonviolent solutions to disagreements between groups.

The CYDP also works to reduce and prevent gang recruitment. With younger adolescents, the CYDP provides prosocial activities, and the staff talk with the youth about the realities of their lives and gang pressures. One of the advantages of the CYDP is that it is located in a part of the community that the youth can access (mostly), given the gang territory delineations. Finally, the CYDP offices have security through plainclothes and undercover police officers, which is a result of a longstanding partnership. This low-visibility security allows the organization to carry out its work—both the mediation between groups and the work with youth—with less risk of unintended confrontations.

One of the central needs for the CYDP is to have a separate space for mediation and work with actively involved gang members, separate from the space where it works with younger people who could be recruited. There are significant risks to the mediation process if anyone other than those involved—such as adolescents arriving for other activities—becomes aware that mediation is happening and who is participating. The limited space also puts pressure on CYDP staff to prioritize participants and activities based on these risks, which reduces the number of activities the program is able to offer. Another capacity limitation is that the plainclothes security staff cannot cover multiple activities. To offer a range of options to people in the area, depending on their level of gang involvement and risk, a range of security options is necessary.

### **3.10.2. Gender Dynamics**

One area that seems not to be directly addressed in current work with gang-involved youth relates to gender dynamics and gangs. There is very little information about the different characteristics of girls and boys who join gangs (or do not), and about the experiences and roles of girls and boys once they are involved. The single major report on youth violence in Belize (the Gayle Report) identifies masculinity, in combination with the contradictory pressures of notions of manhood in settings of socioeconomic marginalization, as a major factor in gang dynamics in Belize. Research on urban youth gangs in other areas of Latin America and the Caribbean reinforces this concept: machismo alone does not generate gang violence, but certain versions of violent masculinity, once established, can exacerbate the social role and power of gangs (Baird, 2012). For change to occur, youth must develop not only alternative interests and values, but must also talk about and alter their conceptions of masculinity and femininity.

### 3.11. Primary and Secondary Prevention Activities in Southside

Southside Belize City is the focus of numerous projects offering primary and secondary violence prevention services aimed at at-risk youth, particularly adolescents who are not in school or employed. There is a wide range of projects offered by NGOs, sometimes with outside funding and sometimes with government funding. For example, the YWCA and YMCA offer childcare, after-school, and summer programs for children, as well as educational and vocational programs for youth and young adults. Some charge modest fees, and others are funded by donors or government grants.<sup>35</sup>

The Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation, and Poverty Alleviation is the primary government actor offering social services of various types, many of which are concentrated in Belize City Southside, due to the socioeconomic traits of the population. These services include conditional cash transfers (Boost Plus program), social assistance, nutrition, training and apprenticeship programs, counseling, referrals to counseling and/or legal services, and tertiary prevention programs (such as the Youth Cadets, now under the MHDSTPA). In addition, the MHDSTPA coordinates closely with the Ministry of Education, offering remedial and pre-vocational training, basic literacy and numeracy, and vocational training (ITVET), both directly through government initiatives and through nonprofit subsidiaries. Notably, in general there is higher male enrollment in ITVET (75 percent in 2013), but higher female enrolment in university and junior college (by about two to one). This suggests that the recruitment, requirements, and content of each path have gender dimensions worthy of policy attention (Huggins, 2016).

Another challenge for delivering any type of social service or violence-prevention activity in this setting is that many youth in Southside have serious behavioral and mental health challenges, compounded by experiences of trauma. Many are unable to sit still or pay attention in the way that a standard workshop or class requires. When youth with more serious challenges—who may be those most in need of services—attend activities, this can deter other youth who are seeking a more standard classroom setting. Therefore, there is a need for a diverse range of programs—even when they are of one type, such as literacy, carpentry, parenting, and others—so that some can have smaller sizes, more preparation, and more professional support for the more difficult adolescents.<sup>36</sup> Finally, some NGOs have noted that

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with the YWCA, Belize City, June 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Restore Belize, July 2016.

there is a lack of sufficient coordination and clear criteria in terms how youth in Southside are referred to different NGO-run programs and how their trajectories and outcomes are tracked.<sup>37</sup>

### **3.11.1. Gateway Youth Center**

One example of this coordination is the Gateway Youth Center, funded and implemented by CAPS I and located near the Gwen Lizaraga High School in Belize City. This center offers services to at-risk youth, including both in-school and out-of-school adolescents, which requires staff to undertake outreach and activity planning in new and diverse ways. The Ministry of Education has taken on the operations and expenses of the Gateway Center in its regular budget planning and staff complement, and views the youth center as a model that could be replicated in other areas outside of Belize City. The central constraint on the Gateway Center is staff capacity, since the project requires a significant number of teachers, tutors, mentors, and others.<sup>38</sup> Even though the government's taking on these staff positions is positive for sustainability of the intervention, this shift also imposes government salary caps. These can push the best-qualified staff out of these positions, as they are attracted to higher salaries in the private and nonprofit sector.

### **3.11.2. Multi-Purpose Social Services Center**

One of the major limitations in government services for at-risk youth and families is pragmatic: there is not adequate space for staff, program administration, and events that is accessible to Southside Belize City residents. GoB services for marginalized people are already dispersed across multiple agencies, projects, and nonprofit activities. Many families in Southside have needs that require services from various sectors: social assistance, youth violence prevention, health, education, parenting, and others. There is significant duplication of institutional time, staff, and documentation when families seek services and assistance from multiple office sites, which also strains parents' time and resources. Project evaluations have identified the lack of consistent, accessible, confidential, and safe spaces for counseling, mentoring, and other programs as a significant impediment to quality implementation in Southside (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014).

