

Gender & Diversity Assessment

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BL-L1042: Promoting Sustainable Growth in the Blue Economy



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Abbreviations

BENIC	Belize National Indigenous Council
BEST	Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology
BFD	Belize Fisheries Department
BHSFU	Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GoB	Government of Belize
IP	indigenous people
IPADs	indigenous peoples and afro descendants
ILO	International Labour Organization
MBECA	Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation
MEP	Maritime Economy Plan
MSME	micro, small, and medium enterprises
NWC	National Women's Commission
SACD	Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

1.0 Introduction

The Government of Belize (GoB) requested the Inter-American Development Bank (IaDB) support through a Specific Investment Loan to promote sustainable growth-enabling-investments that would enhance the competitiveness of productive sectors and sub-sectors in the blue economy, with an initial focus on offshore marine fisheries. The demonstrated vulnerability of the country's main productive sectors necessitates a diversification strategy to increase resilience and enhance sustainable and inclusive economic growth. In addition to promoting more competitive and sustainable models within established key economic sectors, Belize must also enhance the business environment for the development of promising and upcoming sectors⁶. In 2020, the Government established a new Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation (MBECA) with the mission to "increase the gross domestic product through a thriving Blue Economy (BE) development pathway that is harmonized, innovative, and socially just, supported by a robust, science-based management region of our aquatic resources and spaces to improve the livelihood of all Belizeans⁷." MBECA is presently finalizing its policy instruments including a Maritime Economy Plan (MEP) for this purpose.

1.1 Project Objectives and Description

The general objective is to contribute to sustainable growth in the country's blue economy through improved fisher incomes and export earnings within the framework of the country's Maritime Economy Plan (MEP). The specific objective is to develop the enabling environment and to implement select small scale investments (hard and soft) across the fisheries value chain, for a competitive, sustainable, and resilient finfish-oriented fisheries sector and maritime economy investment. To achieve those results, the project will finance goods and services, structured under **two components** as follows:

The general objective of this operation is to improve incomes of artisanal fisherfolks and strengthen export earnings of the fishery sector in Belize.

1.1.1 Component 1:

Strengthening the capacities of government institutions for the sustainable, inclusive, and resilient management of the fisheries sector of Belize

- to improve the Government's ability to sustainably manage key species in the fishery sector,

1.1.2 Component 2:

Direct support to fishers and fishing groups for sustainable and inclusive development of the fisheries sector of Belize

- to promote the adoption of climate-friendly and sustainable technologies by artisanal fisherfolks as well as best fishing practices

1.2 Project Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries will be vulnerable populations who are individual entrepreneurs (including fishers), members in associative arrangements, and/or owners of MSMEs of the selected sectors. The operation will pay particular attention to women, youth, indigenous people, afro-descendants, and migrants. The operation will have a national coverage.

2.0 Rationale for Gender and Diversity Analysis

This Gender and Diversity Analysis has the objective to inform and to be used as input to the staff of the IDB and the FAO Investment Centre (FAO-CFIC) as they complete the project design and to serve as a guide for future implementation of social and gender instruments in compliance with the *Environmental and Social Standards (ESS)* triggered by the project.

Considering the above, this synthesis report for BL-L1042 provides a gender and diversity analysis to:

2.1 Specific Objectives of the Social and Gender Assessment

- characterize, along with indicators and institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation, gender-sensitive value chain;
- provide general recommendations from a gender and diversity perspective for loan project implementation.
- present all relevant statistical data as well as qualitative evidence from focus group interviews;
- discuss pro-gender and diversity priority public policy plans and initiatives mapping; and
- present relevant product and result indicators to measure outcomes needed from a gender and diversity perspective under the proposed subcomponents of BL-L1042.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Desk Review

The methodology comprised the review of secondary data prior to the joint FAO-IaDB mission visit to Belize between 17-21 October 2022. The desk study included a revision of regional and national documents in thematic areas of poverty reduction, fisheries sector, rural livelihoods and institutions, gender, youth and IPADs. The desk review also included assessment of national legislation, policies and programmes geared towards supporting vulnerable populations.

