

Responding to the Effects of Violence on Young Children



The Belizean Experience

International Expert Consultation on
the Prevention of and Responses to
Violence against Young Children
Lima, Peru

- Share the efforts of the GOB in responding to the effects of violence on children living in high crime areas
- Initiatives are relatively new since 2010 so very much a work in progress, but we are already seeing green shoots
- We have benefitted greatly from south-south cooperation and adopting best practices to our Belizean reality
- C\Good example of the value of these interchanges among countries and groups as we try to find solid solutions for common human problems



- Belize is experiencing very high rates of violent crimes, particularly murders.
- In a country of 305,000 people, the 132 murders recorded in 2011 has far reaching impact.
- The most affected area is the largest urban area in the country- Belize City

Situation (cont'd)

- Increasing numbers of reported cases of child abuse.
- Reports in the past 3 years of very young children facing sexual abuse
- Growing number of reported cases of physical abuse of children 4 to 8 years. Boys in this age group are the second highest group for which reports are received

Situation (cont'd)

- Various studies conducted on the causes of violence and the effects on the children and the results were predictable .
- Clear understanding that there needed to be a multi-faceted response to the problem.
- The response needed to be multi-sectoral and coordinated .
- There must be investment in early childhood development

- In 2009 when we registered our highest number of murders 32 per 100.000 which was at civil war levels
- It was clear that we needed to do things very differently because the interventions that were more police and criminal justice heavy and human development responses were not very coordinated
- Unfortunate set of circumstances , but it presented an opportunity for the social sector to harness political will and budgets
- Advocacy from the social sector Ministeries

