



# THE SECRETARIAT

*"Giving Hope to People Living with HIV Through Dedicated Service"*

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## 2018: A YEAR IN REVIEW

### JAN- MAR

### Hand-In-Hand Ministries dedicates its new facilities!

"Hand-In-Hand Ministries' mission is to build strong communities and transform lives through cultural immersions, education, housing and health care".



After establishing itself in Belize in 2002 and providing services through its various programs, 2017 marked a great milestone as it celebrated its 15 years of service to the people of Belize. Programs like: The Building for Change Program where families are assisted through housing, the Scholarship Assistance Program where students are assisted in completing their High School Education, the Outreach Program where children are assisted through our Day-care, Preschool and our outreach program that caters to children marginalized by poverty and disease, namely HIV/AIDS country wide.

Now in 2018 we celebrate a huge milestone! A new Building to work from in one of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods. The building is named The Fowler Community Center, after the founder and cofounder, Wayne Richard Fowler, who lost his battle to cancer and Fr. Joseph Fowler, a retired priest in Louisville,



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Kentucky, still impacting many lives! The new offices are located at one and a half miles on the George Price Highway, Belize City, Belize.

The one thing that has remained constant in our work and services to others is “God”, who has been and continues to be an integral part of our success.

For years this had been a dream for Hand-In-Hand Ministries to have its own offices to house all its programs rather than operating from several locations. Though many challenges were faced along this journey, we never gave up and we kept going as we strongly believed that God leads and we follow. Under the leadership of Mr. Abel Vargas, what was once a dream has finally come true with the support of donors and the support of our partners and organizations that volunteered on this building project and the support from our fundraising events that made this project a reality. We still have quite a bit yet to go, like a fence, the completion of a basketball court and an at risk area for the young men in the area; however, we thank God that it has been completed to the extent of it being of service to others. Hand-In-Hand Ministries philosophy is “just enough, just in time”. We believe in the power of prayers and our ultimate goal to serve the St. Martin’s community...better will come, as we continue to change lives for the better and become the beacon of hope to a community in most need.



We pray and hope that with the continued support from our community, we will be able to bring about only positive changes in the area, with hopes of the change creating a ripple effect of positive outcomes and thus making it a better place to live!

If you would like to assist us, please email us at [abel@myhandinhand.org](mailto:abel@myhandinhand.org) or [maggie@myhandinhand.org](mailto:maggie@myhandinhand.org) or contact us at 615-4804 or 610-2602. Any contributions of \$10,000 or more will earn a permanent spot at the entrance of our building.

## **BFLA Implements the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Program**



1. BFLA does training in CSE in over 8 high schools across the Orange Walk, Belize and Stann Creek Districts. Through the Youth Advocacy Movement and partnership with other groups many other out-of-school youths have been trained in CSE. BFLA is targeting 4 additional schools for the year 2018 to conduct per education training on CSE. The KISS mobile outreach provides services to young people as well as SRH information.

2. Summer camps- BFLA has held summer camps in partnership with other entities in Orange Walk, Belize City and Dangriga. The SRH and CSE information is deliver to youth from ages 10 to 24.

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3. In 2016/2017, MOE asked BFLA to make contributions to revise the HFLE and BFLA contributed in adding GBV. In summer 2017 BFLA was asked to train teachers and a presentation was made to assist teachers in understanding sexuality and other aspects that could help them to become self-aware and provide a foundation of comfortability when teaching from their curriculum. A similar request was made by MHDSTPA to revise the parenting manual used by COMPAR. BFLA is looking to have a formalized MOU with the MOE to solidify that BFLA will be utilized to support CSE training for teachers and in schools. There is a teacher toolkit.

4. AAHA- TWG BFLA has a representative on the technical working group for the Adolescent Health Strategy. Currently, a call for consultant is being made to assist with the development of the strategy. The strategy is to address the gaps in adolescent health and access to services. MOH has a timeline in which the strategy should be produced by December this year.

## 9th Commonwealth Youth Parliament



Dominique Noralez was nominated by the Speaker of the House Madam Laura Tucker Longworth to represent Belize at the 9th Sitting of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP). The event was hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in collaboration with the Jersey States assembly in Jersey, English Channel Islands. The CYP programme, lasting from February 25th to March 1st 2018, was designed to demonstrate to potential future young parliamentarians the fundamentals behind the processes of Parliament in key institutions which underpin democracy and good governance. In addition, it gives attendees a hugely valuable networking opportunity with other participants from across the Commonwealth, as well as with current young Members of Parliament who act as mentors throughout the week. This year's mentors came from the Jersey State, Kenya, Guyana and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The mock parliamentary housing sitting was based on a fictional country named "Commonwealthland" that has a Westminster style parliamentary System. The issues debated throughout the sittings included Access to Universal Health Services, a quality based educational policy and access to skills programme and planning policy as it relates to environmental protection and urban development.



This programme offered a unique opportunity to develop leadership and experience and to be empowered to make a positive difference in shaping the future of their own communities.

With 60% of the Commonwealth's population aged under 30, the CYP is one of the key programmes organized by the CPA and responds to the needs of its young constituents. The CPA recognizes that young people have a proven capability to lead change, and are an invaluable investment for now and the future of the Commonwealth.

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The 10th CYP will be hosted by the Indian Parliament.

## PANCAP Youth Advocacy Workshop



Kevin Mendez, Chair of the PANCAP's Steering Committee on Youth Advocacy and rep of young key populations, Andrew Munnings as CYA for Belize, and Diego Grajalez as representative for young persons living with HIV had the opportunity to interact with Caribbean youth leaders in a Youth Advocacy Workshop, organized by PANCAP, held in Trinidad and Tobago on January 19th & 20th, 2018.

The goal of the training was to better prepare the Caribbean's youth to efficiently mobilize in the response to HIV/AIDS through improving access to HIV combination prevention, care, treatment and support services, in recognition of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The training related to the recognition in the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework (CRSF) on HIV and AIDS 2014-2018 that to strategically target the HIV epidemic will require establishing and sustaining an enabling environment by addressing social and cultural drivers of the epidemic and by removing barriers to access sexual and reproductive health information, education and services.



The pillars of the training included: Targets of Advocacy, the rights based approach to advocacy, the process of developing a successful advocacy plan, using evidence to inform policy, and using the branches of government to enforce rights. A follow-up meeting was held in Belize on February 23rd, 2018 with youth stakeholders with the objective of reflecting on the outcomes of PANCAP's Youth Advocacy Meeting (2018) and developing a tentative road map for the introduction of the 3 priority areas highlighted in the CRYAF-SRH 2018. Invited guests included representative from the Caribbean Regional Youth Council, The Department of Youth Services, The CARICOM Youth Ambassador, Our Circle, Belize Youth Empowerment for Change, and The Belize Family Life Association.

## 5 Youth represented Belize at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London, April 2018

A featured event of the April 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting as we move "Toward a Common Future" will be the Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF) with a focus on a more sustainable future, a fairer future, a more secure future, and a more prosperous future. The Commonwealth population consists of ONE BILLION youth and Belize will be properly represented!

