



**SPECIAL ENVOY**  
*for the Development of Families & Children*

**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY FOR  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILIES &  
CHILDREN**

**ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT  
2021 - 2022**



**SPECIAL ENVOY**  
*for the Development of Families & Children*

## **Table of Contents**

<b><i>Message of the Special Envoy</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Abbreviations</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Executive Summary</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	
1. <i>Overview of the OSE</i>	5
2. <i>Main Achievements of OSE by Program</i>	6
2.1 <i>Special Education Transformation</i>	9
2.2 <i>Mental Health Awareness and Support</i>	11
2.3 <i>Domestic Abuse Informational Sessions and Legal Clinics</i>	13
2.4 <i>Secondary School Scholarship Program</i>	15
2.5 <i>Strengthening Diplomatic Relations</i>	16
2.6 <i>Women's Month Activities</i>	17
2.7 <i>Disaster Relief Response</i>	18
3. <i>Lessons Learnt</i>	19
4. <i>Future Priorities and Plans</i>	20
5. <i>Staffing and Financial Considerations</i>	21
6. <i>Conclusions and Recommendations</i>	22
<i>Annex 1: List of technical staff</i>	24

## *Message of the Special Envoy*

As a champion for families and children, my work as the Special Envoy has always been to empower our most vulnerable. Enabling them to fully contribute and successfully participate in achieving Belize's development goals.



Through crucial partnerships with government ministries, civil society organizations, and international partners, the OSE has and continues to advocate for children and adults with special needs; raise awareness for mental health and gender-based violence; and serve as a voice for those who have no access.

Under this office, I also work very closely with the Special Education Unit as a resource person. By working in partnership with school personnel, families, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Special Education Unit within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology (MOECST) ensures equitable access to education for children with diverse learning abilities.

Additionally, as the Chair of the Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network (SCLAN) for the year 2022-2024, I am committed to addressing 5 key areas affecting the region's social and human development. These include gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, adolescent pregnancy, cervical cancer, and mental health. Since its launch in 2017, SCLAN has partnered with the private and public sectors, UN agencies, and civil society on 15 projects within CARICOM. SCLAN aims to advance the Global Strategy for Women, Adolescents, and Girls, the "Every Woman, Every Child Initiative", and to advance the 2030 SDG Agenda.

Thus, this report is reflective of the impactful efforts that have been made through the OSE to improve the lives of women and children in Belize.

***Her Excellency Rossana Briceño***  
*Special Envoy*  
*The Office of the Special Envoy for the*  
*Development of Families and Children*

## Abbreviations

ALMA	Alliance of Spouses of Chiefs and State Representatives
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
EL DIF	( <i>Spanish for</i> ) Mexican National System for Integral Family Development
DMCCC	Dorothy Menzies Child Care Center
DV	Domestic Violence
GBV	Gender based violence
GOB	Government of Belize
MHDFIPA	Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs
MDRT	Mico Diagnostic Reading Test
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOECST	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology
MOHW	Ministry of Health and Wellness
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration
NARCIE	National Resource Center for Inclusive Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHI	National Health Insurance
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister



OSE	The Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children
SCLAN	Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	Special Envoy
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

## Executive Summary

The Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children (OSE) was reinstituted to support the GOB in advancing #planBelize families’ and women’s agenda. Thus, the main priority areas of focus for the OSE are families, children, women and gender, special education/education, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

In pursuit of this mission, the OSE partners are essentially five (5) ministries that address similar priority areas, such as the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM); Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs (MHDFIPA); Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology (MOECST), Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MOA), and Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW). These partnerships align and scale up resources to bring strategic focus, coordinated efforts, and increased investments for concrete actions.

By working closely with these key stakeholders, the OSE’s strategic action aims to advocate for policy development and strengthening, capacity building, and the implementation of initiatives that address the needs of our nation. To advance #plan Belize’s families’ and women’s agenda, the OSE has implemented various programs such as the secondary school scholarship program in collaboration with the Embassy of the

Republic of China (Taiwan), mental health workshops within the MHDFIPA, resource allocation for underfunded schools and Government-run children's homes/facilities, GDV workshops, hurricane relief response, professional training, and development for persons within the special education field, just to name a few.

Moreover, future plans for the OSE include establishing the Safe Families, Safe Municipalities proposal, strengthening special education centres across the country, implementing trauma-informed classrooms at the primary level, and contributing to improving the children's homes/facilities operated by the GOB. The OSE is also in the process of establishing a partnership with the Mexican National System for Integral Family Development (ELDIF) to provide rehabilitation services for special needs children, which are not available in Belize.

