



SPECIAL ENVOY
for the Development of Families & Children

Annual Technical Report

2023

The Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children

10 St. Mark Street

Belize City, Belize

Overview

This report serves as a testament to the substantive strides achieved by the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children in enhancing and ensuring the well-being of women, children, and families in Belize.

Prepared by Program Coordinator, Brittney Galvez

Table of Contents

I.	Message of the Special Envoy	3
II.	Abbreviations	4
III.	Executive Summary	6
IV.	Introduction	
1.	Overview of the OSE	7
1.1	Mission Statement & Priorities of the OSE	7
2.	Main Achievements of OSE by Program	11
2.1	Educational Empowerment	11
2.1.1	Secondary School Scholarship Program	11
2.1.2	School Site Visits and Donations	11
2.1.3	Fandango Reading Event	13
2.1.4	Chromebooks Distribution	14
2.2	Strengthening Diplomatic Relations	15
2.2.1	Official Visit to Taiwan	15
2.2.2	Women Empowerment Exhibition	17
2.2.3	Welcome, the First Lady of Mexico, to Belize	17
2.2.4	3rd Annual Summit of First Ladies & Gentlemen	18
2.2.5	SCLAN Executive Meeting	19
2.2.6	Meeting with ALMA	20
2.2.7	UNGA Side Event	20
2.3	Improving Health Outcomes	21

2.3.1 Sanitary Pads Distribution	21
2.3.2 Revision of the HFLE Curriculum	23
2.3.3 Mental Health Policy Launch	23
2.3.4 WHO Webinar on Cervical Cancer	24
2.3.5 Mental Health Support	25
2.4 Advocacy & Awareness	26
2.4.1 Women's Month Activities	26
2.4.2 Engaging Men & Boys to Eliminate GBV	27
2.4.3 16 Days of Activism Against GBV	29
2.4.4 Speech on GBV & Access to Justice	31
2.5 Social Empowerment	32
2.5.1 International Day of the Girl Speech	32
2.5.2 Inauguration of the Wheelchair Swing	32
2.5.3 Expanding the Reach of Our Indigenous Women	33
2.5.4 National Service Day	34
2.5.5 Empowering Safe Houses	35
2.5.6 Christmas Community Service Initiative	36
A. Lessons Learnt	38
B. Future Priorities and Plans	39
C. Staffing and Financial Considerations	40
D. Conclusions and Recommendations	41
V. Annex 1: List of technical staff	43

Message of the Special Envoy

In 2023, my continued tenure as the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children reached another significant milestone, marked by notable accomplishments, invaluable collaborations, and substantial insights gained.



Throughout the year, my focus remained steadfast on furthering Belize's developmental objectives, particularly in enhancing the well-being of women and children. As a dedicated advocate for the health, safety, and prosperity of Belizean families and children, my efforts have consistently centered on empowering our most vulnerable members of society.

Through strategic collaborations with governmental bodies, civil society groups, and international stakeholders, my office has consistently championed the rights of all individuals by raising awareness of mental health, NCDs, and gender-based violence, and by amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. Together with these various organizations, we have helped to ensure that children, men, and women are given the tools, information, and resources they need to lead fulfilling lives.

Finally, 2023 also marked the culmination of my term as the Chair of the Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network (SCLAN). Serving within this capacity, I dedicated my leadership to addressing pressing issues impacting social and human development in the Caribbean region, including gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, adolescent pregnancy, cervical cancer, and mental health challenges.


Under my chairmanship, SCLAN's presence in Belize has facilitated the successful implementation of several programs and initiatives aimed at advancing global strategies for women, adolescents, and girls in alignment with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

With this report, I take pride in sharing the accomplishments of our many endeavors, which have had a positive impact on countless lives across Belize.

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

Abbreviations

ALMA	Alliance of First Ladies of Latin America
BDF	Belize Defence Force
BTB	The Belize Tourism Board
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
DV	Domestic Violence
GBV	Gender-based violence
GOB	Government of Belize
HFLE	Human and Family Life Education
HPV	Human papillomavirus
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
MHDFIPA	Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs
MHPSS TWG	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Working Group
MOECST	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology
MOHW	Ministry of Health and Wellness
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration
NCDs	Non-Communicable Disease
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister



OSE	The Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PM	Prime Minister
SATIIM	The Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management
SCLAN	Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	Special Envoy
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UWG	United Women's Group
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

The Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children (OSE) was revitalized and reestablished to support the Government of Belize (GOB) in advancing the #planBelize agenda for families and women, with the primary focus areas including families, children, women, and persons with disabilities.

To achieve its mission, the OSE collaborates closely with five (5) government ministries that share similar priority areas:

1. The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM),
2. The Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs (MHDFIPA),
3. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology (MOECST),
4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFA),
5. The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW).

Through strategic collaboration with these key stakeholders, the OSE focuses on advocating for policy development and strengthening, promoting capacity building, and implementing initiatives that cater to the pressing needs of Belizeans. With these partnerships, we have been able to align resources, coordinate efforts, and increase investments to drive concrete actions.

To further the #planBelize agenda for families and women, the OSE has overseen the establishment and accomplishment of various programs, including the continuation of the secondary school scholarship program in partnership with the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), distribution of sanitary pads to girls in rural communities, resource allocation for underfunded schools and Government-run children's homes/facilities, continuous workshops on gender-based violence (GBV), and advancing efforts to eliminate cervical cancer, among others.

Moreover, further plans for the OSE include establishing the "Safe Families, Safe Municipalities" proposal, creating an initiative to take mental health lessons to the classroom, initiating an adult reading and financial literacy program, particularly for women in the southern districts of Belize, and organize a cancer fundraising event to support local cancer support groups/charities.