3.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Given the joint mission of the Inter-American Development Bank (IaDB) and the Food and Administration Organization (FAO), a list of proposed priority areas and possible interventions were discussed with the Government of Belize (GoB) during October 17 – 21, 2022 in Belize City. Thereafter, a subsequent mission by IaDB on December 12 – 16, 2022 allowed the GoB to revise the list of priority areas. In light of such, the consulting team, in support of GoB and IaDB, proposed to conduct focus group discussions to support a two-way dialogue with potential beneficiaries in coastal communities of Belize during January 2023. The FGDs support Guidelines for Environmental and Social Performance Standard (ESPS): ESPS 2 (Labour and Working Conditions), ESPS 6 (Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources), ESPS 7 (Indigenous Peoples), and ESPS 9 (Gender Equality).

The focus group discussions were held from 1 – 10 February 2023 with fifteen (15) participants (see Annex I for list of fisherfolks who participated). The goal was to assess fisherfolks' experiences, observations and feelings about being in the fisheries sector in Belize. During the FGDs both male and female fishers were engaged, and respondents represented vulnerable groups such as women, youth, indigenous and afro descendants (IPADs). See Annex II for demographics of respondents of focus group discussions.

See findings via focus group discussions in [Section 13: Findings from Focus Group Discussions](#).

4.0 Gender and Diversity Characterization

According to the Statistical Institute of Belize (2022), the total population of Belize by 2020 was projected at 421,464. Disaggregate data by gender indicated a slightly greater population of males (210,754) than females (210,709). Indigenous peoples and afro descendants are found in particular communities in Belize (see figure 2). An analysis by ethnicity recorded the largest population identifying as Mestizo/Hispanic with the smallest population identifying as Garifuna. The data indicated a total of 200,248 Mestizos/Hispanics, 110,370 Creoles, 41,528 Maya, and 28,093 Garifunas. It must be noted that 40,398 identified as 'Other' while 825 respondents chose 'Do not Know/Not Stated'. For indigenous and afro descendants' groups, disaggregate data by gender indicated a total of 20,463 Mayan men and 21,065 Mayan women while it also indicated only 12,846 Garifuna men and 15,248 Garifuna women (see figures 3 and 4).

A mapping of poverty income in Belize using satellite imagery and machine learning indicate that the Corozal District and Toledo District are the poorest districts (IDB, 2020) which also coincides with geographic locations of communities of IPADs. Faced with specific challenges when accessing sector's activities throughout the Belizean domestic marine finfish market and value chain (fishing-processing-exportation-retail-consumption), women, youth, indigenous peoples, and afro descendants (IPADs) remain among the most vulnerable populations.

It is therefore important to recognize and quantify the importance of these target populations in fisheries in Belize to measure such contribution to poverty alleviation and national development. Therefore, this report (i) identifies and quantifies primary barriers that youth, women, indigenous people, and afro descendants may face in terms of economic development in the marine fishery sector and (ii) proposes gender and diversity responsive interventions for improving and optimizing value chain benefits and opportunities to women and diverse populations within the IDB's BL-L1042 loan operation design. Women, indigenous people (IP), and afro-descendants (AD) as well as youth face specific challenges for a better participation and access to productive activities.

4.1 Women in Belize

According to the National Women's Commission (NWC), 60% of female labour is concentrated in services, shop sales, clerical duties, and elementary occupations. Women are also highly concentrated in domestic services-related jobs in the tourism sector such as cleaning, housekeeping, and other poorly paid service jobs, including hair-braiding and souvenir selling (personal communications with A. Murrillo, 2022).