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The CYF provides an opportunity for the young people of the Commonwealth to build cross-cultural connections and networks, debate the challenges facing its young people, and agree on youth-led initiatives to influence decision-makers and ensure young people have a voice in its future.

Belize's representatives include:

*Ruth Gutierrez who is a Belizean student on the prestigious full Erasmus Mundus scholarship in a joint Master's degree in Aquaculture, Environment and Society program.*

*Kristin Marin who is the Vice Chair - Members and Partnerships of the Caribbean Regional Youth Council 2018-2020.*

*Kevin Mendez who is attending as a One Young World Official Delegate.*

*The national delegates are:*

*Kris Miller who is a board member for Belmopan Active Youths and Vice President for the Belize Youth for Road Safety Project.*

*Dominique Noralez who is a Commonwealth Youth Parliamentarian and President for the National Youth Council of Belize.*

Outside of the fruitful conversations that will be held in the official youth forum, it is also an election year for the Commonwealth Youth Council and the chairpersonship is mandated to be in the Caribbean region for this term. For more information on the forum and the elections follow this link: <http://www.mievent.info/event/cyc-elections2018> and <https://www.chogm2018.org.uk/forums>

## **Sixth Meeting of National AIDS Programme Managers and Key Partners Opens with a call for more Country Ownership of HIV Response**

MINISTER OF HEALTH, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF RESEARCH TO ASSESS THE RESILIENCE OF CARIBBEAN TERRITORIES IN THE FACE OF WITHDRAWAL OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 (PANCAP Coordinating Unit, CARICOM Secretariat): The Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP), the mechanism that provides a structured and unified approach to the Caribbean's response to the HIV epidemic, commenced the Sixth Meeting of National AIDS Programme (NAP) Managers and Key Partners in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago from 12–14 March 2018.

Delivering the Feature Address, Honourable Terrence Deyalsingh, Minister of Health, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago highlighted that it has been more than 34 years since the first reported HIV and AIDS case in Trinidad

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and Tobago and the Caribbean and over 17 years since highly active antiretroviral treatment (HAART) became a reality.

However, he emphasized the need to focus on the sustainability of the response. “From the outset of the HIV epidemic in the Caribbean, there have been varied efforts to ensure that our regional and local communities achieved sustainability in our response to HIV”, stated Minister Deyalsingh, “Sustainable HIV programmes are characterized by the ability of a national government and regional partners to increasingly assume full strategic and financial responsibility for their HIV and AIDS response over the long-term”.

The Minister explained that this requires the development and strengthening of policies, infrastructure, skills, processes, human and financial resources to ensure that the response can survive, adapt and scale-up. He highlighted that financing is key to mounting a sustainable response and referred to the approaching 2020 deadline for the “90-90-90 Fast-Track Target”. Further, he explained that “the region finds itself in a global environment with complex development priorities that pose challenges to national budgets and affect bilateral cooperation. The region is expected to experience reduced technical and financial inflows and must collectively mobilize domestic resources especially, for the support of prevention and the elimination of HIV- related stigma and discrimination among key and vulnerable populations, as complimentary external financing dwindles”. Minister warned that while the desire to achieve sustainable responses is widespread, little formal research has been undertaken to assess the resilience of Caribbean territories, in the face of the withdrawal of external support.

***“As a region, we need to urgently heighten the research and the debate on the sustainability of the HIV response,” stated the Minister.***

Addressing the participants, Chair of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM), Global Fund Project and Minister of Education, Guyana, Honourable Nicolette Henry advocated for more country ownership of the HIV response.

***“To achieve the objectives of the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS there is still need to strengthen country ownership of the response and shared responsibility to strategically align efforts to end HIV as a public health problem in the Caribbean”, stated Minister Henry, “As a region we are still challenged with late diagnosis, particularly for men. Yet there is much to celebrate. People are living much longer with HIV, many more patients are on ART and there are greater methods and practices for fast-tracking prevention, operational financing mechanisms, and authority and responsibility of National AIDS Programmes. These are all essential requirements for closing the gap and shepherding an AIDS-free generation”.***

The Minister’s sentiments on low diagnosis figures for men were echoed in remarks by Dr Cesar Nuñez, UNAIDS Director, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Support Team, who stated “the region as a whole is lagging behind on the HIV testing and viral suppression targets. One of three people (36%) living with HIV in the Caribbean is not aware of their HIV status, and late diagnosis is a challenge in several countries, particularly for men. In 2016, one-third of those on treatment were not virally suppressed (33%). This is what we must seek to understand and address. Why are most systems able to initiate treatment once people are diagnosed, but not to retain them in care and achieve the gold standard of viral suppression?”

Ms Annelise Hirschmann, Regional Manager for Latin America and the Caribbean, The Global Fund noted the success of the region’s response to HIV. She reminded the participants of their critical role in defining a path for

the challenges ahead and emphasized the need to use treatment and key population cascades to make decisions on investing domestic and donor funding. Ms Hirschmann advocated that data should be used to shape decisions on the response more effectively. “We know that the region does not have huge increases in domestic financing for health, but are we effectively utilizing what is available?” stated Ms Hirschmann. She also urged participants to continue to plan for the sustainability of the HIV response in light of reduced donor funding.

Dr Edwin Bolastig, PAHO/WHO Representative (ag.), Republic of Trinidad and Tobago reiterated PAHO/WHO’s commitment to all partners involved in the HIV response towards achieving the 90-90-90 Targets by 2030. Dr Bolastig stated that country ownership of the HIV response aligned with the Regional Strategic objectives are indeed essential for the response. He also noted that while more countries have been validated for the Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transfer of HIV and Syphilis (EMTCT), there is still work to be done. In light of this, he recognized PANCAP’s consistent efforts to bring together regional minds for the collective thought process towards building consensus, creating synergies and generating collective action towards ending HIV. He also highlighted the synergy between PAHO/WHO and PANCAP in advocating for universal health coverage and ensuring that no one is denied health care because of age, sexual orientation, occupation, religious beliefs, etc.

Mr Ivan Cruickshank, Administrative and Finance Manager, Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC) highlighted the critical need for data necessary to achieve the 90-90-90 Targets. He also advocated for full involvement of civil society representatives at all levels in the implementation of HIV programmes and the region’s overall response.

Dr Nikkiah Forbes, Director, National HIV/AIDS and Infectious Diseases Programme, Ministry of Health, The Bahamas continued the theme of the meeting, calling for more interest by governments in the sustainability of the response. She stated “I make a respectful but urgent plea to our governments to commit to, as well as finance their National and Regional AIDS response”.

Dr Forbes acknowledged the financial costs of such a commitment but implored governments to also consider the costs associated with inaction. “I also want you to remember that the colour of AIDS awareness is blood red, for its connection to blood and passion – not just red for anger in the face of injustice”, stated Dr Forbes, “The AIDS response must prevail beyond party colours, such as in The Bahamas where fortunately HIV has been a matter that our successive government administrations have consistently supported”.