Introduction

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

The establishment of the OSE in Belize signified a pivotal commitment to championing crucial issues impacting our families and children. This esteemed institution serves as a dynamic platform dedicated to addressing a spectrum of concerns, from advancing gender equality and safeguarding children's rights to enhancing educational opportunities and mental health support.

Operating within the guidance of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the OSE's center of operations is housed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MOFAFT) office at the Laing Building in Belize City. The OSE is staffed by a dedicated team comprising an Executive Assistant, a Program Coordinator, and an Assistant Program Coordinator.


Since the OSE is committed to ensuring and facilitating the empowerment of Belizean families and children, our goal closely aligns with the government's vision of achieving the objectives outlined in #planBelize. By strategically securing funding for governmental projects, initiating capacity-building efforts, and advocating for social policy reform, the OSE plays a pivotal role in facilitating the GOB's transition from vision to action.

The OSE also forges partnerships with development partners and private entities at local, regional, and international levels, spearheading funding proposals and collaborative ventures to strengthen societal structures and pave the way for a better future for all Belizeans.

Finally, functioning as a national focal point on critical thematic areas, the OSE assumes a proactive stance in raising public consciousness. Through targeted educational activities and awareness programs, it endeavors to shed light on the challenges facing families and children, igniting a collective drive towards positive change across Belize.

1.1. Mission Statement and Priorities of the OSE

The primary objective of the Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) is to assist the Government of Belize (GOB) in leveraging the unique strengths, ideas, and experiences



of Belizean families and children to bring about positive and sustainable change in our communities, ultimately leading to a prosperous, unified, and resilient Belize. In alignment with its overarching mission, the OSE aspires to realize a future for Belize in which families and children are equipped with the necessary resources and support to pursue purposeful and successful livelihoods.


The OSE envisions a thriving and resilient Belize achievable through the empowerment of marginalized communities to take charge of their personal advancement and progress. Simultaneously, they should receive the necessary support to leverage resources and avail themselves of essential services that enable active involvement in their development, as well as that of their families and the broader Belizean society.

Within the framework of its mission and vision, the OSE prioritizes three key demographic groups: individuals living with disabilities, marginalized families, and children. The OSE has identified certain factors as the root causes of vulnerability, including:

1. Inability to meet basic needs: encompassing poverty, food insecurity, lack of assets, and restricted access to resources.
2. Social exclusion: influenced by socioeconomic status, disability, special needs, and family status (e.g., single-headed households).
3. Deprivation: spanning nutrition and illness, access to essential services, and participation in education or employment.

Based on the aforementioned considerations, the OSE acknowledges that the empowerment of vulnerable groups necessitates comprehensive measures to address the systemic determinants contributing to their susceptibility. Consequently, in line with its mission, the OSE bears an inherent and fundamental obligation to assist the Government of Belize in realizing its #planBelize Manifesto by mitigating critical issues impacting women and children, including:

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 marginalized 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 endeavors to tackle these challenges, the OSE refers to the national strategies presented in the #planBelize 2021-2025, which is the Government of Belize's official strategic document. The following excerpt has been derived from this document to serve as a set of 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, counseling 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, foster democratic participation and advocacy, and self-reliance.
- Expand skills training, small business collaborations, non-political Boost programs, and Pantry, sports, and cultural family activities.

Furthermore, the Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) upholds its mandate by adhering to various international agreements and treaties that have been ratified and endorsed by Belize. These include the United Nations Human Rights Treaties, which delineate the rights of women, children, and families, as well as 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).

Moreover, the mission statement of the OSE is in accordance with the Government of Belize's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This commitment aims to eliminate poverty, reduce vulnerabilities, and promote socio-economic resilience, specifically focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined 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. Educational Empowerment

2.1.1. Secondary School Scholarship Program

In partnership with the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the office has established an annual 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 ongoing initiative will ensure that the recipients are supported toward the completion of their secondary education.

2.1.2. School Site Visits and Donations

The Office of the Special Envoy donated educational books covering academic disciplines in Math, English, Health, and Science for varying educational standards/grades at the primary school level.

Between September 1st and September 12th, these books, totaling 850, were distributed evenly between six schools to help expand their educational resources and capacity (*refer to images 2.1.2A & 2.1.2B*). These schools included: Queen Street Baptist Primary School, Chan Pine Ridge Primary School, Chapel's Primary School, Louisiana Government School, Paraiso Government Primary School, and Ranchito Government School.

H.E. Rossana Briceño was also invited by several schools to tour the grounds, including those with special needs classes, such as Chunox R.C. and Zills S.D.A (*refer to images 2.1.2C & 2.1.2D*). The OSE contributed several essential items to the schools that were needed to improve their functioning and operations.

Mrs. Briceño also conducted a workshop with the teaching staff of the Louisiana Government School. Serving as a resource person for special education, Mrs. Briceño shared her expertise and valuable insight gained from her prior roles as a teacher and principal (*refer to images 2.1.2E & 2.1.2F*).

Finally, under educational empowerment, the OSE donated back-to-school supplies for the 21 children residing at the New Beginnings Youth Hostel, which is a facility that houses at-risk youths in Belize. These items included school bags, school supplies, sanitary items, activity books, and board games.



Image 2.1.2A: School Books Donation



Image 2.1.2B: School Books Donation



Image 2.1.2C: School Site Visits



Image 2.1.2D: School Site Visits



Image 2.1.2E: Teacher Training Workshop



Image 2.1.2F: SE Presenting to Teachers

2.1.3. Fandango Reading Event

On December 5th, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño participated in the prestigious Fandango Reading event in Bacalar, Quintana Roo, alongside Her Excellency and Spouse of the President of Mexico, Dr. Beatriz Gutiérrez Mueller, Governor of the state of Quintana Roo, Mara Lezama Espinosa, and Belize's Ambassador to Mexico, H.E. Oscar Arnold.