## Introduction

### **1. Overview of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children.**

The OSE was established in Belize to promote and advocate for critical issues affecting families and children in our society. This esteemed office serves as a platform to address various concerns, including but not limited to gender equality, children's rights, special education, and mental health.

The OSE operates within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), and its office is situated within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MOFAFT), the Laing Building in Belize City. The office has three (3) staff inclusive of an Executive Assistant, an Assistant Program Coordinator, and a Program Coordinator.

Through its goal of empowering Belizean families and children, the role of the OSE is to aid GOB in achieving its manifesto: #planBelize. This is achieved through securing funding for Government projects and capacity-building efforts, as well as lobbying for

the development and reform of social policies and legislation, and implementing programs and initiatives that benefit and promote the rights of children and families.

The OSE also assists the government's agenda by strengthening relationships with development partners and private organisations locally, regionally, and internationally to submit funding-seeking ideas for initiatives and programs that strive to strengthen society and pave the way for a better future for all Belizeans.

Finally, the OSE also acts as a national focal point on thematic areas and, thereby, functions to raise public awareness and create educational activities and programs that are designed and implemented to increase public awareness about issues affecting families and children in Belize.

## **1.1 Mission Statement and Priorities of the OSE**

The mission of the OSE is to support GOB in building on the individual and collective strengths, ideas, and experiences of Belizean families and children to transform our communities for a prosperous, cohesive, and resilient Belize. Along with its mission, the OSE envisions a Belize where families and children are empowered and able to lead meaningful, successful lives.

The OSE believes that a prosperous and resilient Belize is possible when vulnerable groups are empowered to initiate and drive their personal growth and development, while also being supported to harness resources and access services that allow them to fully participate in the development of themselves, their families, and Belize.

Under this mission and vision, the OSE focuses on three priority groups: persons living with disabilities, vulnerable families, and children. The factors which the OSE has identified as the underlying causes of vulnerability are:

- ❖ Inability to meet the basic needs: poverty, food insecurity, lack of assets, and lack of access to resources.

- ❖ Social exclusion: socioeconomic status, disability, special needs, and family status (single-headed households)
- ❖ Deprivation: nutrition and illness, access to services, school/employment participation.

The most vulnerable children are those who have no caregiver, have a physical or mental disability, come from the most vulnerable families, and are especially at risk of illness, dropping out of school, and violence/abuse.

Based on these factors, the OSE recognizes that empowering vulnerable groups must be inclusive of addressing the underlying systemic factors that contribute to their vulnerability. Thus, the OSE has an inherent and fundamental responsibility to support GOB in achieving its #planBelize Manifesto by addressing the major issues affecting women and children, such as:

1. Violence and crime against women and children
2. Human trafficking of women, adolescents, and children
3. Sexual exploitation/abuse of women and children
4. Social protection of marginalised women and children (i.e., old, homeless, abandoned, and disabled)
5. Poor representation of women in leadership and management in the public, private, and civil society sectors.
6. Women's equal ownership and/or access to the factors of production, i.e., Land, Finance, and Technology.
7. Males are staying behind in education, with drug abuse, work discipline, and family values/vocation.

Through its effort to address these issues, the OSE refers to the national strategies outlined in #planBelize 2021-2025, GOB's official strategic document, from which the following has been extracted to serve as some of the guiding principles for the OSE:

- ➔ Secure women's access and affordability to proper healthcare services throughout their life cycle (girls, adolescents, childbearing, and older women).

- Empower women through the creation of economic opportunities.
- Increase women's access to and ownership of affordable land and housing.
- Achieve gender equality and equity and end discrimination against women and girls.
- Promote Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).
- Guarantee the equitable participation of women in leadership and governance.
- Strengthen and expand measures to ensure the safety and security of women and children.
- Develop a comprehensive program for educating and sensitizing men on women's issues.
- Ensure that all children have equal opportunity and access to education.
- Develop access to healthy activities, mentoring programs, counselling services, support groups, spaces for Wellness and self-care groups: AA, Gamblers Anonymous, survivors of domestic abuse, and public education on special needs and diverse abilities.
- Provide community and youth leadership skills training, and foster democratic participation, advocacy, and self-reliance.
- Expand skills training, small business collaborations, non-political Boost programs, and Pantry, sports, and cultural family activities.

Furthermore, in support of its mandate, the OSE also observes and follows several international agreements and treaties that Belize has signed and endorsed. These primarily include the UN Human Rights Treaties, which outline the rights of women, children, and families, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1990), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2011), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990).