Director of PANCAP and Chair of the opening ceremony, Mr Dereck Springer highlighted that the meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on the Region’s progress towards achieving the 90-90-90 Targets, to identify gaps in the region’s response and discuss strategies for filling the gaps. He noted that the meeting was being convened at a time of declining resources therefore the region must ensure greater efficiencies and effectiveness of HIV programmes.

The three-day forum culminated on Wednesday, 14 March as National AIDS Programme Managers, Chief Medical Officers, Permanent Secretaries, Development, Regional and Implementing Partners, including civil society organizations that work with people living with HIV and key population groups (including youth), will reach an agreement on approaches for integration as a key strategy for sustainability of the HIV response.



# NAC HIV Training for Belize's Labour Department



In an effort to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS, The National AIDS Commission collaborated with the Ministry of Labour to provide a two-day workshop to key Labour Officers at the Best Western Biltmore on March 15-16, 2018. The training explored a variety of topics pertinent to HIV prevention and the effects of HIV related work place stigma and discrimination.

A total of 22 key Labour Department managers and administrators were present at the two-day workshop. Facilitators of the HIV training included Mr. Arthur Usher, Communication Officer of the National AIDS Commission, Mr. Keron Cacho, Program Coordinator of the National AIDS Commission, Mr. Antonio Coyoc and Jevan Chavarria of Ministry of Health, Mrs. Eva Burgos of Go Belize, Ms. Derricia Salazar of Our Circle and Ms Dominique Noralez from The National Youth Council of Belize. These facilitators presented on Belize's HIV Statistics, the Belize Health and Information System, the concerns and issues surrounding Key Affected Population in Belize and addressed the many ways and facets that the Ministry of Labour can assist in alleviating the issues. The workshop also informed its participants about the various international commitments that Belize has signed on to and ratified, correlating to both Human Rights and HIV service provision.



The NAC continues to maintain a dynamic and multi-sectorial approach to the HIV response in Belize and we take this moment to thank all our partners and colleagues for their support and look forward to your continued partnership.

## 20,000 STRONG



In an effort to keep pace with the growing global movement for gender parity, the Office of the Special Envoy for Women and Children in collaboration with the National Women's Commission (NWC), UNICEF Belize, The Embassy of the United States of America, the Women's Department and the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation hosted, for a third time, the National 20,000 STRONG Women's Empowerment Rally on Friday, March 16, 2018. The first rally took place in 2014 and brought together some 12,000 women and girls from the six districts and the Cayes making it one of the largest non-

political events in Belize. It has since become a biennial event as part of Belize's activities for International Women's Month.

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At its core, the movement aims to celebrate the achievements of Belize’s heroes as well as to offer a platform where we speak on the trials and to share the successes of our women and girls. This year, the Rally brought into sharp focus the challenges and needs of our adolescents under the theme “Nurturing the Next Generation” **#PressforProgress**. Major objectives:

- **To bring national attention to the issues impacting adolescents – girls and boys, particularly education, violence, inequality, inclusion and access to services**
- **To give adolescents the opportunity for their voices to be heard; share their perspectives on the issues affecting their peer group and highlight the role they play already in designing and supporting responses to these issues.**
- **To highlight the opportunities available for adolescents, particularly girls, in the area of Science Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) to help engender a change in attitude and perceptions about the abilities, roles and opportunities for girls and boys.**
- **To promote self-efficacy in girls and encourage them to become agents of their own change and development.**

The Empowerment Rally included dynamic speakers from secondary schools across the country, a motivational keynote speaker and other short presentations on the importance of investing in our women and girls. In addition, the event created a platform; i.e., a marketplace where local artists and entrepreneurs promoted and showcased their products. The marketplace also included a mini exhibition where students from secondary schools from the different districts showcased their artistic work and innovations while encouraging other young persons to get involved.



In an attempt to create momentum, a dynamic and robust public relations campaign surrounding this year’s theme was developed to encourage citizens to advocate for a change in the status quo for the benefit of women and girls. This campaign relied heavily on social media but also utilized broadcast media (radio and television) to mobilize citizens. The centerpiece for public engagement in the campaign was a call to the general public to use the “hands out” concept i.e. (pressing) along with their image and the hashtag **#PressforProgress** to demonstrate their support for change for women and girls. This call has gone out with an encouragement for the public to highlight a change towards which they are committed to advocate and work in the community. These changes include: keeping a gender parity mind set, forging positive visibility for women and girls, advocating for access to justice, challenging stereotypes and celebrating women’s achievements. In addition to this, a series of media rounds with key partners and social influencers was organized to further engage the public and keep the conversation on social change for women and girls going.

Education:

- **Reduce the numbers of incidences of bullying in the school**
- **Increase the number of schools that offer non-traditional courses to girls and boys**

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- Increase in the number of schools that participate in the Financial Literacy competition offered by MOE, with a specific focus to include more girls
- Increase in the number of schools that participate in the Innovation competition offered by PWC, with a specific focus to include more girls
- Increase in the enrolment in the ITVET, particularly girls (by district and gender)

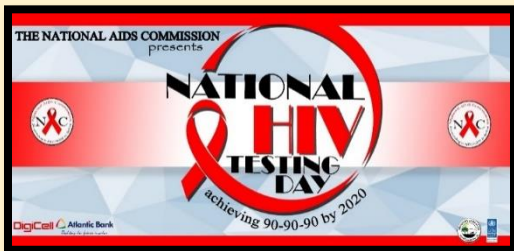
Child Protection

- Reduce the number of children that experience violent discipline in the homes
- Reduction in the number of children who are aware of the mental health service
- 500 parents/ teacher are empowered to effect real change in the direct environment of the family and the schools, ensuring that the traditional societally ascribed roles, responsibilities and opportunities for girls and boys experience a change.



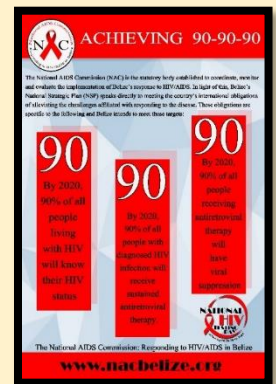
APR - JUN

The NAC Establishes the 1st Annual National HIV Testing Day



The National AIDS Commission (NAC), in collaboration with Atlantic Bank Ltd, the Ministry of Health (MOH), United Nations Development Program and DigiCell proudly commemorated the *1st Annual National HIV Testing Day (NTD) on Friday, June 29th, 2018 from 9am to 3pm; under the theme:*

*“Achieving 9090-90 by 2020.* This year the program included a total eight testing sites: San Pedro Town (Poly Clinic), Corozal Town (CCH Poly Clinic), Orange Walk Town (Central Park), Belmopan City (Police Station), San Ignacio Town (Welcome Center), Dangriga Town (Courts Parking Lot), Punta Gorda Town (Central Park) and Belize City (Battlefield Park).