The fisheries industry in Belize is primarily male dominated with only 2.7% of female representation. In some communities, traditional marine fishing is a responsibility that is shared by both men and women, although they have distinct roles. For example, men go out to fish, while women support with cleaning and selling fish and manage the household fishing income as well as remain the primary caregivers within their family. Therefore, women participate in the fishing sector but at the lowest level of the value chain (i.e. processing). According to Oceans and Economic Trade Strategy (2020), 60-70 per cent of the processors within cooperatives in Belize are women. Under the Marine Conservation and Climate Change Project (MCCAP) project, a women in fisheries forum was first scheduled in 2017. The forum aimed to: (i) increase awareness of women's roles and challenges in the fishing industry; (ii) disseminate information on gender equality in small-scale fishing, and (iii) develop networks for information sharing.

4.2 Youth

Adolescents are defined as individuals between the ages of 10 and 19 years. This period of life is further divided into early (10–14 years) and late adolescence (15–19 years), recognizing the different needs and services that are required for growth and development in safe and nurturing environments. In Belize, the adolescent population of approximately 97,000 (aged 10-19) accounts for 20% of the total population. Adolescents are particularly underserved by health programs in Belize. Critical adolescent health issues in Belize include adolescent pregnancy, mental health support, preventing violence and injury including sexual and gun violence and road traffic accidents, preventing cervical cancer through human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination, preventing iron deficiency anemia, HIV, obesity and other non-communicable diseases .

In terms of economic empowerment for youth, the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) also includes specific strategies for increasing financial literacy among children and youth, as well as among men and women interested in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Overall, the NFIS proposes to expand the availability of financial products and services for women, youth, MSMEs, and agribusiness, yet many of these policy action lines remain limited to urban settings or dormant.

4.3 Indigenous Peoples and Afro Descendants (IPADs)

A culturally diverse nation, Belize is a part of both the Caribbean and Central American regions. Most of the population is of mixed ethnic origin being either English Creoles or Mestizos. Other groups include indigenous Maya, Garifuna, Europeans (English, Dutch/German, and Spanish), Chinese, East Indians, and a number of, Lebanese, West Africans, Koreans, Central Americans, and expatriate Americans. The main concentration of indigenous communities based on languages spoken include Yucatec, Mopan and Kekchi. The highest concentration of Mayas is found in the Corozal, Orange Walk, Cayo, Stann Creek & Toledo districts. The main concentration of Afro-descendent communities (Garifuna) is located in Stann Creek and Toledo Districts (see figure 2 for IPAD communities).

It must be noted that Garifunas are categorized as both afro descendants and indigenous. The Mayas hold customary land rights as indigenous peoples but the Garifunas do not have such rights. In addition, it must be noted that the term afro-descendants are seldom used to describe Creoles and Garifunas in Belize.

5.0 Participation of Vulnerable Population in the Fisheries Sector

5.1 Women

The National Trade Policy 2019-2030 , highlights policy prescriptions to integrate the gender and disability agenda into trade and development. The Policy acknowledges the “involvement of women in fisheries and seafood processing and recognizing the importance of mainstreaming gender and disability.” Yet, a registry under the Belize Fisheries Department (BFD) indicates that a little under 3% or 67 of total registered fisherfolks are women. A further breakdown of registered women in fisheries by districts, indicate that the majority of registered women in fisheries can be found in the Stann Creek District, followed by the Belize District (see figure 1).

Most licensed women fishers were found to reside in predominantly afro-descent communities such as the Stann Creek District (40.3%) and the Belize District (38.8%). The Corozal District, which is predominantly comprised of Mestizos, had the least registered female fishers. On the other hand, men fishers primarily resided in Belize City (35%), Corozal (31%), and Stann Creek (22%) with the least residing in the Cayo District (3%).