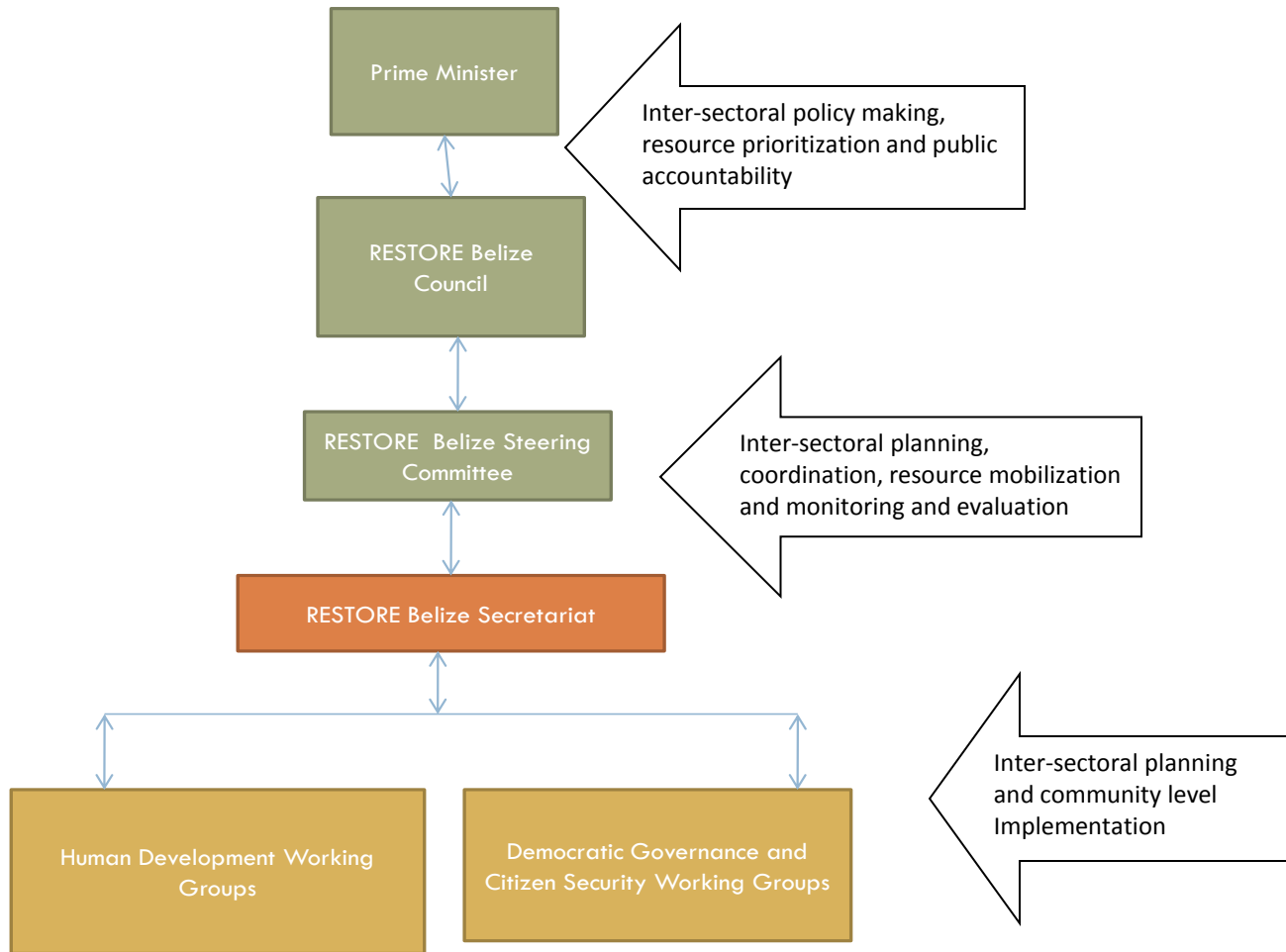
RESTORE



BELIZE

A "Prime Minister" led coordination body that brings together government, private sector and civil society stakeholders in the development, implementation and monitoring of specific strategies aimed at improving the quality of life for each citizen through the restoration of law and order and community building.

The RESTORE Belize Organogram



Laws and Policies

- Abolition of Corporal Punishment in child care settings, institutions and in the education system (May 2011).
- Revision of Integrated Early Childhood Policy-robust child protection component that emphasizes prevention and parenting.
- Current revision of laws on sexual abuse of children and human trafficking that carry life sentences for offenses against young children.
- Legal reform to remove restrictions on young children giving direct evidence in cases of child abuse

Building Protective Factors at Community and Family Level

- Establishment of “ Safe Zones” pilots in the most violent neighbourhoods.
- Interventions includes welfare services to families : conditional cash transfer programme, food subsidy programme, housing assistance , education assistance.
- Skills training and job placement for women, emphasizing single mothers. Programme has a built in life skills component and family support case worker



Building Protective Factors at Community and Family

Level(2)

- Work Programme for Gang Affiliates – credited with a modest decrease in the number of murders.
- Reclaiming of community spaces – “Peace in the Park”, Midnight Basketball

Interventions Targeting Young Children

- Roving Caregivers Programme – home visitation child stimulation and parenting programme for children 0-3 years.
- Capacity Building for child care providers, pre and primary school teachers in Mandatory Reporting of child abuse that includes training on the alternative forms of discipline, identification and referral of suspected cases of child abuse.

Implementing the Corporal Punishment Ban

- Employment of a transformational, whole school approach that engages management, teachers, parents and the community.

Incorporation into Quality Schools Initiative

- Development and implementation of rights based school discipline policy in 100% of schools.



Implementing the Corporal Punishment Ban

- Restorative justice/conflict resolution programmes in schools
- Parenting education programmes in all schools
- Mass media campaign on positive discipline
-

In the best interest of our children

- The Ministries of Human Development, Education and Health are collaborating on early childhood development
- Sanctioned by newly formed Social Sector Ministerial Caucus
- Health, child stimulation and early education, water and sanitation and child protection to ensure that our youngest citizens have the best start in life in peaceful communities