The implementation of the FamCare case management system addresses some of this dispersion, but this does not help overcome the access barriers. Many youth and families are restricted in their movements by gang territory delineations. Finally, there is a somewhat artificial division in many projects in this sector between services aimed at youth and those

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<sup>37</sup> IDB meeting with civil society organizations, April 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Ministry of Education, June 2016.



aimed at families. In reality, many families in Southside include youth and parents who require multiple services, and would prefer to access the government programs in a more coordinated way. Given this situation, the MHDSTPA identifies as a central need and top priority the establishment of a one-stop shop for social services for marginalized youth and families. This would allow the key government ministries to assess families and youth more holistically, tailor service referrals per family rather than per individual, and integrate data collection and tracking. The center would offer space for staff to be more accessible, rooms for training and mediation activities, and space for community recreation, sports, and cultural events. The MHDSTPA already has legal title for the lot for this center and an architectural plan for the building. Establishing such a center does not negate the need for maintaining more local program spaces and services, including in each relatively small neighborhood of Southside. The concept for this center is similar to Ciudad Mujer, an integrated services center for women who experienced violence, in El Salvador. An evaluation of Ciudad Mujer found an increase in use of services and in client satisfaction with services (Bustelo et al., 2016). Other Caribbean countries are also implementing this model.<sup>39</sup>

### **3.12. Services for Victims of Gender-Based Violence**

Gender-based violence remains a widespread problem in Belize. This includes intimate partner violence, violence against children (both boys and girls, with different gendered norms), femicide, other violence against women committed by persons outside the family or intimate partners, and violence committed in the context of human trafficking. GBV also involves hyper-aggressive versions of masculinity, which is a contributing factor to violence committed by and against boys and men. The Nation Action Plan on GBV sets out the GoB's responsibilities and plans for implementing and monitoring the range of international commitments on violence against women (CEDAW, Belem do Para) and Belizean laws on this topic. According to the National Action Plan, the key areas requiring additional strengthening in services for GBV issues are: interagency coordination; political support for compliance with GBV commitments; increasing public awareness of GBV and related gender stereotypes; increasing participation of boys and men in GBV reduction issues; police response to reports of GBV; prosecutions of reported GBV cases; and services for survivors (e.g., counseling, advocacy, health).

The Secretariat of the National Action Plan is the National Women's Commission (NWC), which chairs the overall implementation of such actions. One relevant initiative recently launched is a new victims' complaint mechanism, which establishes a group of representatives

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<sup>39</sup> For example, the IDB is funding a technical cooperation in support of a Women's City Centre Program in Trinidad and Tobago (TT-T1047). The same planning approach and expertise could be applied to the center in Belize.

of police, health, and NWC in each district. A victim can submit a report of GBV here, and another person can also report on behalf of a victim. There is a need for additional staff and counselors to respond to such complaints. Moreover, as there is only one shelter for women fleeing domestic violence in Belize (Haven House), there is a constant need for more capacity in nonprofit or government-run shelter spaces.<sup>40</sup>

The main initiative providing resources to this sector is a project undertaken through the Central American Integration System's (SICA) regional security strategy, under the second component. This project addresses both violence against women and trafficking in persons (mainly women), and works in all seven SICA countries. It provides resources for building policies, programs, and institutional capacity in these topics, and for expanding care services for victims. In Belize, the implementing agency is the Ministry of National Security. A separate study finds that the implementation of specialized services, such as the Sexual Offenses Unit in the Police, is a step forward, but insufficient forensic capacity and social reluctance to discuss evidence straightforwardly in court and in the press are obstacles (Huggins, 2016).

There are two areas of need in this sector that are not currently covered by these initiatives: integration of GBV prevention and services efforts with other community-based projects, rather than as standalone projects; and integration of masculinity issues related to gangs and violence with masculinity issues related to GBV. On a coordination level, there is need to ensure that improved police and legal responses to GBV cases are integrated into the broader institutional reforms and data management changes in the relevant ministries. The proposed one-stop shop for MHDSTPA services in Southside Belize City could provide a platform for some of this integration across sectors and target beneficiaries. Finally, the female adolescents who enter the YH because of victimization, behavioral problems, and/or mental health problems must also be included in the conceptualization of the beneficiaries of any services aimed at addressing GBV.

With regard to data and research, there is a need for additional data on GBV in general. The 2015 MHDSTPA survey of 500 women in Belize on their experiences with violence—following an approximation of the WHO guidelines on such studies—is an important step forward. Nevertheless, this survey focuses mainly on intimate partner and domestic violence, and while it does provide data on other experiences of violence, the analysis is not grounded in the context of the gang and urban violence of Belize City. There is a need for further research about women's experiences as victims and perpetrators of violence in this setting, both as formal gang participants and as residents of gang-controlled neighborhoods. Other themes

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with National Women's Commission, June 2016.

where there is a dearth of research are: trafficking in persons, sex work, role of community organizations, and women's experiences with the police, access to justice, and incarceration. The NWC collects data periodically on certain topics through the Belize Gender Info project but requires outside resources and partnerships to undertake substantial research efforts.

### **3.13. Education**

At the macro level, major reforms in the education sector in Belize are under way through the Belize Education Sector Reform project (Phase II). One main area of focus of this project is preventing and reducing truancy and dropouts. The project aims to track students' performance in different classes and schools, through an early-warning system that identifies those most likely to drop out; this enables potential interventions prior to the decision to leave school. UNICEF is also funding a study to provide more in-depth information on the characteristics and pathways of youth who drop out of school. From a gender perspective, research indicates that girls have a higher school completion rate than boys (65 percent versus 56 percent for secondary school), and more boys than girls are out of school at the secondary level (27 percent versus 23 percent) (Huggins, 2016).

One of the findings of the Ministry of Education in its vocational training programs is that many young people in marginalized communities often require more remedial and pre-vocational training before they can join the vocational courses. Though vocational training programs are quite widespread, there is room for more remedial training. In particular, there are serious problems with literacy among young people, including those who have—on paper—secondary-level education but in practice have primary-level literacy (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014).

One potential bridge to bring more at-risk young people into vocational training would be through linking the Youth Cadet Corps—which is also known as “voluntary probation” for youth with behavioral challenges—to vocational courses more formally. Another barrier identified is that the Belize City ITVET has generally not been receptive to students who have a criminal record or a past incarceration, even though this is not official policy. There could be institutional pressure and incentives to create room for such students, provided they have the pre-vocational skill level. Ensuring that some of the vocational training in the BCP, the WYF, and the YH is formally delivered by the ITVET rather than by informal or inmate instructors could also strengthen these connections.

#### **3.13.1. Positive Youth Development**

The implementation of the PYD curriculum in more than 60 schools in Belize under CAPS I constitutes a major program achievement. In the first evaluation, some of the outcome

indicators were mixed, which is typical and to be expected after only one year of an intervention focused on behavior change (Hull, 2015). A more basic outcome indicator—whether participants returned to school or work after the program—showed very positive results (84 percent) (Guerra, 2016). The Ministry of Education is enthusiastic about this program and aims to expand it to as many schools and youth centers in Belize as it can. The main resource needed at this stage is training on the approach and the curriculum for teachers at the newly onboard schools, and ongoing training for teachers at existing schools. Given the medium-term nature of behavior-change interventions, ongoing technical support to the schools where the PYD is being implemented is necessary to ensure quality control and to handle any challenges that may arise (Hull, 2015).