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National Testing Day promoted the scaling up of HIV testing efforts in keeping with the objectives of the National Strategic Plan. The goal of NTD was to reach a minimum 1200 people tested nationwide in an effort to meet the nation’s objective of fulfilling the 90-90-90 targets *(By 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status. By 2020, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy. By 2020, 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression).*



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Besides targeting the eight above mentioned sites on June 29th for all day testing, the NAC and in collaboration with MOH, Belize Family Life Association, Our Circle and GoBelize engaged and test the key affected populations in the high disease burden areas (Belize City, Cayo and Dangriga) as a part of our regionally acknowledged award winning “On-site Testing Program”.



In what has become a standard in the programming of the NAC initiatives, we incorporated multiple layers to the HIV testing experience; with the success of the World AIDS Day 2017 live art display program, we also added a live art display to the NTD programming utilizing six



local fine arts designers. As a result of these initiatives, Belize has been and continues to be a lead entity in the region implementation of testing initiatives. Nationwide over 36,000 HIV tests were done in 2017 and with the general scale up in services, we are on track to meet on national targets.

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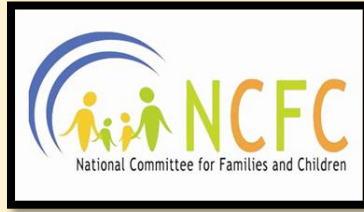
### NTD testing results:

TESTING SITE	TOTAL MALES TESTED	TOTAL FEMALES TESTED	TOTAL TESTS
COROZAL	116	111	227
ORANGE WALK	125	121	246
BELIZE	226	266	492
CAYO	316	242	558
STANN CREEK	69	73	142
TOLEDO	43	45	88
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>1753</b>

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- It is noteworthy that for the first time we have more males than females getting tested. This is a testament to our successful awareness campaigns and engaging the targeted areas. It also speaks to a potential behavior change that we hope to strengthen and continue to support without losing the strong health seeking behavior of women.



*“Championing the Rights, Welfare and Development of Belizean Families and Children”*

## **NCFC’s Informed Teen Reporters Report on how Crime and Violence are Affecting their Generation**



The Informed Teen Reporters (ITRs) are a youth group of the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC). This group, in partnership with Channel 5 produces news reports on relevant topics affecting children and youths. In June’s edition, the Informed Teen Reporters focus on the topic of crime and violence and how it is affecting their generation.

If you would like to get an insight into this story, please visit the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LtM-OoQagg>.

## **NCFC Produces Videos to Educate the Public about Laws Pertaining to Sexual Violence Against Children**



In 2014 the Criminal Code was amended with respect to Rape, Child Prostitution and Consent of children in Belize. This is in direct correlation to Articles 19 and 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To demystify the legal jargon and simplify the amendments, four videos were produced by the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) with funding from UNICEF.

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It is our hope that armed with this knowledge, adults and children will be more aware about the sexual abuse of children, be encouraged to report suspected cases, be less stigmatized and be aware of the consequences for perpetrators of these crimes.



To view these videos, visit the following links and also share with your family and friends:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LtM-OoQagg>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pCCeWxCfok>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKnet\\_s\\_gKs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKnet_s_gKs)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9D865JOod70>

## NCFC's CRC Ambassadors Conduct Presentations to Primary School Children about the CRC

One vital role of the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) is to educate children and adults about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Through the CRC Ambassadors this continues to hold true in various parts of the country. Primary school children and their teachers are treated to exciting presentations about their rights and responsibilities! During the second quarter of this year, over 150 children have learnt about their rights and their responsibilities.

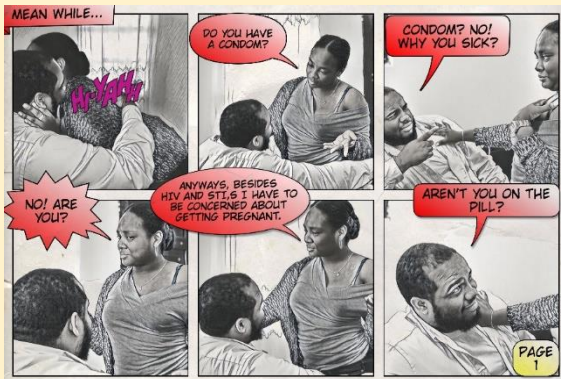


If you would like to request a CRC presentation, please visit our office at 62 Cleghorn Street, Belize City or contact us at 223-0059/1180 or [ncfc@bt1.net](mailto:ncfc@bt1.net). Also, visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/ncfcbz/](http://www.facebook.com/ncfcbz/) to get weekly updates about the CRC.

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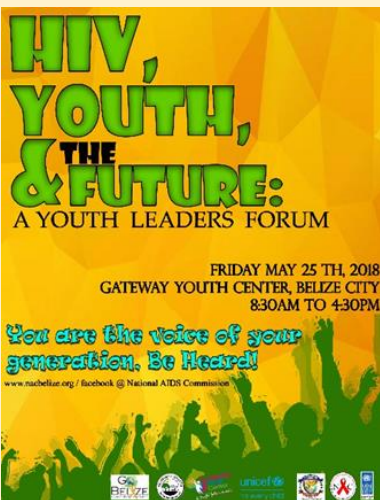


# The Department of Youth Services presents: “Use A Condom” A Comic Strip Story.



## HIV, YOUTH & the FUTURE: A YOUTH LEADERS' FORUM

On Friday May 25th, The National AIDS Commission (NAC) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Department of Youth Services, GoBelize, UNICEF, and the Gateway Youth Center hosted its second dynamic and innovative HIV Youth Leaders' Research Forum with 45 youth leaders at the Gateway Youth Center under the theme: *“HIV, Youth and the Future: A National Youth Leaders' Research Forum”*.



The forum addressed some of the overarching issues that are affecting the youth population in relation to HIV and how these issues impact the national response to HIV/AIDS.

The day's agenda include pointed, dynamic and innovative presentations on the following topics: HIV 101, the Ministry of Health's



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Surveillance Report, the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 and the Knowledge, Attitudes & Practices in Sexual Behaviour & HIV in Belize Report. These documents all speak to the actions and psychology of youth in Belize and how that then affects the national data. The forum was a great opportunity for the youth population to actively engage in and directly affect in the national dialogue.



After these presentations the leaders were asked to then give some creative thought to the following question: *what is one problematic area within the HIV response as it relates to the youth demographic, and how would you approach fixing it?* The youth leaders designed very dynamic programs that would effectively change the way the HIV message has been received and targeted; including: peer-to-peer condom supply groups, peer counselling/support group, and group testing programs.

The forum was designed as a one-day activity to spark the conversation, interests and concerns of the youth population in an effort to engage them in meaningful change. The discussions and dynamic socialization that the leaders and facilitators experienced was refreshing and allowed both parties to have a glimpse into the true picture of the response. The participants were given an assessment to evaluate their knowledge gained. Because of the interactive nature of the presentations, the participants gained knowledge and reported a high level comfort with the information, willingness to participate again and very pleased with the program.