This event was a part of the National Reading Strategy in Mexico, an initiative aimed at promoting literacy and cultivating a love for reading. This event also highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts in nurturing education, fostering cross-border relationships, and promoting literacy on a national and global scale.



Image 2.1.3A: SE speaking at the Fandango Event



Image 2.1.3B: SE at the Fandango Event

2.1.4. Chromebooks Distribution

December 13, 2023, was a momentous day, as we handed over 10 Chromebooks that are equipped with ChromeVox speech manual technology to 10 visually impaired secondary school students.

With the assistance of the screen reader software and the accessibility features, these students will be able to access online textbooks, collaborate with their peers, and engage in interactive learning experiences that will give them the freedom to explore vast realms of knowledge and develop essential skills for the future.

This initiative was a collaborative effort, supported by the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children, the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Office of the Prime Minister, CustomerHD, Mr. Evan Cowo, Mr. Marshal Nunez of the Disability Desk, and Dayel Carvajal who will be assisting the recipients of these Chromebooks to become proficient in using this innovative software.

Through this initiative, we are providing students with a pathway toward empowerment by opening up a world of possibilities and promoting equal opportunities for their growth and development. This approach underscores our commitment to fostering an inclusive academic environment where every student can learn, flourish, and contribute meaningfully to society.



Image 2.1.4A: Chromebooks



Image 2.1.4B: Chromebook Distribution Ceremony



Image 2.1.4C: Chromebook Recipient



Image 2.1.4D: Chromebook Recipient



Image 2.1.4E: Chromebook Recipient



Image 2.1.4F: Chromebook Recipient

2.2. Strengthening Diplomatic Relations

2.2.1. Official Visit to Taiwan

On February 14th, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño went on an official visit to the Republic of China (Taiwan) and was greeted at the Taiwan Taoyuan Airport by Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H. E. Ambassador Lily Li-Wen Hsu and Belize's Ambassador in Taiwan H. E. Dr. Candice Pitts (*refer to image 2.2.1A*).

She was escorted to the Presidential Office for a courtesy call with Her Excellency, President of the Republic of China (Taiwan), H.E. Dr. Tsai Ing-Wen. Mrs. Briceño reiterated Belize's continued appreciation for the mutually beneficial bilateral relations between Belize and Taiwan, and they exchanged mutual admiration and commitment to continued cooperation.

During her visit to Taiwan, Mrs. Briceño also had the opportunity to participate in a panel discussion for the "Empower Women, Empower LAC Forum" (*refer to images*

2.2.1B & 2.2.1C). In her response to the topic of the forum “Challenges and Prospects for Women's Socio-Economic Development in the post-Epidemic: Public-Private Partnerships and International Collaboration”, Mrs. Briceño urged education as that overarching path to combating pre- and post-pandemic challenges.

She emphasized that education is the key to empowerment, achieving self-sufficiency, ending discrimination, achieving inclusiveness and equity, and gaining economic independence. For this reason, she noted that “we cannot move forward without educating our women and girls and empowering them for full participation in society, and we most certainly cannot meet SDG 5 without women”.



Image 2.2.1A: SE Official Visit to Taiwan.



Image 2.2.1B: SE With Other Honorary Guests.



Image 2.2.1C: SE Giving Remarks.

2.2.2. Women Empowerment Exhibition

On April 4th, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño had the pleasure of addressing President Tsai, ROC (Taiwan), on his visit to Belize, while giving welcome remarks at the Women Empowerment Exhibition.

Mrs. Briceño, along with the other presenters, showcased the achievements of the Economic Empowerment of Women in Belize in the Post-Pandemic Era project. In her remarks, Mrs. Briceño expressed Belize's gratitude to the Republic of China (Taiwan) for its continued support and partnership.



Image 2.2.2A: Guest at the Event



Image 2.2.2B: SE Giving Remarks

2.2.3. Welcome, the First Lady of Mexico, to Belize

On April 18th, 2023, the Special Envoy had the honor of welcoming the First Lady of Mexico, Dra. Beatriz Gutiérrez Müller, to Belize. The purpose of the visit was for an event held in Belize City on the *Recovery of Historical Records in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

On behalf of the Government of Belize, H.E. Rossana Briceño accepted a book scanner from the First Lady of Mexico to assist Belize in recording and preserving our history. Training for the use of the scanner was also provided, as well as an array of books.



Image 2.2.3A: Guest at the Event



Image 2.2.3B: SE Receiving Book Scanner



Image 2.2.3C: SE Giving Remarks

2.2.4. 3rd Annual Summit of First Ladies & Gentlemen

The Special Envoy, H.E. Rossana Briceño, participated virtually in the third Summit of the First Ladies and Gentlemen held on September 6, 2023, in Kyiv, Ukraine. Mrs. Briceño provided remarks on the topic of Mental Health, inclusive of its importance, and the Fragility and Resilience of the Future.



Image 2.2.4A: SE Video Remarks for 3rd Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen

2.2.5. SCLAN Executive Meeting

On September 18th, 2023, the SCLAN Executive held a hybrid meeting from New York as they attended events for the high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly.

The First Ladies that attended included H.E. Rossana Briceño, Spouse of the Prime Minister of Belize and Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children, Chair of SCLAN, Mellisa Santokhi-Seenacherry, First Lady of the Republic of Suriname, Vice Chair of SCLAN, H.E. Mrs. Ann Marie Davis, Spouse of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, H.E. Mrs. Kristin Burt, Spouse of the Premier of Bermuda and H.E. Mrs. Sharon Rowley, Spouse of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The First Ladies discussed current and future projects and their plans for 2024.