More broadly, some project evaluations have noted that some teachers continue to use corporal punishment and aggressive tactics for managing conflicts and behavior problems in the classroom. This disproportionately affects youth who already have multiple challenges, and it can undermine the positive progress of interventions such as PYD. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that all teachers are well-versed not just in PYD as a specific intervention, but also in nonviolent communication, mediation, and conflict resolution tactics (Catzim-Sanchez, 2014). This also aligns with the general approach of Positive Youth Justice (Butts, Bazemore, and Meroe, 2010), which calls for such skills among staff in juvenile justice organizations as well as in youth-serving agencies outside the justice system.

### **3.13.2. Post-Secondary Education and Professional Qualifications**

The post-secondary sector is not the direct mandate of CAPS or of citizen security projects in general, but it is relevant insofar as it produces the professionals who work in the institutions and services of the sector. Nearly every interlocutor in Belize commented that there are not enough professionals working in Belize who have advanced skills and qualifications in the following fields: psychology, therapy, counseling, social work, and law with a public interest or social justice orientation.<sup>41</sup> When projects offer jobs that require such skill sets, there is often a lack of applicants, and/or applicants with only a bachelor-level education. Anecdotally, many Belizeans who do have these skills migrate to other countries for better-remunerated work options, thus leaving a shortage in Belize. While the GoB cannot oblige any person to stay and/or to work for government institutions indefinitely, it does have leverage through the scholarships that the state offers university students in a range of fields. When a student accepts a government scholarship for domestic or international study, he or she signs a “bond,”

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<sup>41</sup> This is also identified as a lesson learned in the evaluation of Metamorphosis project. See Catzim-Sanchez (2014).

requiring a certain period of community service after completing the degree. According to both the Ministry of Education and the MHDSTPA,<sup>42</sup> this rule is inconsistently enforced; many students do not return for this service. In some fields, including law and social work, there is a need for more structured work positions that would qualify as community service. Given the GoB's need for legal aid lawyers and for social workers and therapists, there is an opportunity to create positions that are eligible for and reserved for students in this bond arrangement. Nevertheless, there is also a pressing need for more senior and advanced professionals. Thus, additional incentives and recruitment are still necessary.

### **3.14. Data**

#### **3.14.1. Inter-Agency Public Sector Management Information System and FamCare**

The need for consistent, quality, multifaceted data on crime and violence and on interventions to address crime and violence has already been identified as a priority by the World Bank (Carneiro, 2016) and by the Ministry of National Security (MNS) and MHDSTPA. The data systems established under CAPS I—IPSMIS and the FamCare case management system—are fully installed in terms of technological platform, software, licenses (unlimited licenses for FamCare were obtained via PreJuve/UNDP), and MHDSTPA staff (though not all are under government human resources structures; some are paid as consultants by outside projects).

The first area of need within this information system is to improve and sustain interagency data provision and analysis. Not all ministries that could contribute data to IPSMIS and FamCare do so on a regular basis or with parameters that are aligned to the systems. According to technical staff working in data systems within the ministries and in international organizations, the key barrier seems to be twofold: (i) a lack of political will and clear direction from senior leadership that all ministries should use a single platform for social policy data; and (ii) a lack of staff in individual agencies with the skills, job mandate, and consistency to organize, upload, and analyze the data. This appears to be the case with the crime data at CIMS: although the purposes and approaches for handling police crime statistics are clearly different than other types of information, there appears to be no clear protocol or regulation to ensure that the right types of data are transferred to and from CIMS and IPSMIS/FamCare.

The second area of need is perhaps simpler: ensuring that all the agencies with which youth in social services may interact have access to the FamCare case management system. One example is the WYF: when a youth arrives at the WYF by court order, WYF staff often do not have access to the youth's case history, including previous contact with the law, previous

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<sup>42</sup> Interviews with Ministry of Education and MHDSTPA, June 2016.

assessments and services from various elements of MHDSTPA, Ministry of Education, and others, nor any assessments conducted by professionals.<sup>43</sup> The access parameters for ensuring confidentiality and appropriate access controls are already in place. Another more complicated harmonization of FamCare is with the judicial system. While the juvenile justice system—through the Attorney-General’s Ministry—is moving rapidly on building a diversion program, it is seeking a case management system (electronic software system). There would be many advantages to having a single case management system shared by the judicial agencies, the social services agencies, and the youth detention facilities. This choice remains in the hands of the Attorney-General’s Ministry, but there is a need for more robust discussions and analysis regarding decisions about such data systems, as these can shape data collection and M&E strategies for years to follow. (The U.S. Embassy is funding the digitization and recording of court proceedings in the adult court system; this could be replicated for the juvenile system. Although recording alone does not ensure integration with other systems, it is a necessary first step.)

### **3.14.2. Belize Crime Observatory**

Data collection and analysis capacity within MNS, with a focus on crime and violence police data, is underway and has received extensive training in analysis methods (e.g., GIS) from an international consultant.<sup>44</sup> Staff capacity and some modest software limitations are ongoing needs. More broadly, however, there is a clear opportunity for more collaborative and inter-agency data analysis reporting, beyond simply reporting on crime incident patterns. For example, social services data from MHDSTPA combined with police data from MNS could enable a more in-depth, mixed-methods study about the factors shaping certain types or trends of crime and violence. The US Government is funding some of the analysis of CIMS and CompStat data, but they note that relevant social, political, and economic factors also need to be integrated into the analysis, in order for it to be a basis for policymaking or police strategy development.

### **3.14.3. Gender-Disaggregated Data**

There is a need to collect, organize, and analyze gender-disaggregated data in nearly all sectors, and to conduct meaningful analysis where a gender perspective could be useful. (This is a central recommendation of the recent Caribbean Development Bank Gender Assessment, which also calls for more civil society organization involvement in this process.) (Huggins,

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Kolbe Foundation staff, June 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with MNS, June 2016. Some of this capacity is funded by the IDB, through a Technical Cooperation.

2016). For example, a comparison of case histories of at-risk young men versus young women in similar conditions in Southside Belize City may reveal relevant information about their options, constraints, and trajectories. Similarly, collecting more detailed data on adolescents in the YH could help policymakers understand how and why gender shapes whether young people with behavioral and/or mental health challenges are placed in foster care, group homes, juvenile detention facilities, or elsewhere, and their trajectories after each transfer.

Under the National Plan of Action for GBV, there is some support for gender-disaggregated data collection. The NWC is working on a “Belize Gender Info” project that in the past has addressed topics such as political participation and women’s health; violence and gender is on the priority topic list for upcoming reports. The NWC also produces quarterly reports on the Plan of Action, which could be further integrated in terms of data analysis with other data sources and reports on crime and violence more generally. Moreover, there is a need to integrate these exercises with the regular analysis produced by the Statistical Institute of Belize (Huggins, 2016).