Finally, the OSE's mission statement is also aligned with GOB's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to eradicate poverty, reduce vulnerabilities, and promote socio-economic resilience, namely the SDGs below:

- SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms.
- SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
- SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- SDG 16: Promote peaceful, inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

## 2. Main Achievements of the OSE by Program

### 2.1 Special Education Transformation

In its efforts to transform special education in Belize, the OSE visited and strategized with several schools across various communities that have a special education centre (*reference image 2.11 - 2.14*). These visits, often in collaboration with the National Resource Center for Inclusive Education (NARCIE), allowed for a better understanding and appreciation of the individual needs of each school and helped to identify ways to respond for better inclusiveness and accommodation of our children with diverse needs and abilities. The goal of NARCIE is to ensure schools and teachers have the support to accommodate any special needs and considerations required by children.

The OSE has trained officers within the Special Education Unit in the Mico Diagnostic Reading Test (MDRT). This included a working session with NARCIE Officers to take a strategic look at meeting the mission and objectives of the special education unit at MOECST (*reference image 2.15*). The OSE has also implemented training services with a route for certification for Sign Language Interpreters countrywide. This was achieved through a joint effort with MOE and Autism Belize.

Furthermore, in our commitment to inclusive education, the OSE, with the support of UNICEF, presented various equipment to Stella Maris School for the benefit of their Life Skills Approach program (*reference image 2.16*). These types of equipment included sewing machines, an industrial stove, and a freezer that helped to strengthen the program. Hence, our support of this program was instrumental as it serves to assist students with disabilities to gain skills that will facilitate a better quality of life and ensure their holistic development. Through these important initiatives and partnerships, the OSE has worked to ensure better and more inclusive education opportunities for our children with special needs.

Finally, in support of the overall education system in Belize, the OSE has obtained and distributed literacy resources for underfunded schools countrywide. This is an ongoing project and endeavour of the Office.



Image 2.11: Discussion with the staff and administration of the Louisiana Government School



Image 2.13: Discussions with the staff of St. Matthew's Anglican School



Image 2.12: Visits with schools in Southern Belize



Image 2.14: Visits with schools in the Corozal District





Image 2.15: Strategizing with NARCIE officers



Image 2.16: Presentation of equipment for Stella Maris School

## 2.2 Mental Health Awareness and Support

To align with our agenda, the OSE has facilitated ongoing Mental Health Workshops within the MHDFIPA.

The OSE has also launched a cooperative effort with MOHW for Mind Health Connect to provide counselling to frontline staff at the KMHM (*reference image 2.21*). This initiative was launched in response to the mounting need caused by the unrelenting stress of caring for COVID-19 patients. This program will also be extended and available to our security forces.

Additionally, the OSE partnered with the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to invest in the mental health and overall well-being of the children and staff at the New Beginnings, formerly Princess Royal Youth Hostel. Phase I of the project involved capital investments in education, programming, and rehabilitation. This included donations of a stove, industrial wash and dryer, uniforms, books for the library, and school and art supplies. In phase II, the OSE supported the children from New Beginnings to participate in a 6-week workshop to build their life skills in cooking and sewing. Finally, phase III of the project at New Beginnings focused on improving mental health and involved facilitating a therapist to visit once a week with the children. The office-sponsored therapist also helped with the capacity building of the staff by engaging in sessions with them on mental health and managing their workload.



Furthermore, the OSE collaborated with California Baptist University to organise a training session with social workers and residential care staff on mental health and adverse childhood experiences, which was instructed by Dr. Kendra Flores Carter, an Assistant Professor with the Department of Social Work at California Baptist University. This initiative was a follow-up to the needs identified at a familiarization meeting hosted by Mrs. Rossana Briceño, Special Envoy, in 2021.

Lastly, because mental health is a major part of our overall health and well-being, the OSE has also used its platform on social media to break the taboo around mental illnesses with education and awareness campaigns and posts.



Image 2.21: Joint effort to support the mental health needs of frontline workers.



Image 2.22: Supporting New Beginnings Youth Development Center



Image 2.23: Training Session on Mental Health

## 2.3 Domestic Abuse Informational Sessions and Legal Clinics

As a pillar of #planBelize, the OSE has implemented programs to ensure the rights and protection of women and children in Belize. This has led to ongoing domestic abuse informational sessions and legal clinics for women held across Belize and in partnership with the MHDFIPA (*reference image 2.31-2.37*).