Within the fishing sector, men were found to have higher income earnings. It is a reality due to factors such as ownership of productive assets such as boats, boat engines, fishing gears and the fact that they held higher earning positions in fishing organizations and cooperatives. Due to these reasons, men were found to have greater access to financial credit. On the other end, women faced challenges in accessing loans and other financial credits due to a lack of ownership of assets (productive, real estate) and stereotypical perspectives of women. Women's lower access to productive resources underscores their limitations in ensuring adequate living standards, ensuring food security, and alleviating household poverty. This places women in precarious situations that can increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence (Gender Strategy, Action Plan and M & E for the coastal zone and fisheries sector of Belize (2022 – 2027)).

Over the past five years, the Government of Belize (GoB), with support from multi-lateral and national stakeholders, has organized a Women in Fisheries Forum (WIFF) with the first event held in 2017. Over the years, this has allowed women in fisheries in Belize to convene at least annually to focus on a specific theme and engage in plenaries thereafter. The event also assists the Belize Fisheries Department (BFD) with a mapping of women's participation in the fisheries sector given that the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) does not presently collect data on women's participation in the sector.

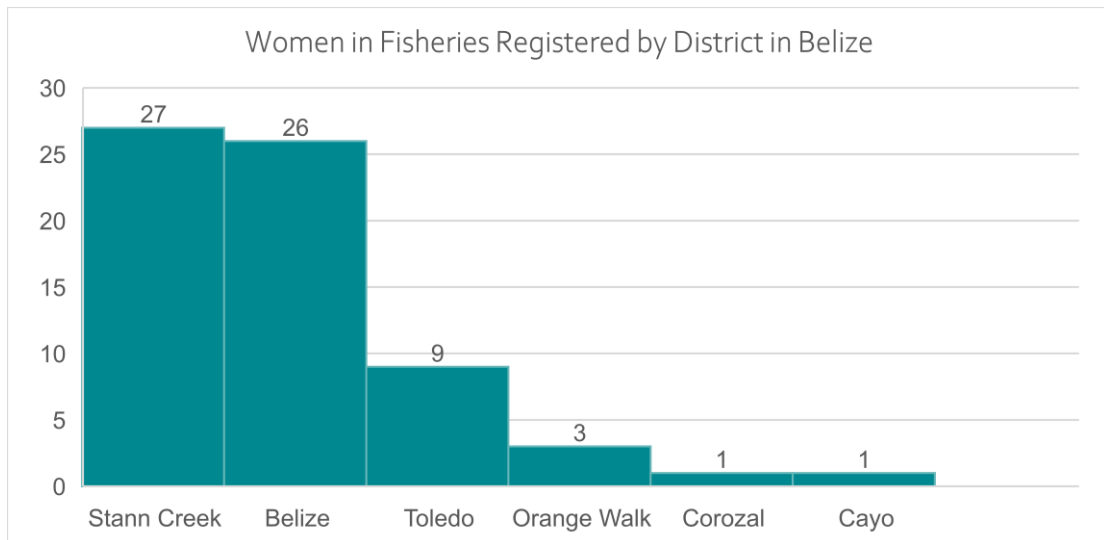


Figure 1: Women in Fisheries in Belize (Author's Elaboration)
Source: Belize Fisheries Department