#### **3.14.4. Victimization Survey**

Several interlocutors noted that there is a need for a comprehensive, quality survey on crime victimization in Belize. A previous attempt at such a study in recent years did not reach completion. Given the limitations on police crime incident data, a victimization survey would be an important complement to the data available to policymakers.

#### **3.14.5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Given the number and range of internationally and domestically funded projects and interventions in the citizen security sector in Belize, there is a danger of an overload in data requests for M&E purposes. Many of the M&E plans and results tables for these projects—most notably for UNDP, UNICEF, and YCT projects, along with the CAPS II plans—refer to similar types of data and sources. For example, most draw on neighborhood-level police incident data, program completion information, employment and education status, therapeutic treatment outcomes, recidivism data (which is actually only readmission data), and others. There is an obvious need for coordination and sharing of information, to improve efficiency and transparency and to share the workload. The UNDP is funding one consultancy to develop a coordination mechanism for projects in this sector, and this could also serve as one platform for linking data and M&E issues. Other options include technical-level roundtables or coordinating working groups, joint funding of data sources, and integration of results reporting processes.

#### 4. Current Programs and Interventions in Citizen Security

Table 2 provides a summary of projects currently in implementation in the citizen security sector.

**Table 2. Projects in Citizen Security in Belize, as of February 2017**

Project name	Amount, duration, funder	Partners	Main area / activities	Details and notes
PREJUVE (Comprehensive Security and Prevention of Violence Affecting Children, Adolescents and Youth in Central America)  Regional Project – Central America	2014–17  US\$6 million  SICA (CASS BB1 section)  Funds from UNDP Spain Trust Fund	Executing Agency: UNDP (Country Offices in CentAm Regional, ES and DR, in coordination with other CentAm offices)  Partners: UNICEF Restore Belize CYDP DYS Belize Central Prison NCFC CRD Community Policing / BPD MNS	<i>Primary/Sec/Tertiary Prevention; countrywide</i>  1. Revision of citizen security policy frameworks  2. Institutional capacity for primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention of violence against youth and women (plans, strategies, institutional capacity and architecture)  3. Innovation Laboratory: exchange, South-South and triangular cooperation, best practices	For Belize 2016 Workplan, includes: - Update Restore Belize Strategic Plan post-2015 - Improved institutional plans for violence prevention (focus on youth, children, and women), with UNDP, NCFC, UNICEF - Tertiary prevention plan for youth in conflict with the law, including reinsertion after prison - Standard Operating Procedures and Institutional capacity at the YH - National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents: Violence prevention component (with NCFC) - Youth Success Drop-in Center in Southside + a new drop-in center in another area of Belize City - Core correctional practices, training, programs, mental health care at the WYF
Strengthening the Resilience of Southside Belize City to Enhance Security and Development	UNDP 2013–2016  \$3.35 million	UNDP UNICEF UNEP ILO UNAIDS  Restore Belize Belize City Council  Red Cross Min Agriculture Min	<i>Primary Prevention and Community Development - Southside</i>  1. Environmental security: green jobs, environmental action plan, water and sanitation projects 2. Personal security: addressing HIV risk in youth in Yarbrough 3. Community-based income-generation projects 4. Health literacy, livelihood programs for	- Need more information from Restore Belize on implementation status



		Education SIF MoHealth BFLA YES YWCA CPU Attorney General Min Labour Belize Better Business Bureau BTIA BFCA NICH	youth 5. Primary care facility to address vulnerabilities (e.g., mental health, behavior change) 6. Surveillance system for injury control 7. Address pro-violence social norms 8. Poverty reduction action plan 9. Youth employment strategies and reducing child labor 10. Knowledge generation and management	
Southside Youth Success Project (completed)	U.S. Embassy UNDP 2012–2014  \$200,000	U.S. Embassy UNDP DYS	<i>Secondary Prevention – Southside (males)</i>  - Targets 100 youth (male, 14–17 years old) - Mentoring - Life skills training - Afterschool program - Provided ID for legal ID registration - Established a youth drop-in center - Feeding program	- Placed 75 young men in job positions for two years - Lesson learned: 34 percent did not complete because court cases sent them to detention
Youth and Community Transformation Project	Caribbean Development Bank  US\$7.35M (US\$2.05M GoB counterpart)  2013–2018	MHDSTPA (PEU)  Restore Belize DYS BPD CRD National Sports Council National Institute of Culture and History	<i>Primary and Secondary Prevention: Southside + Countrywide</i>  - Social services for youth/families in Collet, Lake Independence, Loyola (Southside) - Literacy - SCAIS life skills - Community infrastructure (parks, etc.) - Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) in schools - Youth job skills - Conflict mediators in schools (also funded by U.S. Embassy) - Community dialogues - Sports and art - Nutrition	- Extensive logframe on results available - Could collaborate with a one-stop shop for MHD services
Metamorphosis : Resilience for High-risk Male Children (2012–2014)	Restore Belize	Restore Belize MHDSTPA	<i>Secondary and Tertiary Prevention: Southside</i>  - Target: Southside males ages 12–14 w/ single	- Evaluation report (2014) shows promising results in: improved behavior, increased participation in school, reduced violence,

pilot)			<p>mothers, low income, high exposure to crime and violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Objectives: foster resiliency and protective factors; provide adults over 24 with skills for parenting</li> <li>- Peacebuilding retreats</li> <li>- Family assessments</li> <li>- Conflict mediation</li> <li>- Individual therapy</li> <li>- Family dialogues</li> <li>- Parenting sessions</li> </ul>	<p>expansion of pro-social networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More nuanced assessment and evaluation formats</li> </ul>
Youth Apprentice Program	Under Restore Belize, since 2010	Managed by Ms. Dianne Finnegan	<p><i>Tertiary Prevention:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides six-month employment apprenticeships for youth at highest risk or gang involvement</li> <li>- Provides life skills courses</li> <li>- Provides a weekly stipend if participants comply with rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operates in cohorts, two per year</li> <li>- Connected to proposals to implement a CureViolence model in Southside</li> <li>- Close cooperation with the police in Southside</li> </ul>
Belize Integral Security Programme (BISP)	<p>SICA Central American Bank for Regional Integration (CABEI)</p> <p>Timeframe and amount tbd</p>	<p>MNS (Beneficiaries : BDF, BPD, Coast Guard, National Forensic Sciences Service)</p> <p>Program Execution Unit at MNS</p>	<p><i>Institutional Capacity: Infra/Equipment; Law Enforcement</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Refurbishing police stations; provide vehicles, cameras, comms systems</li> <li>2. Improve investigation and prosecution tools</li> <li>3. Infrastructure and equipment (medical, facilities) for government agencies working on citizen security</li> </ol>	
InfoSegura Central America Regional Project	<p>USAID UNDP</p> <p>2015–17 (?)</p> <p>2016 Belize budget: \$176,000</p>	<p>USAID UNDP SICA MNS MHDSTPA</p>	<p><i>Data System – Cross-Agency</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve national capacity to collect, monitor, and process data on crime and violence</li> <li>2. Improve data related to project monitoring</li> <li>3. Improve knowledge management and translation to policy</li> <li>4. Expand access/licenses with FamCare</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workplan includes: sex offender registry; coordination with crime observatory</li> <li>- Workshops on justice statistics and systems; visits to other observatories</li> <li>- Local “safe cities” reporting pilots, starting in Belmopan</li> <li>- Workplan implies that this project covers three technical staff + M&amp;E staff</li> </ul>
Crime Observatory	<p>IDB (TC)</p> <p>\$200,000</p>	<p>SICA MNS-JICC</p> <p>Link with RIC</p>	<p><i>Data Analysis – Crime</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Software capacity</li> <li>2. Consultant on building</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unclear if and how this overlaps / is coordinated with the InfoSegura project. Some items</li> </ul>