Image 2.2.5A: SCLAN Executive Meeting



Image 2.2.5B: SCLAN Executive Meeting

2.2.6. Meeting With ALMA

On September 18, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño, Chair of SCLAN, participated in a meeting in New York City with the Alliance of First Ladies of Latin America (ALMA), which consists of First Ladies from Costa Rica, Panamá, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, and Paraguay.

Mrs. Briceño gave a presentation on the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and shared best practices.

During the gathering, they also discussed the work of SCLAN and ALMA in the area of gender-based violence and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). H.E. Dr. Jill Biden, First Lady of the United States of America, also joined the conversation as a special guest.



Image 2.2.6A: SE with H.E. Dr. Jill Biden



Image 2.2.6B: Guest at ALMA Meeting

2.2.7. UNGA Side Event

As the Chair of the Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network (SCLAN), H.E. Rossana Briceño gave the opening remarks for the United Nations General Assembly Side Event held on September 19th, 2023, in New York.

The Government of Belize, Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network -SCLAN, SE Comisca, UNDP Belize, and UN Foundation co-hosted this high-level meeting on the margins of the 78th United Nations General Assembly under the theme “Building Climate Resilient Health Systems to Achieve Universal Health Coverage”.

This event aimed to raise awareness about the critical intersection between climate change and health and explore lessons learned and best practices for health program adaptations required to accelerate progress toward universal health coverage, in particular for women, children, and adolescents.

In her speech, H.E. Mrs. Rossana Briceño emphasized that "We must strengthen our healthcare infrastructures to withstand extreme weather events while increasing the capacity of healthcare workers to identify and manage climate-related health risks."



Image 2.2.7A: SE Remarks at UNGA Side Event

2.3. Improving Health Outcomes

2.3.1. Sanitary Pads Distribution

On the 17th and 18th of May 2023, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children distributed sanitary napkins and other essential supplies to several high schools and communities in the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

This initiative was started by Ms. Seidi Quetzal and her "Don't Tax My Femininity Campaign," which sought the removal of taxes (35.5%) on all feminine hygiene/sanitary products in Belize.

In observance of Menstrual Hygiene Day on 28 May, this activity was executed by the office to raise awareness for and increase access to proper and affordable menstrual care for women and girls in Belize. This was done through a collaboration with the Straughan Foundation, which donated 8,661 sanitary pads, Hon. Oscar Requena, and Belize Queen Freight, who covered the cost of the sanitary pads shipped from Dallas and Belize.

As part of this campaign, the office also personally contributed several boxes of disposable sanitary pads, along with reusable sanitary hygiene kits that were donated by the Roman Catholic Food for the Poor.

The purpose of these donations is not only to ensure the availability of these supplies in schools and homes but also to encourage open conversations about feminine health and hygiene.

The Office of the Special Envoy expresses heartfelt gratitude to the MHDFIPA for their unwavering support in making this initiative a reality. Their collaboration has been instrumental in our reaching out to schools and coordinating the distribution efforts.

In addition, the office extends special thanks to Mrs. Suman Hotchandani for her generous donations of essential items, which have played a crucial role in enhancing the impact of the campaign and ensuring its success.



Image 2.3.1A: Sanitary Pads Distribution



Image 2.3.1B: Sanitary Pads Distribution



Image 2.3.1C: Sanitary Pads Given to Schools



Image 2.3.1D: Sanitary Pads Given to Schools

2.3.2. Revision of the HFLE Curriculum

Through her work as the Chair of SCLAN, H.E. Rossana Briceño partnered with UNFPA to support the revision of the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) at the primary school level in Belize. Since this curriculum has not been revised since 2006, this revision process helped to ensure that the HFLE was updated to reflect the current reality of Belize.

This initiative was completed through the hiring of a qualified consultant to identify gaps in the current version of the curriculum through the facilitation of consultations and validation sessions, and drafting and finalizing the revised Health and Family Life Education Curriculum based on recommendations received from stakeholders.

The achievement of this initiative was important to ensure the relevancy of the information to today's society, to appropriately address social needs and dilemmas, to allow professional teachers to adopt the curriculum in its entirety to be taught holistically in the classroom, and to scale up Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) information and access to in school youths.

2.3.3. Mental Health Policy Launch

On October 10th, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño attended the launch of the updated National Mental Health Policy 2023-2028 for Belize.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW) in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) With funding support from the European Union (EU) and the Universal Health Coverage Partnership (UHC-P),

the primary focus of the policy is to promote and protect the human rights of individuals living with mental health conditions, recognizing their inherent dignity, and prioritizing the importance of their well-being.

The policy was first created in 2008 but has been updated to strengthen action areas and ensure the inclusivity of mental health partners in Belize. Mrs. Briceño joined the members of the ministry and other key partners in signing the pledge to support the implementation of the policy.



Image 2.3.3A: Mental Health Policy Launch

2.3.4. WHO Webinar on Cervical Cancer

As the Chair of SCLAN, H.E. Rossana Briceño had the honor of participating in a global meeting hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) on November 17th, 2023, to show support for the Day of Action for the Elimination of Cervical Cancer.

In her remarks, Mrs. Briceño provided an update on the current state and response to cervical cancer prevention and treatment in Belize and reiterated Belize's commitment to eliminating cervical cancer as a public health issue.

She further emphasized that prevention, detection, and treatment are key to eradicating cervical cancer as a public health issue. Regular screenings, vaccination against Human papillomavirus (HPV), and access to quality healthcare can save lives.