These empowerment and sensitization sessions focused on educating women on gender-based violence, recognizing its different forms, and understanding the laws for legal redress and services available to women and girls who are survivors of and dealing with gender-based violence (GBV) situations. The OSE worked with the Bar Association to have multiple lawyers attend the sessions to provide free legal counsel to the women and educate them on their rights.

Since building awareness is key in our work to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, the OSE, in collaboration with Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network (SCLAN) and the Spotlight Initiative, also held sessions that engage our boys and girls to increase their awareness of the dynamics of GBV. In a session held at the Orange Walk Technical High School, topics such as navigating societally assigned roles, determining your value system, navigating relationships, managing anger, and effective communication were discussed (*reference image 2.38*). By involving youths early in the discussion on gender, stereotypes, and managing emotions, these sessions and

workshops help to change and shape mindsets for the future, which has become an important pillar in the fight against GBV.



Image 2.31: DV Sessions in Corozal



Image 2.32: DV Sessions in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye



Image 2.33: DV Sessions in San Ignacio



Image 2.34: DV Sessions for Women from the Sugar Industry, ASR/BSI, in Orange Walk District



Image 2.35: DV Sessions in Ladyville



Image 2.36: DV Sessions in Hopkins





Image 2.37: DV Sessions in Belmopan



Image 2.38: Engaging Boys and Girls on the Topic of GBV in Orange Walk Town

## 2.4 High School Scholarship Program

In partnership with the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the office has established the secondary school scholarship program to assist 18 students across the six (6) districts with tuition and stipend scholarships, as follows:

Student Awardees	School	District
3	Escuela Secundaria Tecnica Mexico	Corozal
2	Belize High School of Agriculture	Orange Walk
1	Orange Walk Technical High School	Orange Walk
1	Belize Rural High School	Belize
1	Edward P. York High School	Belize
2	Belmopan Comprehensive High School	Cayo
1	Mopan Technical High School	Cayo
3	Bella Vista Government Secondary School	Stann Creek
3	Julian Cho Technical High School	Toledo
1	Corazon Creek Technical High School	Toledo

This is an ongoing initiative that will ensure that recipients are supported towards the completion of their secondary education.



Image 2.41: Ceremony Held for Scholarship Recipients

## 2.5 Strengthening Diplomatic Relations

As the Chair of SCLAN and the Spouse of the Prime Minister of Belize, the Special Envoy has participated in several international forums that have helped to establish and strengthen diplomatic relations with various organizations and world leaders. Such meetings have helped to highlight Belize on the world stage and have facilitated the gathering of global support, albeit via endorsements or funding, towards tackling the major issues affecting our nation on both a local and global levels.

Such an initiative included a joint declaration between the Alliance of Spouses of Chiefs and State Representatives (ALMA) and SCLAN, which culminated with a gathering of members in New York City during the United Nations General Side Events in September 2022. The purpose of this joint declaration was to strengthen relations between the regional organizations and to facilitate the dialogue related to issues of common interest that require the commitment and participation of all sectors of society. H.E. Rossana Briceño was present at the event to share her office and SCLAN's commitment to empowering vulnerable groups while promoting cooperation, solidarity, equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity, among other issues of common interest.

As well, an event held in Kigali, Rwanda, called for joint accelerated efforts to eliminate cervical cancer in the Commonwealth. At this event, H.E. Mrs Rossana Briceño shared

with the delegates her dedication to using her good offices for greater awareness and toward reducing the risk of women developing cervical cancer. The OSE, through its collaborative efforts with SCLAN and the MOHW, has utilized its platforms through informational media campaigns to raise awareness for vaccinations, screenings, early detection, and other ways to prevent this life-threatening disease.

Finally, H.E. Briceño also participated in the Second Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen, where she shared some remarks. The purpose of this summit was to stand in solidarity with Ukraine and raise awareness of the crisis brought on by the war. The first ladies of the world gathered in a joint effort to raise funds towards the purchase of ambulances to support and strengthen Ukraine's health response to the war. The Special Envoy's participation in such international endeavours is especially vital to solidifying Belize's global reach and presence within the international spheres.

## **2.6 Activities during Women's Month in 2022**

As a part of Women's Month in March of each year, the OSE joins with the MHDFIPA and the Women's Commission to carry out several activities that celebrate and highlight our outstanding Belizean women. A few of the activities conducted in March of 2021 include a High School Vision Board Party that was carried out in several secondary schools to inspire and rally young women towards working together for Belize's development. The OSE also coordinated with MOHW to have a National Health Fair in which clinics and hospitals offered discounts to public servants when doing their preventative care.