It is recommended that the program be done on a regular basis with different demographics and different communities throughout the country. By all accounts the program was a success and the NAC fully intends to develop some of the suggested ideas into a national programs and evaluate their success.

## BFLA: Youth Ambassadors Exchange Program

On April 12th 2018, nine Youth Ambassadors: *Cristian Verde and Mikhail Rosado of Ocean Academy, Alexis Guy of Edward P. Yorke High School, Shaylee Flowers, Jaminie Nah and Shanique Perez of Bishop Martin High School, Ryan Smith of Belize High School, Jeffery Coc of Belmopan Methodist High School, Jauquin Coc of Belmopan Comprehensive High School* along with their Mentor Dr. Golda Mejia – Teacher at Anglican Cathedral College returned to Belize after three weeks of exchange in the US.



The Youth Ambassadors Program is a U.S. Department of State Youth Exchange designed to strengthen the leadership skills of young people from Latin America and the United States. This multi-national exchange also builds bonds of friendship and understanding between people of the Caribbean, Central and South America and people of the United States. The official program goals of the Youth Ambassadors Program are:

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- To develop a cadre of young adults who have a strong sense of civic responsibility, a commitment to community development, an awareness of current & global issues, and strong interpersonal leadership skills;
- To foster relationships among youth from different ethnic, religious, and national groups; and
- To promote mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between the United States and our Western Hemisphere counterparts.

## Belize National Faith Leaders Consultation

PANCAP has been involved in discussions with Faith Leaders from its inception in 2001, recognising their importance and the role of religion in the lives of the people of the Caribbean. The PANCAP Champions for Change Programme introduced in 2004 formalised the importance of inter-religious component in reducing stigma and discrimination as an essential aspect of Human Rights. The Partnership with the Caribbean Council of Churches acted as a catalyst for incorporating a cross section of religious organisation in the accelerated response to HIV and AIDS. The PANCAP special Conference of Faith Leaders in Guyana on November 2005 set the stage for institutionalizing FBOs in the PANCAP structure and fostering their voices in shaping the various iterations of the Caribbean Regional Strategic Frameworks, the latest being 2014-2018, that form the guidelines of the PANCAP network for action and resource mobilization especially in the areas of treatment, prevent, stigma and discrimination.



This Consultation is a follow-up to a series of engagements involving faith leaders in Belize and elsewhere in the Caribbean under the PANCAP Justice for All programme.

***The aims of the consultation are to:***



- \* Establish the main goals for an inter-religious faith leaders' network in Belize with emphasis on contributing toward the end of AIDS. These may include:
- \* Endorsing the 2016 UN High Level Political Declaration for fast tracking the end of AIDS;
- \* Accepting the implementation, the PANCAP Justice For All Roadmap in short, medium and long-term stages;
- \* Working toward a joint consultation of Faith Leaders and

representatives of the Key populations with a view to discussing the way forward on reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination;

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- \* Consolidating the structure and functions of the Belize National Faith Leaders Network.
- \* Identify the lessons learned for ending AIDS from faith leaders' engagements with people living with HIV and with other groups such as parliamentarians, youth leaders, civil society and members of your church communities.
- \* Highlight challenges for developing a viable Faith Leaders Network and proposals for overcoming them.
- \* Make specific recommendations to the PANCAP Coordinating Unit for collaboration and support to achieve the goals of the Belize inter-religious/faith leaders Network.
- \* Establish priorities and timelines for achieving the goals of the Network.

#### The PANCAP Justice for All Roadmap and Groups Contributions to Ending AIDS

The Justice For All (JFA) Programme was introduced by PANCAP in September 2013 as a regional response to the UN High Level Political Declaration (June 2011) designed to reduce AIDS related stigma and discrimination. Hence the JFA Roadmap revolved around 5 principles:

- Enhancing family life and focusing on those in need
- Increasing access to treatment and affordable medicines
- Reducing gender inequality including violence against women, girls and adolescents
- Promoting prevention with special reference to sexual and reproductive health and rights including age appropriate sexual education
- Implementing legislative reforms for modifying AIDS-related stigma and discrimination



Following a series of national consultations since its inauguration, a regional consultation in April 2014 in Jamaica and the recommendations of the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development the PANCAP in



October 2014, the Justice For All Roadmap was adopted with 15 actionable recommendations for implementation in short, medium and long term deliverables (See Annex III).

Based on the lessons learned from operations on the ground, special attention in 2016 was given to working with stakeholder groups -- parliamentarians, Faith Leaders, Youth, National AIDS Programme Coordinators, Civil Society - individually, to identify what each could contribute to ending AIDS in the Caribbean. The results have been heartening.

They have been demonstrated in the recommendations from Regional Consultations coordinated by PANCAP in partnership principally with UNAIDS, UNDP and PAHO/WHO and in which the UN Secretary General Special Envoy for HIV in the Caribbean and the Director of the PANCAP Coordinating Unit played lead advocacy roles.

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The outcomes from these stakeholder fora identified a series of recommendations whereby their respective collectives may contribute to ending AIDS.

## Collaborative Network for Persons Living with HIV – Candle Light Vigil



On June 1<sup>st</sup>, C-NET+ in collaboration with REDCA+ held a Candle Light Vigil to commemorate the lives of those that are still living with HIV in our community. It was held at the Belize Institute for Management from 6:00pm to 11:00pm.

The agenda included opening remarks from the Executive Director of C-NET+ as well as from the REDCA Regional Secretariat; Mr. Otoniel Ramirez Hernandez.

This continued with statements from the community in regards to their success stories, trials and recommendations to fellow persons living with HIV and advocates.



Following this, was a guided meditation which was to reflecting on the lives of those that have departed and giving thanks to a bright prosperous future. After this session was completed, there was moment of Loudness/Celebration which was accompanied by a song *“Vivir la Vida”*

At the ending, a red ribbon was formed with the candles to commemorate all those within the community who are giving there all to the response in Belize.

## NAC 3-Day Training on Guidelines for the Comprehensive Care of Gay Men and Other MSM



From April 11-13 2018, The National AIDS Commission and Ministry of Health through the United Nations Development Programme hosted a three day training entitled *“Guidelines for the Comprehensive Care of Gay Men and Other Men who have Sex with Men”* The overall objective focused on improving the health services offered to this key population; in order to meet the UNAIDS 90-90-90 treatment target by 2020. This sensitization workshop trained a total of 25 Health Care

Providers representing a variety of medical practitioners countrywide. Dra. Lydia Guerra was the lead facilitator of the three day training along with the following invited facilitators: Ms. Martha Carrillo (MC Consultancy),

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Mr. Kevin Mendez (Ministry of Health), Mr. Karl Wade (Empower Yourself, Belize Movement) and Mr. Aston Chavarria (Belize Youth Empowerment for Change).



## JUL – SEPT



## The National AIDS Commission launches HIV Services App

Since 2014 the National AIDS Commission (NAC) has been utilizing very innovative, creative and imaginative means to directly engage and reach the varying populations we serve. Throughout the past five years the NAC has reinvented its public private partnerships, develop and redesign its public image, recreate its communication and programs strategies and have made a concerted effort toward full inclusion of all populations represented in the response.