At the end of her remarks, Mrs. Briceño urged all countries to come together to scale up prevention, detection, and treatment efforts and work towards eliminating cervical cancer as a public health concern worldwide.

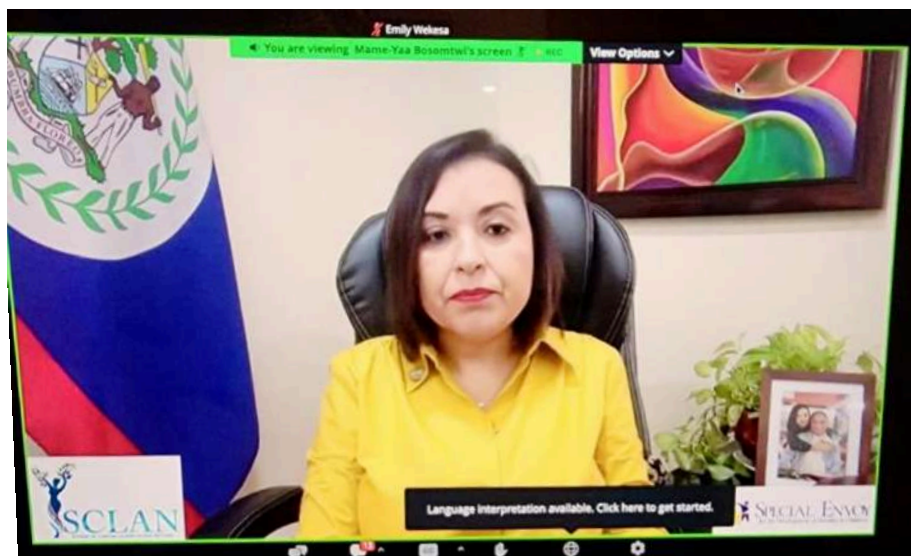


Image 2.3.4A: SE Video Remarks for WHO Webinar

2.3.5. Mental Health Support

H.E. Rossana Briceño is also a member of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Working Group (MHPSS)(TWG) from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, which is responsible for promoting mental health awareness and support across Belize.

As a member of this group, Mrs. Briceño has engaged with several stakeholders, including staff members from the Ministry of Health of Wellness, towards improving mental health outcomes for all Belizeans.

The main purpose of the MHPSS TWG is to discuss technical aspects of the MHPSS emergency programming in Belize, harmonize interventions, avoid duplications, facilitate referral pathways, and mainstream the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) MHPSS framework and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.

The TWG also intends to address the various barriers and challenges in the provision of mental health services in Belize.

2.4. Advocacy and Awareness

2.4.1. Women's Month Activities

During Women's Month in March of each year, the OSE collaborates with the MHDFIPA and the Women's Commission to organize various activities that honor and showcase the remarkable women of Belize and champion causes that affect women.

To kick off the start of Women's Month, the OSE hosted and supported an Inspiration Renewal Ecumenical Service on Sunday, February 26th, 2023, at the Bliss Institute for the Performing Arts. This was done in collaboration with Apostle Suzette from Merirh's Ministries International.

On March 8th, 2023, which is celebrated annually as International Women's Day, H.E. Rossana Briceño gave a speech to the women in the Belize Defence Force (BDF) to recognize their sacrifices, challenges, and achievements in a mostly male-dominated field (*refer to images 2.4.1A, 2.4.1B, & 2.4.1C*). She reiterated in her remarks her admiration and support for the women in uniformed services, acknowledging the need to break gender stereotypes, discrimination, and bias within our armed forces.

Additionally, for Women's Month, awards were given to three (3) remarkable women during the Women's Month celebrations. These women include Seidy Quetzal, Francisca Assi, and Doretta Valerio.



Image 2.4.1A: SE with the Other Guest at the Event



Image 2.4.1B: SE Remarks to BDF



Image 2.4.1C: SE Receiving an Award from BDF

2.4.2. Engaging Men & Boys Program to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence

Since building awareness is key in our work to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, the OSE, in collaboration with SCLAN and the Spotlight Initiative has held several sessions that engage young men and women from high school, junior college, youth groups, and military organizations in efforts to increase their awareness and help prevent gender-based violence. At the end of 2023, a total of 25 trainings were conducted with 594 participants from all across Belize.

These sessions allowed the participants to increase their knowledge and understanding of gender, effective communication, anger management, and accountability. The training included enriching conversations, teamwork, and collaborative activities, as well as discussions and teachings about the various issues surrounding Gender-Based Violence and how these young people can use their newly acquired knowledge to positively impact their communities.

By involving youths early in the discussion on gender, stereotypes, and managing emotions, these sessions and workshops help to change and shape their mindsets for the future, which has become an important pillar in the fight against GBV.



Image 2.4.2A: EMB Training with Students



Image 2.4.2B: EMB Training with Students



Image 2.4.2C: EMB Training with Students



Image 2.4.2D: EMB Training with Military



Image 2.4.2E: EMB Training with Youths



Image 2.4.2F: EMB Training with Youths

2.4.3. 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

The OSE held several activities in honor of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which started on November 25th, 2023, and ended on December 10th, 2023.

These activities included:

1. High School Poetry Competition, which encouraged high school students to create an original piece around the theme: “From 16 Days of Activism to 365 Days of Action: End Violence Against Women and Girls Now!”.
2. Primary School Poster Competition, which required the students to make an original piece of artwork on a poster depicting the theme: “From 16 Days of Activism to 365 Days of Action: End Violence Against Women and Girls Now!”.