	2014–present	observatories	the CO 3. Technical staff contracts 4. Training 5. Coordination with other CentAm observatories 6. Publishing reports	(website, consultancies, technical staff) seem to be covered by InfoSegura.
UN Trust Fund to End VAW	UNTF	MHDSTPA	<i>Institutional Capacity - VAW</i>  1. Empowerment of women's groups 2. Access to legal and other services 3. Strengthen laws and policies on VAW 4. WHO-style survey on VAW	- Could collaborate with MHD on services for survivors of VAW; one-stop shop - Survey should link to data systems
BA1: Prevent VAW and Trafficking in Central America (Regional)		Multi-agency commission: Women's Dept (MHDSTPA), MNS	<i>Institutional capacity and services - GBV</i>  1. Improve coordination on prevention plans Improve institutional capacity on VAW, TIP, femicide (regional, national, local) 2. Care plans and services for those affected	Consultancy firm "MC Consultancy" providing technical assistance
National Action Plan on GBV (2015–2020)	GoB	Committee, led by Women's Commission	<i>Institutional Capacity &amp; Services - GBV</i>  1. Harmonized multisectoral response: stakeholder capacity, district committees; Ministry Focal Points. 2. Primary prevention: Gender Safe Communities for out of school youth; prevention on schools; media awareness; focus on men and boys; research on GBV among elderly, disabled, LGBT. 3. Response: Sexual and Domestic Violence Branch in the BPD; increase officers with GBV specialization; training on GBV at police recruitment and training; ongoing training for police; victim services; DNA	- Could collaborate with MHD one-stop shop

			laboratory; push prosecutions; provide health, psychosocial, economic, and advocacy services for survivors. 4. M&E of the above efforts.	
Community Policing (BPD in Southside)	Various funds – need to check	BPD U.S. Embassy (tbc)	<i>Secondary Prevention: Southside</i>  1. Youth Apprenticeship Program 2. Sewing project for single mothers (to make police and Coast Guard uniforms); daycare project 3. “Get to Know Belize”—day trips for children during summer. 4. Park renovations 5. Cameras 6. Outreach to employers to reduce stigma of ex-prisoners or people arrested	- Need to map out format and timing of these initiatives - Need to coordinate with CAPS on CYDP, courses/programs offered for youth, MHD one-stop shop
U.S. Embassy ESF Grants through CARSI	U.S. Embassy / CARSI 2015	Building People Mvmt (\$172K) (Local NGO, Toledo)  Pathlight International (\$271K) (NGO, Cayo)  Foundation for Refugee Education Trust (RET International, Belize City and Cayo) (\$396K)  Belize Credit Union League (\$68K)	<i>Primary Prevention, different districts</i>  - After-school programs - teacher training - Job skills - Financial education  U.S. Embassy INL projects include equipment and materials for: BPD, GSU, Intelligence, Coast Guard - UK prosecutors advising on criminal procedures - recording of court proceedings - witness protection - CompStat - CIMS - Child and Family Court (Cayo)	Similar types of projects will be funded in 2016 (\$1.2M); decisions expected in Sept/Oct.
Belize Education Sector Reform Project	CDB	Min Education	<i>Institutional Capacity: Secondary Prevention in Schools</i> 1. Strengthening regulatory framework 2. Strengthening system	- Need to coordinate data systems - Activities related to truancy prevention and reduction - Early warning system

			leadership 3. Strengthening school management and leadership 4. National Human Resources Development Strategy 5. M&E System 6. Curriculum and qualifications review	
Juvenile Diversion	UNICEF	Attorney General / Supreme Court MHDSTPA (CRD) MNS	Consultancy underway in 2016 to develop the diversion program and policies.	
European Union Projects	EU	UNICEF	Protection of young women against violence	

**5. Strategic Policy Alignment**

The key policy documents that provide strategic policy frameworks and, in some cases, target indicators in the citizen security sector include the following:

**Government of Belize**

- **Horizon 2030:** Long-term development vision and strategic plan.
- **Restore Belize: Strategic Policy 2011–2015:** new post-2015 strategy is underway. This is the whole-of-government coordinated strategy plan (led by the Office of the Prime Minister) for addressing youth crime and violence and restoring the rule of law. The three pillars are: Human development; Economic development and citizen prosperity; and Democratic governance and citizen security. These link to other ministry-specific plans and policies. The key outcomes include: For Pillar A (target area Southside): improve maternal and child health; increase early education participation; increase employment for families in poverty; increase community participation for youth. For Pillar B: increase employment and entrepreneurship; reduce poverty in targeted communities; increase growth of urban economy. For Pillar C: improve governance for addressing social violence; increase efficacy for criminal justice systems; increase participation in citizen-led programs. The citizen security interventions under a potential CAPS II would be most aligned with Pillar C, and there are many of the same partners and stakeholders. Restore Belize is developing an updated strategic plan for 2015 forward through the UNDP PreJuve project.

- **Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) for Belize (2015):** This strategy provides the broad plan for development for Belize, in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Interventions in citizen security and criminal justice generally align with “Critical Success Factor 2: Enhance Social Cohesion and Resilience” (access to various basic services and inclusion efforts) and “Critical Success Factor 4: Enhance Governance and Citizen Security” (including technical and political governance systems; addressing social factors fueling crime; policing; administration of justice; national borders). Many of the specific actions mentioned align with other projects set out in the chart above (e.g., policing tactics, swifter case management in courts). Notably, it endorses secondary prevention work (employment and education for at-risk youth) and work on alternative sentencing, especially for juveniles (Condition 4.4, Action 5). There is a technical and inter-agency working group for each Critical Success Factor, which includes M&E work and indicator development and tracking.