In 2016 the NAC in collaboration with CODE-IT launched its first app, Infections. This was a gaming app that was designed to engage the user in a fun and interactive gaming experience while imparting key knowledge about HIV/AIDS. This app was a pioneering effort and was recognized as one of the most innovative communication strategy in the region. Infection is available for FREE at the Google Play store.

In light of the success of Infection, the NAC then listen to the responses of the general public and then aligned it with our national mandate-access to HIV services for all-and decided to address another of the pressing issues facing the nation in relation to HIV services...readily available knowledge. The NAC realize that one of the key issues hindering our ability to reach our 90-90-90 targets has been the access to services; and one of the key reasons for not accessing services in Belize is lack of knowledge. Knowledge about where to go, what services the facilities offer and ultimately how to find the facilities.

Staying with the motive to bring innovation to the HIV/AIDS/TB response, the NAC in collaboration with LXJ Code Belize developed and design Belize's first HIV services App. This app is a readily available source of information on all the major HIV service facilities in the country. It provides the user with real-time data on the nearest health facility, what services they offer, location, links the user to the service providers' Facebook and website for more information and provides timely updates on upcoming events from varying partner agencies within the response. The NAC Health Services App is truly a gateway that shows the link between innovation and necessity.



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On Friday September 28<sup>th</sup> the NAC officially launched the Services App and it was available on both IOS and Android platforms. We take this opportunity to invite everyone to download the app and continue to seek healthy choices and proper health seeking behaviors in aspects of your life.



## UNICEF and Partners Launch U-Report Belize

### “Amplifying Young Voices in Safe Spaces”

*Belize City, Belize, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2018...*

UNICEF Belize and key partner National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) launched U-Report in Belize on Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup> with an I AM Belize U-Report Rally and Concert at the BTL Park. The theme for the launch “**Amplifying Young Voices in Safe Spaces**” emphasized the importance youth voices and the need for safe spaces allowing young people to come together, hang out, get information and as well as freely express themselves through music, drama and to share their own experiences and views on national social issues.



U-Report is a free online messaging tool that employs various social media platforms to engage youths, maintaining anonymity, confidentiality and credibility; designed to engage young people. The platform now allows for the discussion of issues such as poverty, climate change and emergencies, violence and conflict as well as economic inequality among other priority issues affecting the country and registers the results of polls instantaneously. The utility of the platform will allow organizations in decision making and advocacy management positions to engage young persons, field their views, collecting that information in a disaggregated manner and inform policy making and programme design addressing the needs of young people.

In Belize, the management of the platform employs a multi-partner approach that as well includes Ministry of Labour and Local Government via the Sustainable Child Friendly Municipality Initiative; Department of Youth Services of the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, Digi – Belize Telemedia Limited and SMART Belize.



Today, there are 493 U-Reporter members with an almost even male/female representation. U-Reporters are spread nationally across the country. To participate in U-Report you must register by sending the word JOIN via a message to the U-Report Belize Messenger account. To learn more, visit the U-Report webpage: <http://belize.ureport.in/>

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## TWO YOUNG BELIZEANS IN PERU!

From July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 4<sup>th</sup> 2018 two young Belizeans attended the Youth Now! Youth Leadership Camp in Lima Peru. The two youth leaders, Shayanne Dena (UNFPA Youth Advisory Group) and Dominique Noralez (BFLA Youth Advocacy Movement), were chosen to be two of the 50 participants from over 1000 applications from across Latin America and Caribbean. The camp focused on political advocacy in relation to population development.

Discussion topics included: Promotion and defense of human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, the right to education, and the rights of persons with disabilities, LGBTI people, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, children and adolescents, and people living with HIV, Activism in civil society and political advocacy activities, social auditing in favor of rights, governance, democratization, student leadership, peace, conflict resolution and defense of secularism, Promotion of gender equality, women's empowerment and prevention of social and gender violence, Participation in the Population and Development agenda, including the Montevideo Consensus, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, local community development, defense of the territory, social cohesion, environment and recovery of the community social fabric, Prevention of adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and early union, Communication for development, the creation of public opinion through blogs, opinion columns, radio, art for development, cultural management, community living culture and sports.



Outside of the training, the two Belizeans also got the opportunity to attend the **3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Conference on Population** convened by ECLAC. This conference serves as a space for governments to present their achievements made in relation to the Montevideo Consensus. This conference ended on August 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. It is interesting to note that Belize did not present our national report but representation included Mrs. Joan Burke Skeen as Civil Society Representative under the International Planned Parenthood Federation for the Belize Family Life Association and Mr. Mark Antrobus as Government Representative from the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation.

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## CONDOM SQUAD HIT THE PAVEMENT ON CARNIVAL DAY

The Youth Advocacy Movement, Belize's longest running youth-led organization, hosted its carnival day condom distribution activity. The event was a part of the BFLA/YAM **'Keeping it Sexy and Safe'** initiative and took place on the September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 on the route of the Carnival Road March in Belize City principal streets. This time of year Belizeans, specifically young people engage in festive activities that include consuming large volumes of alcohol which may lead to risky sexual behavior. Risky sexual behavior that may cause young people to contract and spread HIV along with other STDs and even unwanted pregnancies.



The activity included the distribution of condoms but also the dissemination of information to the public both in person and via social media platforms like Facebook. The activity leads straight into the launching of season 13 of the TV/Radio/Internet Media show, Bigg Chatz so do look out for it in October 2018! Yammies hope to extend the activity to pre-carnival mass camps in 2019.

## National Council on Ageing Recognizes International Day of Older Persons

October 1st is observed as International Day of Older Persons. In observation of this day the National Council on Ageing is hosting its annual Conference on Ageing on October 4th, 2018 at the Best Western Biltmore Plaza under the theme: **Financial Planning for Retirement**. In 2010 Help Age International estimated that over 65% of all older Persons in Belize did not have access to a pension. Financial security and financial resilience remains a challenge for older persons across the country. In an effort to safe guard the financial security of future Belizeans this year's conference will focus on:



- Educating key stakeholders on the importance of preparing for retirement
- Provide information regarding financial planning and how to adequately plan for retirement in the existing Belizean Economy.
- Discuss the benefits of pension provision for employees.
- Provide information to promote independent retirement planning through long term savings options.
- Provide an overview of the existing Pensions Act and its impact on Belizean employers and employees.

Post conference will focus on additional public education and awareness activities to encourage Belizeans to assess their own retirement readiness.

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## **PANCAP Director and the Inter Religious Organisation of Guyana (IRO) discuss faith leaders' role in ending AIDS**

**Monday 17 September 2018 (PANCAP Coordinating Unit, CARICOM Secretariat):** Director of PANCAP, Dereck Springer recently held

discussions with the Inter Religious Organization of Guyana (IRO) on the role of faith leaders in ending AIDS. The Director is advocating for faith leaders to leverage their influence with the communities they serve, youth and vulnerable populations to propagate HIV prevention including testing and other issues related to the achievement of the 90-90-90 Targets<sup>1</sup> and the 2030 goal of ending AIDS.