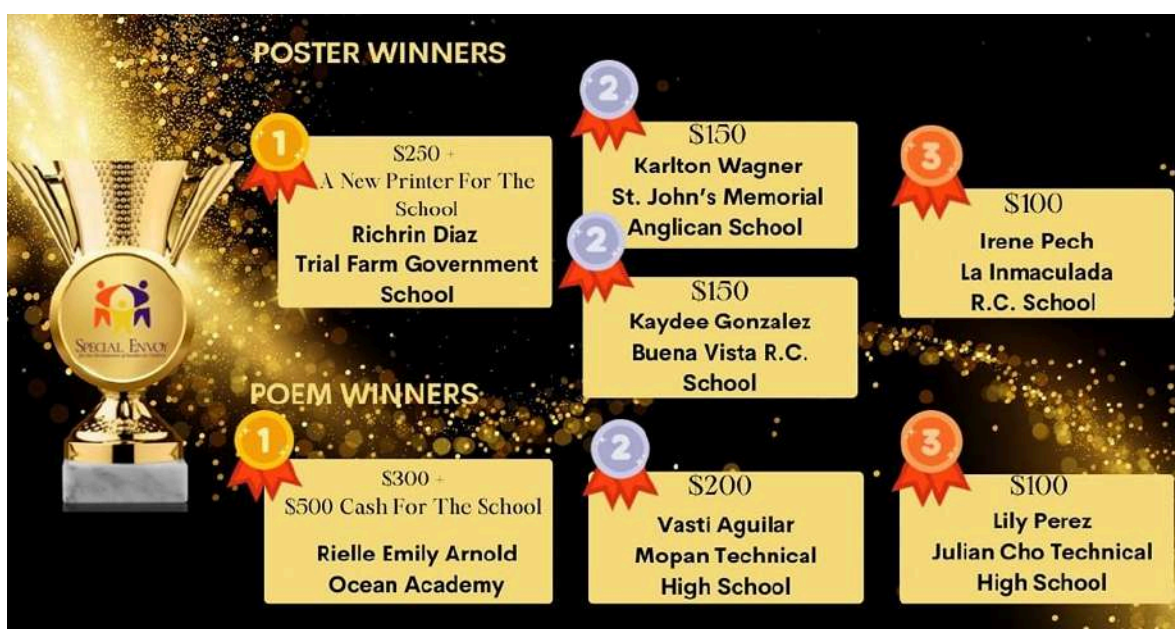


Image 2.4.3A: Winners of Poster and Poetry Competitions

3. Videos featuring participants from the “Engaging Men and Boys” Program reciting their pledge to end gender-based violence.
4. Videos from several mental health professionals provide mental health advice and support to victims of domestic violence.

5. Videos featuring the Prime Minister, Ministers, Mayors, and Journalists from Belize conveying a supportive message in line with this year's theme, "From Activism to Action. It Ends With Me."
6. Women's self-defense class in collaboration with the United Women's Group (UWG).



Image 2.4.3B: Participants Present at Self-defense Class

7. Performance piece entitled '6 Feet Down the Aisle' in collaboration with Briheda Haylock and Modern Dance Company. The emotionally charged performance dedicated to the memory of Anisha Young shed light on her tragic disappearance while advocating for justice and raising awareness about gender-based violence.



Image 2.4.3C: Performers of '6 Feet Down the Aisle'

2.4.4. Speech on GBV and Access to Justice

On December 6th, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño gave the keynote remarks for the Anti-Gender-Based Violence & Access to Justice: Building a More Protective and Empowering System event.

This event was a first of its kind in Belize and was a collaborative effort between the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the United States Embassy, and the Government of Belize.

In her speech, she focused on the current situation for persons accessing justice in Belize, highlighting challenges, opportunities, and priorities for building a better system to protect victims and prevent further instances of violence.

Mrs. Briceño also amplified the notion that it is not enough for us to just condemn violence; instead, “what we need now is to expand our resources, grow our manpower, and build upon a comprehensive approach that encompasses legal, social, and cultural dimensions to ensure the protection of all in Belize, especially our women, and children”.

She closed off her remarks by encouraging everyone to unite in our resolve to do MORE to create a Belize where justice is accessible, perpetrators are held accountable, and gender-based violence is eliminated once and for all.



Image 2.4.4A: SE Giving Remarks



Image 2.4.4A: Guest at the Event

2.5. Social Empowerment

2.5.1. International Day of the Girl Speech

In celebration of International Day of the Girl, on October 13th, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño had the pleasure of giving some inspiring remarks to the girls and young women of Belize at the Adolescent Girls Town Hall hosted and facilitated by UNICEF Belize.

Drawing inspiration from her journey, Mrs. Briceño conveyed a message filled with hope and motivation, encouraging the girls to dream ambitiously and chase their aspirations relentlessly.



Image 2.5.1A: SE Giving Remarks



Image 2.5.1B: SE with Attendees

2.5.2. Inauguration of Wheelchair Swing

On November 3rd, 2023, H.E. Rossana Briceño was the guest speaker for the Inauguration of the Wheelchair Swing in Orange Walk Town.

Being the first of its kind in Belize, the induction of this swing marks an important milestone in ensuring that every child, regardless of their abilities, has the right to play, have fun, and enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

This important and inclusive initiative was made possible thanks to The Belize Tourism Board (BTB), The Child Advisory Body, Hon. Kevin Bernard, The Orange Walk Town Council, His Worship, Mayor Ladrack Sheppard, and Deputy Mayor, Doreth Pascascio.

The inauguration of this wheelchair-accessible swing highlights the importance of creating inclusive, accessible, and equitable spaces, where every playground, every school, every workplace, and every corner of our society can be enjoyed by all.