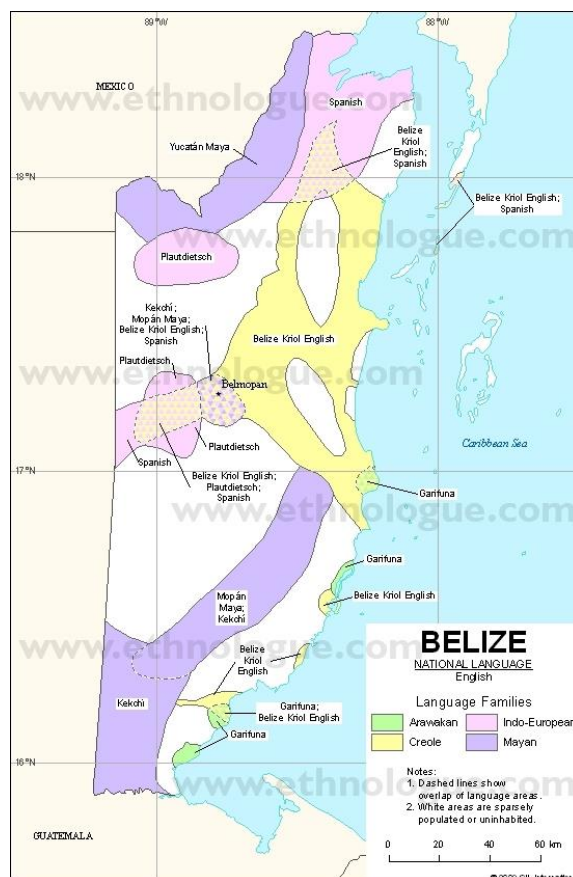


Figure 2: Geographic Locations of IPADs Communities
Source: ethnologue.com

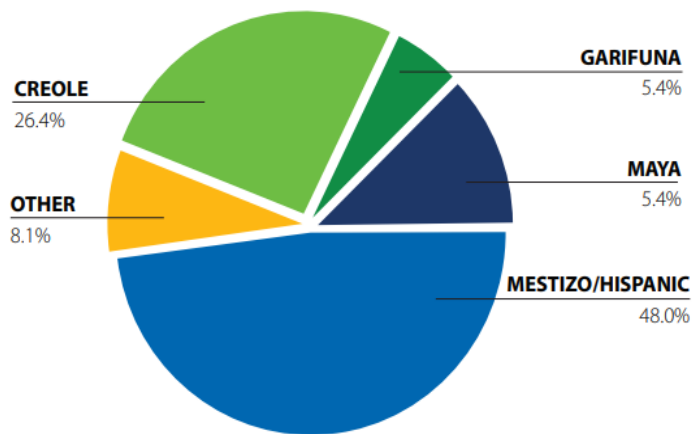


Figure 3: Total Population by Ethnic Groups

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize

Ethnic Group	2020		
	Male	Female	Sub-total
Creole	57,548	52,822	110,370
Garifuna	12,846	15,248	28,094
Maya	20,463	21,065	41,528
Mestizo/Hispanic	98,191	102,057	200,248
Other	21,185	19,212	40,397
Don't Know/Not Stated	521	304	825
Total			421,462

Figure 4: Population by Ethnicity

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize

5.2 Youth

Under the Student Engagement and Awareness Strategy, devised under the Northern Communities Engagement and Investment Strategy and developed jointly by Belize Audubon Society (BAS) and the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD), was evaluated in 2019 to assess the effectiveness of the five different youth engagement programmes is one example of more targeted interventions for youth engagement linked to the fisheries sector (MAR Fund, 2019). It is based on the lessons learnt, perceptions and outputs provided by the youth engagement programme assessment, and the participatory planning process with BAS, SACD and other MPA co-management partners. Its objective is the development of a collaborative framework for a structured youth engagement strategy. The strategy provides opportunities for class and field activities from infants through high school, integrating existing activities by multiple organizations, reducing overlap of effort, and standardising messages to ensure students are immersed in and inspired by conservation experiences throughout their school life - from primary to high schools – and continuing beyond. Results of the assessment indicate that there is a high level of youth engagement, with positive behavioural change, especially when field activities are part of the structured learning activities. It integrates a focus on not only class-based activities, but also ‘learning by doing’ through outdoor experience. This is considered critical as it is the field activities such as the BAS Reef Protectors and SACD Volunteer and Internship Programmes that engage interest in the environment and build conservation leadership skills in these key fishing communities.