Present were the Secretary to the IRO, Jennifer Dewar, committee members Pastor Ronald McGarrell of the Family Federation for World Peace and Neil Bacchus of the Muslim Youth League.

The Director explained that PANCAP has been engaging faith leaders since its inception in 2001 in recognition of their reach and influence.

### **Contributing to the First 90**

Referring to the **First 90**, the Director stated that unlike other sectors, faith leaders have tremendous influence with various ethnicities, religions and people of all cultural backgrounds. Hence, faith leaders can provide information to large audiences to make informed decisions about knowing their status. He highlighted that this message aligns with the World AIDS Day 2018 theme, *“Know your status”*, and advised that this would be an ideal opportunity for faith leaders to begin dialogue with their communities on the importance of being tested.

### **Faith Leaders also critical to the Second 90**

“You also have a role to play in relation to the **Second 90** in helping people with treatment adherence,” stated the Director. He illustrated that faith leaders can provide information on nutrition and the importance of remaining on treatment. He highlighted that faith leaders are integral to providing PLHIV with counselling and social support as part of the work they do in providing solace and hope.

He also informed the IRO of the seven Caribbean territories and states that have achieved the dual targets for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and Syphilis and emphasized that faith leaders have a role in encouraging HIV positive pregnant women to remain on treatment to avoid transmission to their babies.

### **Third 90: Faith leaders' integral to public education on viral suppression**

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<sup>1</sup> **What are the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) 90-90-90 Targets?**

- By 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status.
- By 2020, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy.
- By 2020, 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.



“Faith leaders are also critical to the achievement of the **Third 90**”, stated Mr. Springer, “you have a captive audience that includes PLHIV and through your messages you can influence them to remain on medication and become virally suppressed”. He explained that faith leaders are critical to providing community-level education on the benefits of PLHIV achieving viral suppression.

### **Faith leaders can fill the gap left by diminished public education on HIV**

The Director further posited that faith leaders could empower their communities with health and family life education especially regarding young people and the issue of sex and sexuality. The PANCAP Director emphasized that in light of reduced public education on HIV prevention, treatment and care, it has become necessary for faith leaders to fill that gap by providing their communities with critical information and guidance on HIV. He urged the IRO to collaborate with PANCAP particularly with regard to reducing stigma and discrimination, which he highlighted as barriers to vulnerable populations accessing HIV prevention and quality health care.

### **Outcomes and commitments**

The IRO committed to discussing the proposed approaches with the wider body. Ms Dewar also proposed utilizing the influence of IRO members on other committees and boards to propagate the messages. She explained that members also serve on such bodies as the National Commission for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases and can utilize these platforms for HIV education. The IRO also committed to exploring the idea of a liaison between the two entities who would work with PANCAP on HIV education initiatives.

Mr. Springer stated that he was encouraged by the enthusiastic response of the IRO and committed to providing resources to reinforce HIV education initiatives by faith leaders through the provision of public awareness materials. At the culmination of the meeting, he stated, “I am pleased that the IRO is willing to explore utilizing their influence for HIV prevention. Indeed, the role of faith leaders is not to be underestimated at this critical juncture of the region’s HIV response”. The initiative forms part of a series of regional engagements by PANCAP with faith leaders under the [Justice for All \(JFA\) programme](#).



## **SCLAN & PANCAP collaborate for “Pressing Forward for the Health and Well-being of Women, Children and Adolescents”**

Sub-head: Event focused on the safety, physical and psychological well-being of women, children and adolescents.

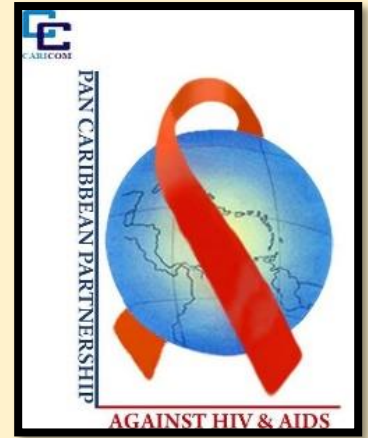
On Monday 24 September 2018 (PANCAP Coordinating Unit, CARICOM Secretariat): The Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network (SCLAN) in collaboration with the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP) hosted a special forum entitled ***“Pressing forward for the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents”*** as a side event during the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Monday 24 September 2018. The Forum was designed to increase awareness and to stimulate interest, especially among

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First Ladies to advocate for the development of programs that will support the safety, physical and psychological well-being of women, children and adolescents around the world. The event was chaired by Hon. Kim Simplis Barrow, First Lady of Belize and Chair of SCLAN.

It was intended to bring together First Ladies, Spouses of Heads of Government and UN Representatives to facilitate knowledge exchange, which can contribute positively to progress in key areas such as mental health, the reduction of gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, and HIV and AIDS. This initiative also aimed to build upon the long-term efforts set forth by the global community including former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Every Woman, Every Child Global Movement and the Global Strategy for Women's Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030).

Present were Hon. Dr. Patricia Minnis, First Lady of The Bahamas, Hon. Kim Simplis Barrow, First Lady of Belize and Chair of SCLAN, H.E. Sandra Granger, First Lady of the Republic of Guyana and Vice Chair, SCLAN, H.E. Martine Moise, First Lady of the Republic of Haiti, Hon. Eloise Gonsalves, First Lady of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ms. Laura Tucker-Longworth, OBE, Speaker of the Belize House of Representatives and PANCAP Champion and Director of PANCAP, Mr. Dereck Springer.



## Promoting Empowerment Through Awareness for Les/Bi Women (PETAL)



After completing a very informative and in-depth training, the PETAL BUDDIES Peer-to-Peer Navigators are doing their own mini-support group sessions educating their peers about HIV, GBV, and HIV Treatment and Adherence and providing referrals across the country. PETAL BUDDIES (Building Understanding of the Difficulties and Dilemmas in Engaging Services). We have trained 13 Peer navigators from across the country and will throughout the country until the end of the keeping with the 90-90-90 goals.

Fifteen (15) women of all ages and their children were trained in basic computer literacy as a part of Empowerment and Life Skills (PELS) program. Participants learned and practiced computer hardware, software and operating especially by strengthening their skills in keyboarding. They are now familiar with popular programs like MS Word and PowerPoint.



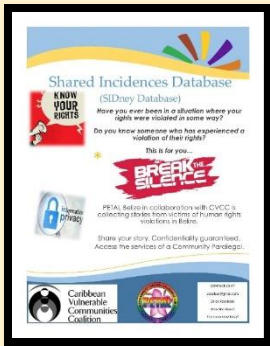
We will continue to do support group sessions year under the present funding from CVCC in



children were trained for our Peer training the use of systems



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As a grantee of CVCC, PETAL has held four (4) mini - sessions informing the country about the use of the SIDney database platform. SID stands for Shared Incidence Database. It is a mechanism/platform designed to log human rights violations. Simone Hill, one of the community paralegals, speaks on Human Rights issues and this ties in with supporting the SIDney database in providing redress and assistance.