Image 2.5.2A: SE Giving Remarks



Image 2.5.2B: SE at the Event



Image 2.5.2C: SE Along with Attendees



Image 2.5.2D: SE at Ribbon Cutting

2.5.3. Expanding the Reach of Our Indigenous Women

On December 8th, 2023, the Special Envoy was honored to attend and share her remarks for the closing ceremony/graduation for the "Expanding the Reach of Our Indigenous Women" Project.

This project was the result of a collaborative effort between the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children; the Embassy of the Republic of

China (Taiwan); Taiwan Technical Mission; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration; the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous People's Affairs; and the Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM).

This event saw the graduation of 20 Indigenous women from both Santa Cruz Village and Punta Gorda Town, who received Technical and Vocational Skills Training in various topics aimed at unlocking their entrepreneurial skills and economic potential.

In her remarks, H. E. Rossana Bricneo emphasized that when women are given the right tools and resources, they become catalysts for positive transformation that contribute to their empowerment, as well as the upliftment of their families and communities.

Therefore, with initiatives such as this, we are not only ensuring the promotion of equal opportunities for our Indigenous women but are also working towards a more just and prosperous nation for all.



Image 2.5.3A: Closing Ceremony for 'Expanding the Reach of our Indigenous Women's Project'

2.5.4. National Service Day

National Service Day is commemorated every year on September 19th in honor of the life, work, and service to the country of the late Rt. Hon. George Cadle Price.

This day demonstrates the importance of giving back to our community and having the will to serve others.

In honor of this, the staff at the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children provided breakfast to members of our community experiencing homelessness in Belize City.



Image 2.5.4A: Staff Packing Breakfast



Image 2.5.4B: Staff Packing Breakfast



Image 2.5.4C: Distributing the Packages



Image 2.5.4D: Distributing the Packages

2.5.5. Empowering Safe Houses

The Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children (OSE), the Spouses of CARICOM Leaders Action Network (SCLAN), and with support from the

Spotlight Initiative, supported Belize's safe houses with essential household items, groceries, and food hampers.

The three safe houses: Mary Open Doors, Haven House, and House of Docas, all received support for their shelters, totalling BZD\$56,516.13. These safe houses provide an important service to victims and survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence, as they not only provide a physically secure place where survivors can have their basic needs taken care of, but they also provide other support services, including referral services.

The OSE and SCLAN worked in collaboration with the safe houses to improve the quality of services provided and make them more accommodating and secure for their residents. Therefore, considering that these safe houses provide an essential service to the entire country, this initiative helped to provide the safe houses with the support that is essential to aiding survivors of gender-based violence when they are displaced and in need of a safe space for themselves and their children.



Image 2.5.5A: Handing Over to Safe House



Image 2.5.5B: Handing Over to Safe House

2.5.6. Christmas Community Service Initiative

On December 14th, 2023, the Special Envoy, H.E. Rossana Briceño, joined her husband, Prime Minister, Hon. John Briceño, in spreading Christmas cheer with the incredible residents of Golden Haven Rest Home (*refer to image 2.5.6A, 2.5.6B, & 2.5.6C*).

On behalf of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children, Mrs. Briceño provided gifts/care packages to each of the residents and the visitors from Good Samaritan and with the assistance of the Prime Minister, the home also received essential items, including much-needed mattresses, water coolers, fans, and other necessities that will significantly enhance the well-being and comfort of its residents.

Also, on December 15th, 2023, the OSE provided grocery packages to several low-income families to increase their holiday provisions. This initiative was a part of OSE's commitment to promoting social welfare and empowering vulnerable populations. The grocery packages were given to selected families to offer some relief to them during the holiday season.



Image 2.5.6A: SE & PM with staff at Golden Haven Rest Home.



Image 2.5.6B: SE & PM Greeting Residence.



Image 2.5.6C: PM Speaking with Residence.

Lessons Learnt

The post-evaluation of the Office's programs revealed several insights that could have significantly enhanced the effectiveness of our efforts. These insights include:

- Enhance networking with key stakeholders to secure additional support, resources, and funding for initiatives.
- Maintain ongoing, direct communication and collaboration with vital stakeholders, as well as local and international organizations, to ensure program success.
- Pooling our resources and networking capacities to drive impactful change and avoid the duplication of programs and initiatives.
- Increase public awareness of community issues such as sexual violence, GBV, cancer, HIV/AIDS, and children's rights through media campaigns and educational programs.
- Improve access to support services and information for women experiencing domestic violence.
- Secure additional funding from external partners to sustain existing programs and introduce new initiatives aimed at improving the lives of women and children in Belize.
- Highlight and promote the Office's achievements via various media channels to keep the public informed about the impactful work of the OSE.
- Leverage emerging technologies to enhance communication, operational efficiency, and outreach efforts.
- Continuously support the capacity building of OSE staff through ongoing training and informational sessions.
- Increase our social reach by creating a website designed and dedicated to highlighting the goals, purpose, and initiatives of the OSE.

Future Priorities and Plans

The Office has five (5) projects it is seeking support to execute in line with its mandate and objective:

1. Continuation of the Engaging Men and Boys Program:

It is a one-day training session targeted at students to advocate for eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls while also providing education about mental health.

The target location for the sessions will be 50 schools in the Stann Creek and Toledo districts. The students/participants will be from the Primary (Std. 6), Secondary, and Tertiary level schools.

2. Safe Families, Safe Municipalities:

A project aimed at establishing a resource corner within our 9 municipalities where the public across Belize will have access to educational tools on GBV and the services offered to people experiencing GBV.