Other key strategic policy documents that are more specific to particular themes or ministries include:

- Ministry of National Security: Belize National Security Strategy
- National Action Plan on Children and Adolescents
- National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence

At the international organization level, the following strategic documents and activity areas are relevant:

- **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Country Programme Document (2017–2021):** This sets out three priority areas: (i) child rights monitoring and reducing multidimensional poverty; (ii) lifelong learning; and (iii) safety and justice for children. This third area is the most relevant to citizen security. Its key areas of action are: reducing violence against children, strengthening the child justice system, and enhancing the child protection system. Actions will address issues such as: adding social workers to juvenile courts; expanding family courts; better procedures for child witnesses and victims; GBV against adolescents; abuse against young children; guidelines for “alternative care of children.” UNICEF is involved in the GoB’s work on juvenile diversion (plan expected in 2017) and plans to conduct an evaluation on the juvenile justice system in 2019.
- **United Nations Development Programme: Country Program Document (2017–2021):** The UNDP CPD is under review, but also includes a priority area on citizen security. The UNDP is leading the PreJuve project, the InfoSegura project, and is very

involved in the work on juvenile diversion, as well. In addition, it is leading a consultation on youth institutions and stakeholders, with the NCFC, and the development of an interagency coordination mechanism for projects related to at-risk youth and citizen security issues. The UNDP has also provided bridge funding to key initiatives that began under CAPS and had a gap in resources between CAPS I and CAPS II: the data systems; some of the training at the YH and WYF; and some staff roles.

- **World Bank:** The World Bank conducted a systematic country assessment in Belize in 2016. This analysis identifies crime and violence as a key area of concern and sets out (i) education and skills and (ii) data systems as priority areas for intervention.
- **United States Embassy:** The U.S. Embassy in Belize works on citizen security mainly through its Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) framework. Through this framework, it provides grants to NGOs in primary and secondary prevention (approximately US\$1.2M for 2016, in grants of a few hundred thousand dollars each). Through the International Law Enforcement and Narcotics (INL) branch, it provides financial, technical, and equipment support to: Belize Defense Force, Belize Police (community policing, Gang Suppression Unit, crime analysis, CompStat, equipment), the Coast Guard, the courts (recording of court proceedings and some witness protection), and to the MNS generally.
- **SICA (Central American Integration System):** The SICA Regional Security Strategy, developed in 2012, sets out areas for regional cooperation projects in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Belize participates in the overall SICA processes and has a portion of several projects (notably, BA1 on violence against women; InfoSegura; PreJuve). SICA does not have standalone funding; rather, it channels international contributions to different elements of its Strategy, and provides some project coordination and oversight functions.

## 6. Key Actors

The GoB institutional framework relevant to this project runs from the highest level to the most specific implementation organizations. Key actors and entities include the following:

- Horizon 2030 Implementation Framework: Commission, Coordination Units, and District Committees; Monitoring & Evaluation Plan (including MED, SIB, and relevant technical committees)

- GSDS: Technical Committees (Social Cohesion & Resilience; Governance and Citizen Security)
- Restore Belize
- Crime Control Commission
- National Committee on Families and Children
- Belize City government
- Ministry of Economic Development: Coordination of internationally funded projects and domestic budget allocations
- Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation, and Poverty Alleviation: Community Rehabilitation Department (Youth Hostel and Wagner Youth Facility); Conscious Youth Development Program; Child Protective Services; specific violence prevention projects
- Ministry of Education: Department of Youth Services
- Ministry of National Security: Belize Police Department, JICC
- Attorney-General's Ministry (including Chief Justice and juvenile justice working group)
- National Women's Commission
- NGOs: Belize Family Life Association, YMCA, YWCA, Crime Stoppers Belize, Youth Enhancement Services, Youth Apprenticeship Program, Haven House
- Community-based organizations
- International donors, including the in-development coordination mechanism for violence prevention projects<sup>45</sup>

## 7. Recommendations

Given the needs and gaps identified above, the following recommendations briefly outline potential interventions and projects that international organizations (in partnership with relevant Belize counterparts) could consider, for CAPS II and for other initiatives. This list is not comprehensive; notably, it does not provide in-depth recommendations related to policing or the judicial system for adults.

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<sup>45</sup> A consultant funded by UNDP is developing this mechanism.



### 7.1. Education, Skills, Professional Training

- Expansion of Gateway Youth Center Model to other areas of Belize: The Southside (Gwen Lizaraga H.S.) Center is operating smoothly. This model has proved successful so far and could be implemented in other towns.
- Expansion and ongoing support for PYD implementation: The initial implementation was successful, but there is first a need for ongoing accompaniment and technical support for teachers and others providing this curriculum. Second, it has not yet reached all schools or staff. It could also be implemented in nonschool settings, such as youth centers and programs for out-of-school youth. Third, more general conflict resolution and mediation skills for teachers to handle students with behavioral challenges could be added on to PYD training.
- Literacy, remedial, and pre-vocational training for at-risk Southside youth: Despite the significant number of vocational training programs available, many cannot access them due to literacy and basic education limitations. There is a need for remedial and pre-vocational training, especially for literacy. Given that there is sometimes social stigma against adolescent and adult participation in such programs, there is a need to rebrand and/or shift recruitment and retention strategies.
- Literacy, remedial, pre-vocational, and vocational training for YH/WYF residents: Some programs are already underway, but these could be expanded in terms of scope, topics, and scheduling. There is a need for more formalized training programs—delivered by accredited institutions in a structured way (ITVET and others)—that could provide incarcerated youth with credentials that will be valid after their release. There is also a need to ensure that vocational programs outside of detention centers are more open to accepting students who have criminal records.
- Education diploma programs for YH/WYF residents: Similarly, there is a need to expand the scope, schedule, and structure of academic classes for residents, including primary and secondary levels, and potentially post-secondary courses. The inmate-led classes are successful and well adapted, but residents also need courses that provide formal credentials.
- Scholarship bond arrangements for community service: Given the identified lack of professionals with advanced training in social work, therapy, and psychology, as well as the challenges in retaining such professionals in roles serving at-risk youth and/or the justice system, there is a need to build training programs (in Belize or abroad) that integrate a practicum or incentives for employment in these areas. Moreover, to provide legal aid

services, the scholarship program for law students could be revised to require community service delivered through the legal aid program for juveniles.