PETAL is hosting the CWSDC 2018 (Caribbean Women Sexuality and Diversity Conference) in October. October 4-8. This year's Theme: ***BUILDING THE CASE: Strengthening Caribbean LBT Research for Advocacy.***

Please follow the link below that speaks of the UPR and ICCPR for which Belize is to report on in October. PETAL's coordinator, Simone Hill will be representing Belize at the UPR and Caleb Orozco (UNIBAM) will represent Belize at the ICCPR.

<https://www.facebook.com/OpenYourEyesBz/videos/321684221972676/>

## Empower Yourself Belize Movement (EBYM) Updates:



### SEX, Gender and Sexuality Workshop



Session were held to inform participants of the definition and differences between the concepts of sex, gender and sexuality. Participants were then asked to identify where they got their earliest lessons and messages about gender, sex and sexuality and how this impacted them.

This portion of the workshop ended with participants engaged in a sexuality myths and fact interactive activities.

### Human Rights workshop with LGBTI community- EBYM

hosted a workshop at the Maya Princess Hotel in San Pedro on Sunday September 23rd, 2018 for the LGBTI community that focused on primarily on educating and empowering the LGBTI community in San Pedro about thier Human Rights and how to address Human Rights violations



The workshop focused on: (1) what is the legal rights and obligations of the LGBTI community; and (2) what the institutional structures of the legal system are.

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There was a second Human Rights and Belize workshop which was aimed at educating, empowering and introducing Community Paralegal and SID to the key Stakeholders in Orange Walk Town.

**EYBM celebrated PRIDE 2018** to commemorate the Section 53 ruling and the subsequent strengthening of their advocacy within the varying communities and partnerships.



## National AIDS Commission and the Ministry of Health collaborate on a NAC District Committee skills building training

On Thursday August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 the NAC held a scheduled District Committee (DC) certified training. The intent of the training was to strengthen the non-Ministry of Health (MOH) members (mostly new members) of the DC in HIV/TB, the Belize Health Information Systems (BHIS) and the policies and procedures of the NAC. The NAC invited two members from each of the seven DC's for a total of fourteen invited members to be a part of the training. This training was vital because it served as the basis for future trainings and overall development of the DC as we continue our revitalization efforts.

The NAC engaged the assistance of the MOH to deliver the HIV/TB & BHIS training components component of the training. As per the agenda, the MOH staff deliver the HIV/TB & BHIS components of the program and engaged the participants in dynamic discussions that allowed the NAC to better gain on-the-ground perspectives on the effectiveness of our program design and how to better implement future programs.

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## The National AIDS Commission launches two new dynamic ads...

The National AIDS Commission is proud to launch its Wedding Conundrum 2 HIV Awareness ad. This is a follow-up to Wedding Conundrum 1 and follows the couple at a one-year anniversary party where they received some very important but distressing news.....



The NAC also launched another awareness ad that focused on human rights: "Once Upon a time In Belize...a Human Rights Story." This ad follows the lives of three people who have been discriminated against for various reasons and shows the viewers the linkages between all the individuals as it relates to their Human Rights and HIV violations.....



The national AIDS Commission is proud to continue its legacy and history of redefining the HIV/TB response in Belize and as a forerunner in this response we continue to strive to meet the needs of the country, provide hope and create an enabling environment through dedicated service.

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**OCT - DEC**



## **BELIZE PARLIAMENTARIANS SENSITIZATION FORUM**

**Parliamentarians to define their Legislative, Representational and Oversight Roles to Address the Challenges toward Ending the AIDS Epidemic.**

**The Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP), with funding from the CARIFORUM 10th European Development Fund (EDF) Programme of Support for Wider Caribbean Cooperation hosted a [Parliamentarians Sensitization Forum](#) in Belize on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018.**

The Forum is a follow-up to the series of engagements involving parliamentarians under the PANCAP Justice for All programme. Parliamentarians were sensitized with regard to their advocacy role for the elimination of stigma and discrimination, as well as their legislative, representational and oversight roles.

The objectives of the forum was to identify the barriers to achieving the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets including stigma and discrimination; define parliamentarians' legislative, representational and oversight roles in addressing the barriers to ending the AIDS epidemic; and agree on specific actions to be undertaken by parliamentarians and timeline.

In an invited comment, Hon Laura Tucker-Longsworth MSN. RN. OBE. - Speaker of the National Assembly; Chairperson, National AIDS Commission said that there must be increased engagement with parliamentarians on health, social protection, justice and attacking stigma and discrimination. Parliamentarians have the mandate to play a more meaningful role in advocating and championing for supportive policies, laws and budgetary allocations in an effort to end AIDS by 2030.

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## The National AIDS Commission Commemorates World AIDS Day 2018

On November 30th, 2018, as we observe World AIDS Day, the National AIDS Commission of Belize (NAC) renewed its commitment to having everyone know their HIV status. This year's theme focuses on the knowing your status which is directly linked to UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets.

As the national response, the National AIDS Commission and its partners have made significant strides in the fight against HIV/AIDS/TB. As the global reach has turned the tide on HIV by transforming a death sentence into a treatable disease; millions of people are on treatment, but even better - millions of people are NOT on treatment because they have the tools to protect themselves. Due to accelerated research and development, we are in pursuit of a cure. While we have championed the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable, we are not done.



In Belize it is our goal to reach a system of universal health coverage, which will ensure that health policies and programmes promote human rights and that our most vulnerable and marginalized populations are at the centre of these programmes, ensuring that no one is left behind. Stigma and discrimination is however, one of the biggest barriers that still deters people from taking an HIV test. Access to confidential HIV testing is still an issue of concern. Many people still only get tested after becoming ill and symptomatic. These policy changes are instrumental in creating an anti-discrimination atmosphere that opens the door for testing and therefore more Belizeans knowing their status.

HIV testing is critical for scaling up treatment and ensuring that all people living with HIV can lead healthy and productive lives. It is also crucial to achieving the 90-90-90 targets and empowering people to make choices about HIV prevention so they can protect themselves and their loved ones.

In order to meet the need and targets of people living with HIV/AIDS, the NAC conducted a robust and daring two-prong campaign. (1) In the weeks leading up to World ADIS Day, the NAC (through the aid of Santiago Castillo Ltd., and Grace Kennedy Belize Ltd.) provide 130 food packages to needed families throughout the country who are affected by HIV/AIDS. (2) On November 30<sup>th</sup>, the NAC and its partners embarked on the very popular and effective free HIV testing day. This signature activity has become a staple event in the health care landscape for Belize and an integral part of the Belize's move to target awareness, stigma and discrimination and better health-seeking behaviors in our populace.



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The National AIDS Commission takes this opportunity to thank all its partners for their support, guidance and dedication throughout 2018 and we look forward to strengthening our partnerships as we move forward in 2019.

**HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!**

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