Additionally, utilizing its public reach and social media platforms, the OSE highlighted several inspiring women who have been positively contributing to Belize's development, including six (6) female entrepreneurs who have been successful in finding niches that provide a unique product or service. The main purpose of this initiative was to recognize and demonstrate our appreciation for the impactful work that women have been doing in our country while also inspiring other women and young women to do the same.

This activity has also continued as one of the activities for March 2022, with the addition of a Women in Business Pop-Up Shop that was facilitated in various municipalities across the country and was a collaborative effort between the OSE and other organizations that support women's empowerment and entrepreneurship. Finally, through prioritizing

women's health, for Women's Month 2022, the OSE collaborated with NHI to provide free pap smears, VIA, and breast examinations for women at several health centres and clinics across the country. This initiative was especially important in ensuring access to screenings that can aid in the possible prevention and early detection of health-related issues affecting women.

## 2.7 Disaster Relief Response

As mentioned before, the priority areas for the OSE include supporting the most vulnerable population, especially in times of natural disasters. To this end, Mrs. Rossana Briceño, along with Elvira Mendez, Counsellor for Belize on the Board of Executive Directors of IDB, presented a monetary donation to HelpAge Belize, Orange Walk Chapter. The purpose of this donation was to provide relief to the victims affected by flooding resulting from hurricanes Eta and Iota. The funds directly benefited victims in the villages of Douglas, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Santa Martha, San Roman, and Trial Farm in the Orange Walk District.

Additionally, following the aftermath of Hurricane Lisa, Mrs. Briceño, accompanied by Elvira Mendez, also presented donations from an IDB fundraiser to Liberty Children's Home and Sister Cecelia Home for the Elderly. This valuable contribution was instrumental in supporting these care facilities in their recovery and maintaining operations.

Moreover, in response to Hurricane Lisa, the OSE collaborated with private sector partners, SanCas Limited, Nando's Wholesale, and 123 Supermarket, to present 170 toiletry packages to the MHDFIPA that were distributed to affected families. Lastly, to help with the relief and recovery following Hurricane Lisa, H.E. Rossana Briceño also joined Joel Nagel, Chairman of Caye International Bank Ltd., to deliver a monetary donation to the Dorothy Menzies Child Care Center (DMCCC) to support repairs at the centre.



Image 2.71: Monetary donations for Liberty Children's Home and Sister Cecelia Home for the Elderly



Image 2.72: Donation of toiletry packages to hurricane victims



Image 2.73: Monetary donation to DMCCC

### 3. Lessons Learnt

The post-evaluation of the programs carried out by the Office has led to the identification of several lessons that would have enhanced the effectiveness of the accomplishments outlined in this report. These include:

- ➔ Increase networking with key stakeholders to allocate support, resources, and funding for projects.
- ➔ Maintain consistent and direct communication and collaboration with important stakeholders and other local and international organizations to ensure the success of the programs.
- ➔ Expand and roll out the domestic violence and GBV information and sensitization sessions to engage youths from all schools across Belize.
- ➔ Increase and boost public awareness on issues affecting our communities, such as sexual violence, GBV, cancers, HIV and AIDS, and children's rights, through media campaigns and programs.
- ➔ Improve access to support services and information for women in DV situations.
- ➔ Expand and increase the allocation of funding from external partners to support the continuity of current programs and allow for the implementation of new initiatives that will improve the lives of women and children in Belize.



- ➔ Highlight and publicize the achievements of the Office through various media platforms to keep the public attuned to the impactful and important work that the OSE is doing.
- ➔ Utilize and keep up with emerging technology to enhance our communication, functioning, efficiency, and outreach.
- ➔ Strengthen and continuously support the capacity building of the OSE staff through participation in training and information sessions.

## **4. Future Priorities and Plans**

The Office has four (4) projects it is seeking support to execute in line with its mandate and objective:

1. Proposal to establish safe families and safe municipalities.

This proposed program will involve developing a GBE Support Network in each of the nine (9) municipalities of Belize through the capacity building of local governments to improve access to services offered to those affected by DV.

2. Strengthen twelve (12) existing special education centers.

Through the allocation of resources and funding and equipping staff with the necessary training, the OSE will continue the work of enhancing the field of Special Education in Belize.

3. Implement trauma-informed classrooms at the primary school level.

To respond to the mental health needs of children, the OSE will promote and support trauma awareness and understanding to help recognize the prevalence and symptoms of trauma, encourage support and recovery, and avoid re-traumatization.