## 7.2. Services for Gang-Involved Youth in Southside Belize City

- Multiyear funding and expansion of the space and staff capacity of the Conscious Youth Development Program (CYDP): Given the security and confidentiality requirements of the CYDP, it is urgent that this organization have adequate meeting space and staff available to conduct both mediations with active gang members and outreach with other community members, including prevention of recruitment of youth. Since the nature of CYDP's work requires building trust in volatile settings, short-term projects and funding do not work. Multiyear funding for ongoing outreach, mediation, and recruitment prevention is necessary.
- Additional staff and training on mediation for CYDP: Since mediation of gang conflicts is one of the most direct interventions possible for reducing gun violence spurred by gang dynamics, this activity merits additional staff resources and training to expand its capacity. In contrast to heavy-handed policing approaches, using locally trusted interlocutors to follow gang dynamics, identify intervention and mediation opportunities, and provide follow-up with involved parties has shown promising results elsewhere.<sup>46</sup>
- Identification of the most at-risk youth and reduction of access barriers: The youth most at risk of violence and/or gang involvement in Southside are the least likely to encounter existing social services. Proactive outreach and assessment to identify the youth with multiple and/or severe risk factors is necessary.<sup>47</sup> When youth face mobility and other restrictions to accessing secondary prevention services (e.g., training classes, skills workshops, arts/sports programs), these are not reaching the most at-risk youth. There is a need for more information—mainly qualitative—on current access barriers, and then adjustments by service providers to address them. Examples include offering multiple iterations of programs in spaces that do not require travel; offering services with the (tacit or explicit) endorsement of gang leaders; being intentional about if and how any government or law enforcement representatives are involved.
- Social worker and counselor staff capacity with specialized training for working with traumatized and/or gang-involved youth: There is a general dearth of social worker and counseling capacity in Belize. Nevertheless, working with youth who have past or current

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<sup>46</sup> Examples include CureViolence in the United States and (preliminarily) in Trinidad and Tobago and other international locations. See [www.CureViolence.org](http://www.CureViolence.org). The Peace Management Initiative in Jamaica has a similar experience.

<sup>47</sup> The Southside Metamorphosis project provides an example of doing this identification, intake, and assessment via schools, families, and existing services, with established tools.

gang involvement, as well as those who have been exposed to serious violence and trauma, requires a specific set of skills and experience. This could be strengthened for social workers affiliated with various secondary and tertiary services, through additional training and/or exchanges with similar projects in other countries.

### **7.3. Primary/Secondary Prevention and other Social Services (including on GBV)**

- One-stop shop for social services and violence prevention activities: As outlined above, there is a need for more space and more coordination for service delivery, particularly for the range of social services and violence prevention services that often involve members of the same families. This need is especially acute in Southside Belize City. A single facility that integrates program administration, activities, and outreach and offers space for other community events would create efficiencies (mainly for the MHDSTPA) and would allow families and youth a more holistic approach for intake, assessment, participation in activities, and follow-up. More localized sites could also offer certain activities in coordination with this hub.
- Integrated GBV services: While some analysis proposes stand-alone centers for services for survivors of gender-based and/or sexual violence, it may be more efficient and effective to add this module of services to the proposed one-stop shop. This would allow women and men to learn about and access GBV services even if it was not the main reason for accessing the MHDSTPA. Moreover, certain services that require confidentiality could occur in adequate spaces (e.g., counseling) at the center, while others could link more effectively with other locations (e.g., courts, police).
- Shelter space for women fleeing domestic violence: There is a clear need for more shelter space, at least for temporary stays, for women and their children. Since the existing shelter is in Belize City, the additional space is needed both in the City and in other districts. (This is separate from the housing requirements for girls involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, discussed below.)
- Integrated data and case management: An additional benefit to more coordination of Southside prevention and social services is that the FamCare case management system could serve as the sole platform for tracking the assessments, activities, and monitoring of youth and families in this area. This would require coordination for data sharing between ministries and—most important—with nonprofit organizations operating in the area. Ideally, this could also reduce the data collection burden on each organization for its M&E work.

#### 7.4. Juvenile Justice: Institutional Reforms

- Reduction in crossover from foster care to juvenile justice: This requires a major effort by MHDSTPA to identify the youth who move from foster care into youth detention centers for noncriminal reasons, to assess their needs (housing, treatment, etc.), and to build a clear institutional strategy for channeling them away from the juvenile justice system. This will likely entail building other residential facilities for those who cannot manage in the existing foster care system and/or who have serious mental health needs.
- Implementation of existing Alternatives to Incarceration and Alternative Sentencing options: While some legislative changes are required to expand alternative sentences, there is room to increase the implementation of alternatives currently available. This requires awareness-raising and training of justice and law enforcement at all levels—mainly in police and court settings—and building institutional incentives and an internal culture that encourages choosing noncustodial options for adolescents. There is room here to work with the media to alter the sensational coverage of extreme cases (e.g., the 15 year-old involved in the recent shootout at a police station) and to provide more coverage of adolescents who reintegrate into prosocial pathways while under alternative sentences and/or diversion.
- Diversion policy and program framework: This is underway through the UNICEF project but will require resources and political will from all government entities and international organizations. This initiative includes legislation changes, policy development, and building programs to “receive” and supervise juveniles who are diverted from the criminal justice system at various stages. (Consultant reports on the parameters of this program are expected in summer 2016.)
- Alternative housing and treatment for youth in detention for noncriminal reasons: There is a need for separate housing and treatment facilities for youth who have serious mental health and behavioral problems and are currently placed at the YH or WYF as a last resort. The main groups are: uncontrollable behavior cases; those sent from foster care system for discipline reasons; and those with serious trauma who are identified as victims of trafficking, prostitution, and/or abuse. There is also a need for additional residential foster care spaces (e.g., group homes or families) for older adolescents, to provide them stability before they have contact with the criminal justice system.
- Adequate facilities (new or by renovation) for specific groups in the juvenile justice system: The most urgent need is a higher-security space for girls that is separate from the women at the Belize Central Prison. The second-most urgent need is housing for youth leaving

detention, at the reentry stage, who do not have family to live with. This could be a halfway house or group house facility, with some support and supervision during the transition stage.