5.3 Indigenous Peoples & Afro Descendants (IPADs)

The economic basis of the survival of indigenous peoples is increasingly under threat. The state provides no financial support for Maya or Garifuna farmers to practise their traditional farming. Furthermore, since the 1990s, the government has granted logging concessions to foreign companies covering hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Toledo. These concessions have impacted heavily on indigenous communities and their way of life. These communities continue to fight to defend their land rights from encroachment and expropriation, both by large corporation and illegal miners. A landmark judgement in 2015 ruled in favour of the 39 Mayan communities in Southern Belize, concluding that they had rights to the lands they had historically occupied. As in the case with gender, existing national data in the form of reports and datasets to determine exactly how indigenous and afro descendants score in any of these areas within the coastal zone and fisheries sector is lacking.

6.0 Challenges Faced by the Sector

The fisheries sector continues to face challenges and limitations despite efforts to demarcate fishing zones, promote technologies for sustainable fishing and more effective regulations. For example, the literature suggests that the Fisheries Resources Bill 2019 was developed but it is uncertain if it has been passed. This Bill proposes to embrace the principles of the ecosystems approach to fisheries and the requirement of fishery management plans which focus on biodiversity targets and the social and economic needs of fishing communities.

There is also a need for a management framework for locally consumed fisheries, and in particular finfish, which are important to food security and pose biodiversity concerns due to their informal nature and lack of a more structured regime. In an effort to improve the effectiveness of fisheries management interventions, it may be necessary to reassess morphometrics as a basis for size and weight regulation, and future management regimes should consider gear design, gear registration and

tagging, and gear efficiency. In addition, it must stipulate fishing gear per fisher (National Fisheries Policy, Strategy & Action Plan, 2019).

A third challenge is the need to sensitize all stakeholders on climate-ready fisheries management and marine and coastal ecosystems management. As such, fisheries management approaches need to assertively address the impacts of climate change. Aligned to such is the issue of managed access. Managed access needs to be further developed to include comprehensive data collection, monitoring and evaluation. Also, the co-management of marine reserves need to be better defined and institutionalized and metrics for co-management need to be defined and be applied across the board for all co-managers (National Fisheries Policy, Strategy & Action Plan, 2019).

A final challenge, and more internal to the BFD, is the limitation in the pool of technical expertise that is resident in the Department to address the wide diversity of technical disciplines required for the administration and management of the Fisheries Sector.

7.0 Critical Data Gaps

One of the critical data gaps stems from a very outdated census conducted in 2010 by the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB). The 2020 census was delayed during the pandemic and activities in support of such are ongoing with the goal to complete data collection by the end of 2022. The SIB also supports with issuing external trade bulletins and gross domestic product (GDP) bulletins on a quarterly basis.

Another critical data gap is the lack of poverty assessment to inform development plans in various sectors. The last poverty assessment for Belize was conducted in 2009, during which the national poverty rate was assessed at 41.3%. During this assessment, sub-national estimates of poverty were provided only at the district-level (IDB, 2020).

A third critical data gap specific to fisheries is the lack of a digital database at the Belize Fisheries Department or at the Ministry of Blue Economy & Civil Aviation (MBECA). When asked for registry of fishers, an excel sheet with names, contact details, geographic locations and age was provided (see Annex 1). The data provided does not facilitate disaggregate data by ethnicity, details on license or any additional insights into expertise, types of fishing (e.g. artisanal, sports fishing or deep slope).

8.0 Archaic Legislation

Apart from challenges and limitations within the sector, outdated laws continue to guide the marine sector. The fishing industry is governed by the Fisheries Ordinance (dated September 24, 1948) consolidated in Chapter 174 of the Laws of Belize 1980. The principal regulations for the fisheries sector are the Fisheries Regulations 1977 passed under statutory instrument No. 66 of 1977. In January 1999, the Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations 1999 were passed to amend the Fisheries Regulations of 1977 (the Principal Regulations). The amendment enacted a new schedule of fees for licenses and permits, including commercial fishing vessels license, marine bio-prospecting license, black coral license, research permits, fish processing plant permit, and fish exporters permit. This amendment also called for the re-registration of all vessels and fishers. Since 1977, a number of statutory instruments have come into effect, including marine protected areas, species protections and gear restrictions. For activities by fishing vessels in the high seas, including measures against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU), fishing and pollution control, the main regulation is the High Seas Fishing Act (2013) (National Fisheries Policy, Strategy & Action Plan, 2019).