4. Contribute to the improvement of services offered by the Government-run children's homes/facilities.

This initiative will involve continuing to provide services to children living in the Government-run facilities to support their mental health through counselling,

develop their life skills through training programs, and maintain their overall prosperity through essential staff training and the supply of vital resources.

## **5. Staffing and Financial Considerations**

At present, the OSE is working to bolster the initiatives it has completed while strategizing to add more programs to its portfolio in support of women and children in Belize. Based on this, the main strength of the OSE is its advocacy platform, which serves as an important and respected body to enact and encourage positive change concerning the areas of focus mentioned at the beginning of this report. Inversely, the possible weaknesses of this Office lie in the often-limited financial resources available to carry out successful projects. While the OSE is supported by GOB under the umbrella of the MHDFIA, its allocated funds are often not comparable to the amount of the programs the Office tries to execute. For this reason, some desirable changes would be to increase our partnerships with international and local organizations that offer funding through grants or donations for projects and programs that align with our goals of empowering our most vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, the size of the staff at the OSE also serves as both a strength and a weakness. With a smaller staff, collaboration, inclusion, and communication are often strengthened through the close working relationship of the staff members. However, this also means that members of the staff might be working on and overseeing multiple projects at a time to ensure the desired outputs and outcomes for the OSE. The desirable changes that have been enacted to accommodate the three-member staff of the OSE involve outlining the essential duties and responsibilities that are required and expected for each job title. This allows for a clear understanding of everyone's role and function within the OSE. As well, when it comes to the overall workload, the OSE ensures equal disbursement of projects among its staff members, while also encouraging its staff to support one another towards the successful completion of their respective initiatives and goals. This guarantees that, even with limited human resources, the OSE maintains the efficiency and productivity of the Office.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

As an important advocacy body in Belize, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children is responsible for helping our most disenfranchised and vulnerable persons, albeit via new programs or policy changes that are tailored to empowering such groups. So far, the OSE has overseen the successful implementation and achievement of various initiatives that have benefited and supported women, children, and families in Belize.

In terms of education, such initiatives have included the transformation of special education schools and programs through school visits, donations, and training programs. The successful institution of a high school scholarship program has assisted 18 students from across Belize with covering the cost of their tuition and fees.

Another impactful achievement aimed at supporting women in Belize was the domestic abuse informational sessions and legal clinics, which have been instrumental in empowering and educating women about GBV, inclusive of the laws and services available to protect survivors. A similar session was also facilitated with young men and women to engage them in informed discussions on the topic of GBV. Also, on the topic of supporting women, the OSE has facilitated various activities for Women's Month to highlight the important work and contributions of our Belizean women.

Likewise, another noteworthy achievement of the OSE is its support of mental health awareness, for which the Office has worked to provide both counselling services and training sessions on the topic of mental health. As well, in support of disaster relief and through important partnerships, the OSE has assisted with presenting monetary and material donations to support those impacted by hurricanes in Belize.

While the above-mentioned highlights the main achievements for 2021 to 2022, most of these programs are set to be annual programs. This includes the GBV sessions, the scholarship program, the special education transformation, Women's Month activities, and mental health supportive services. Even so, improving these programs will be geared towards securing the funding necessary to carry out the program and to expand the reach of the project to all regions of the country.

Still, notwithstanding the continuous programs, the Office also has plans in place to add to its list of achievements. These include a Safe Families, Safe Municipalities proposal,

the strengthening of special education centers, the implementation of trauma-informed classrooms, and the improvement of government-run child-care facilities. These future priorities will allow the OSE to continuously meet its mandate of empowering and supporting women and children in Belize. For this reason, the OSE is committed to continuously addressing the present issues affecting women and children and to expanding the programs and projects of the Office of the UN Special Envoy.

## Annex 1: List of Technical Staff

Name	Position	Phone	Email
<b>Current:</b> Brittney Galvez (May 2023 - present)  <b>Former:</b> Santree Sandiford (Jan 2021 - Aug 2022)  Lucy Moguel (Sep 2022 - Apr 2023)	Program Coordinator	280-2621	osebz@outlook.com
<b>Current:</b> Shaneile Gutierrez (Dec 2022 - present)  <b>Former:</b> Erick Glenn (Jan 2022 - Nov 2022)	Assistant Program Coordinator	280-2621	shan12Kuylen@hotmail.com
Roanna Carballo (Jan 2021 - present)	Executive Assistant	280-2621	secretary@ose.gov.bz