- Legal aid for all juveniles: To ensure that youth have a representative with the skills to manage their cases in their best interests—particularly in pushing for fair treatment, due process, and noncustodial sentences—there is a need for subsidizing legal aid. Since there is already a Legal Aid Office for adult capital cases, this could be expanded with additional staff specialized in and mandated for juvenile cases. There is also a need to train other justice officials and raise awareness among community residents about the availability of legal aid and its implications.
- Reentry Services: The continuum of care—including aftercare and reentry—program and training activities began under CAPS I, working with the CRD, the YH, and the WYF. Implementation is only at early stages, and more training, resources, and staff are required. The central reentry needs for juveniles are housing, employment, and therapy/counseling. There is also a need to ensure smooth transition for those who turn 18 during their sentence and/or reentry stage, so that they remain connected to relevant youth services rather than being automatically shifted to adult systems. Reentry requires robust organizations in communities to provide housing and programming, as well as to assist with data collection and supervision. At present, few organizations have this capacity or specialization. In fact, some community NGOs are resistant to working with the reentry population. With sensitization, training, and resources, some of these could provide relevant services.

#### **7.5. Juvenile Justice Facilities: Youth Hostel and Wagner Youth Facility**

- Integration of FamCare case management at both facilities: The MHDSTPA has already implemented the FamCare case management system at the YH. The WYF is not currently using this system, but the licenses and software are available to complete the integration. This requires some staff coordination and training.
- Expansion and implementation of core correctional practices for all staff: This approach (shifting from punitive to rehabilitative methods) began under CAPS I, using training plus ongoing accompaniment. There is a need for further training, including for security staff (not just social workers) at both facilities. Additionally, the implementation over the medium term is where most challenges occur, so ongoing technical assistance from the trainers for several years will ensure full and quality implementation, as well as appropriate data collection.

- Expansion and implementation of risk assessment tools: The LSI risk assessment tool, as part of an overall RNR approach, is now being widely used at the YH and WYF. There is a need for further staff training and ongoing implementation technical assistance support. More broadly, there is a need to integrate the findings of the risk assessment with the strategic planning and institutional reforms outlined above.
- Additional programs and treatment options at YH and WYF: Some vocational, educational, and counseling activities are led by inmates, which is generally positive for the participants and affords flexibility and in-built adaptation to the detention environment. Nevertheless, this is not a substitute for classes and treatment provided by accredited professionals, in which students can also receive relevant certifications. More resources are needed to hire such instructors and therapists, to provide adequate spaces for programming, and to ensure that scheduling can cover weekends and evenings as much as possible.
- Social work and therapy for serious mental health and trauma issues: There are now more social workers connected to clients at the YH and WYF than there were before CAPS. Nonetheless, many of the youth residents have serious mental health, behavioral, and/or post-traumatic needs that require more advanced or specialized treatment. There are not enough qualified professionals working in the system to provide such treatment. Given the lack of such professionals in Belize in general, the GoB may need to consider subsidizing advanced training and/or providing incentives for professionals to work in the justice system with youth.
- Alternatives to segregation/solitary confinement for discipline and protection reasons: Due to a lack of alternative options, segregation (solitary confinement) is sometimes used at the WYF to hold residents as a disciplinary measure and/or when they pose a threat to others, and/or when they are under threat from others. This contravenes international standards that prohibit the use of solitary confinement for minors, especially if it exceeds 15 days, as it causes psychological harm and abrogates human rights. There is a need to build alternative methods of handling discipline, threat, and protection situations, which may require other infrastructure or staff resources.

## **7.6. Data Systems**

- Interagency active use of IPSMIS / FamCare: The platform functions well, but not all agencies contribute data. There is first a need for high-level consensus and direction that all ministries involved in social policy (including the Police) should contribute data to IPSMIS and FamCare, and use these systems as the single cross-government platform for such

data. (This does not overlap with separate systems for separate types of data, such as CIMS for crime data.) To do this, there is a need to train data management staff in each ministry on how to organize, upload, and analyze the data and produce joint analysis reports.

- Gender-disaggregated data: Through IPSMIS/FamCare as well as other data collection and analysis endeavors—including CIMS, CompStat, surveys, VAW and GBV research—the GoB should build more gender-disaggregated data on a range of social, economic, health, and violence issues. This could also contribute to gender-disaggregated indicators for M&E work on various projects.
- Research on gender dimensions of crime, violence, and criminal justice: There is also a need for more in-depth research projects, both qualitative and quantitative, on these topics. Funders and GoB entities could commission research on gender and gangs, perceptions of justice actors, community prevention activities, treatment services, reentry needs, and other topics. This could occur in partnership with academic institutions inside and outside of Belize.
- Commissioning of a mixed-methods, five-year longitudinal study on juveniles in conflict with the law: Rather than undertaking onerous and restrictive experimental research methods within the confines of a particular project evaluation framework, more in-depth, medium-term research could be conducted through a wider research project. This could involve collaboration with key projects such as CAPS II, YCT, PreJuve, Diversion, and others. Samples of juveniles in conflict with the law—inside and outside detention systems—could be tracked on numerous variables over five years, to analyze factors shaping outcomes such as recidivism, social reintegration, mental health, and well-being.
- Coordination of all ongoing M&E data exercises in the citizen security sector: Many projects in this sector, regardless of funding source, have results frameworks and M&E plans that contain the same types of data and indicators (e.g., demographics, employment and education participation, crime patterns, social attitudes and perceptions). Even though not all involve the same specific populations, many do: youth in Southside. There is an obvious benefit to coordinating data collection on common indicators, to reduce the burden on participants and implementing organizations, and to broaden projects' ability to account for the wider context. This does not preclude project-specific M&E exercises, but project executing units and agencies should combine resources as much as possible to produce cross-project data sources.

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### **Policy Frameworks**

- Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (2015)
- Restore Belize Strategic Plan (2011–2015)
- MNS National Security Plan
- MHDSTPA. National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan: A Multisectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence in Belize (2015–2020)
- UNDP Country Programme Document (2017–2021). In draft; currently under internal review.
- UNICEF Country Program Document (2017–2021)

## **ANNEX 1: INTERVIEWS**

### **List of Interviews (June, 2016 and February 2017, in Belize City, Hattieville, and Belmopan):**

- Ministry of Human Development (CEO)
  - Community Rehabilitation Department
  - Child Protection Services
  - Conscious Youth Development Program
  - Youth and Community Transformation Project
  - Planning & IPSMIS
- Ministry of Education (CEO)
- Ministry of National Security (Policy Director)
  - JICC
  - Southside Police Commander
  - Gang Suppression Unit
- Chief Justice and Solicitor-General
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Kolbe Foundation: Belize Central Prison and Wagner Youth Facility
- National Women's Commission
- Youth Apprenticeship Program
- YWCA
- UNDP
- UNICEF
- U.S. Embassy

### **Interviews by Phone (July, 2016):**

- RESTORE Belize