3. Taking Mental Health to the Classroom:

It is an initiative that will serve as an intervention and prevention strategy to remedy and lessen the likelihood of poor mental health outcomes for young people in Belize by providing them with effective coping tips and resources to take care of their mental health.

First, this project will seek to strengthen and develop the knowledge, abilities, skills, and technical know-how of teachers and school counselors in managing and maintaining mental health among their student body.

In the second instance, the project will seek to engage both students and parents in a series of training sessions to facilitate sustainable mental health practices within the home.

4. Adult reading and financial literacy program:



This project aims to increase the reading and financial literacy skills of adults who did not complete formal education. This project will help increase their comprehension and economic capacity while decreasing literacy gaps in Belize.

5. “Pretty in Pink” High Tea Cancer Fundraising Event:

The goal of this event is to raise funds to support two children from Orange Walk who are battling cancer. All proceeds from the event will be donated to help these children and their families with medical expenses and other related costs.

Staffing and Financial Considerations

The OSE is currently enhancing its completed initiatives and planning to expand its program portfolio to better support women and children in Belize. The OSE's primary strength lies in its influential advocacy platform, which serves as a significant and esteemed entity for implementing and promoting positive change in the specific focus areas outlined in this report.

Conversely, the potential weaknesses of the Office are attributed to the frequently limited financial resources available for effectively executing projects. Although the OSE receives support from GOB under MHDFIA, the allocated funds often fall short in comparison to the scale of programs the Office endeavors to implement. To address this, we aim to increase partnerships with international and local organizations that provide grants and donations for projects aligned with our mission to empower vulnerable populations.

The staffing level at the OSE represents both a strength and a weakness. A smaller staff fosters stronger collaboration, inclusion, and communication due to the close working relationships among members. However, it also results in staff overseeing multiple projects simultaneously to ensure desired outcomes for the OSE.

To address this, essential duties and responsibilities for each job title have been defined, clarifying everyone's role and function within the OSE. We also strive for equitable project distribution among staff and encourage mutual support to ensure successful project completion. This approach helps to maintain the Office's efficiency and productivity despite limited human resources.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As a prominent advocacy body in Belize, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Development of Families and Children plays a crucial role in assisting the most marginalized and vulnerable individuals by introducing new programs and enacting policy changes tailored to empower these groups. To date, the OSE has effectively supervised the implementation and attainment of diverse initiatives that have positively impacted and provided support to women, children, and families across Belize.


Such initiatives have included the advancement of education through school visits, donations, and the distribution of specialized Chromebooks to visually impaired students. As well, the successful continuation of a high school scholarship program has assisted 18 students from across Belize with covering the cost of their tuition and fees.

In terms of education, these endeavors have encompassed the revitalization of special education institutions and programs through on-site school visits, resource contributions, and the provision of specialized Chromebooks to aid visually impaired students. Moreover, the successful continuation of a secondary school scholarship initiative has continued to provide financial assistance to 18 students from various regions of Belize since 2022.

Another impactful achievement aimed at supporting women in Belize was the annual Women's Month and the 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate GBV activities. A similar initiative aimed at eliminating GBV was also facilitated with young men and women to engage them in informed discussions around this topic.

Still, when it comes to supporting our most vulnerable, the OSE has been encouraged to be a part of the inauguration of the wheelchair swing in Orange Walk Town and the UNICEF event for International Day of the Girl. Both of these events have helped to empower our children, casting a light on equal opportunities for all members of our society. Our social empowerment activities have also made a significant impact across Belize, from building the technical skills of our indigenous women in the south of Belize to supporting the safe houses that shelter victims of domestic violence and providing food and supplies to the homeless and the elderly.

Likewise, another noteworthy achievement of the OSE is its support for the improved health of Belizeans, for which the Office has worked to provide sanitary pads to girls in



southern Belize and the revision of the HFLE to ensure its implementation at the primary school level. Additionally, in support of mental health, the SE has signed onto supporting the Mental Health Policy Launch and is also a member of the MHPSS TWG to improve mental health awareness and outcomes in Belize. The SE has also been a dedicated advocate for raising cervical cancer awareness. She has utilized her platform to participate in the WHO webinar, shedding light on Belize's initiatives to eradicate cervical cancer, share exemplary approaches, and identify areas that require further enhancement.

In 2023, the SE has also undertaken significant initiatives to enhance diplomatic ties between Belize and other countries. Her activities encompassed an official visit to Taiwan, her address at the Women Empowerment Exhibition, and the reception of the First Lady of Mexico in Belize. Additionally, during her attendance at the 78th UNGA in New York, the SE engaged in networking with executive members of SCLAN and ALMA and delivered the keynote speech at the UNGA side event.

While the above-mentioned highlights the main achievements for 2023, most of these programs are set to be annual events. These include the Engaging Men & Boys training, the scholarship program, 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 expand the project's reach 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, taking mental health lessons to the classroom, implementing an adult literacy program, and having a cancer fundraising event. 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 Office of the Special Envoy is dedicated to continuously addressing issues affecting women and children and expanding its programs and initiatives.

Annex 1: List of Technical Staff

Name	Position	Phone	Email
Current: Brittney Galvez (May 2023 - present)	Program Coordinator	280-2621/ 675-6731	osebz@outlook.com
Former: Santree Sandiford (Jan 2021 - Aug 2022) Lucy Moguel (Sep 2022 - Apr 2023)			
Current: Shaneile Gutierrez (Dec 2022 - Jan 2024)	Assistant Program Coordinator	280-2621	belizeose@gmail.com
Former: Erick Glenn (Jan 2022 - Nov 2022)			
Roanna Carballo (Jan 2021 - present)	Executive Assistant	280-2621	secretary@ose.gov.bz