9.0 Ongoing/Planned Pro-Gender Public Policy & Initiatives

A gender strategy will enable the intersectoral and collaborative approach to climate change adaptation planning. It will also support the inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups in adaptation planning, decision-making processes, and active participation and implementation of climate adaptation actions on the ground. While there is no specific gender policy within the BFD, recently through the efforts of the National Women's Commission, a revised National Gender Policy has been completed but remains unpublished.

Section 10.2 Gender and Disability Inclusiveness under the National Trade Policy 2019-2030, highlights policy prescriptions to integrate the gender and disability agenda into trade and development. The Policy acknowledges the "involvement of women in fisheries and seafood processing and recognizing the importance of mainstreaming gender and disability". Therefore, given a growing trend of women participating in fisheries in Belize there is a need to develop strategies that reflect and promote such increased participation by offering gender-equitable opportunities to fisheries and particularly in efforts to diversify fishing products and provide alternative livelihoods to supplement fisheries income.

9.1 Green Climate Fund Readiness Project

Under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as implementing entity a project entitled *Enhancing Adaptation Planning and Increasing Climate Resilience in The Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector of Belize* is ongoing. This is projected to be an 18-month project with main beneficiaries to include: (i) the Belize Fisheries Department; (ii) Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute; (iii) Belize Meteorological Service; (iv) fishers; and (v) fishing communities. Data gathered through this readiness project will be vital to develop the climate rationale for fisheries and coastal zone projects for the GCF, and overall climate change projects. The data gathered will illustrate the high vulnerability of both sectors in Belize and the need to increase resilience to ensure the viability of the fishing industry and the livelihoods, well-being, and safety of the stakeholders in both sectors.

As part of the project, the Government of Belize held its fifth annual Women in Fisheries Forum (WIFF) in June 2022. The annual forum has become a space for women in fisheries to convene and discuss specific activities to address ongoing challenges in the sector and to complete capacity building in technical areas.

9.2 Women in Fisheries Forum

The WIFF 2017 was very instrumental in sharing a number of barriers and needs faced particularly by women, youth and IPADs. This event also assisted the Belize Fisheries Department (BFD) with a mapping of women's participation in the fisheries sector given that the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) does not presently collect data on women's participation in the sector.

Key action proposed by participants at the 2017 WIFF included but were not limited to: (i) empower women to participate in all aspects of fisheries management through capacity building and development; (ii) comply with the international/national/regional policies on women's empowerment and women's rights in the fisheries sector; (iii) mainstream gender in policies, programme and documentation, (iv) participate in interdisciplinary gender research groups; (v) conduct gender analysis at the fishing community level and (vi) continue to disaggregate fisheries data by sex. The 2022 WIFF focused on the link between gender and climate change and saw the participation of fifty-

five (55) women who are directly involved in fisheries or work indirectly as key stakeholders in government, private or non-profit sectors.

It must be noted that key actions proposed under the 2017 WIFF have been integrated under the recently launched *Gender Strategy, Action Plan and M & E for the Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector of Belize (2022 – 2027)*. In addition, Belize finalized and launched its first gender analysis in fisheries by the end of 2022 under the ongoing GEF readiness project - *Gender Analysis of Belize’s Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector* . See [Section 12.0: Recent Milestones in Gender Policies in the Fisheries Sector](#) for more details.

9.3 National Gender Policy (2021 unpublished¹)

The revised National Gender Policy (2021 unpublished) seeks to “achieve gender equity and equality and end discrimination against women and girls in Belize” (National Gender Policy, 2021) It is founded on principles outlined in the Belize Constitution and on international Conventions and Agreements signed by the Government of Belize. The Policy was commissioned and prepared by the National Women’s Commission in compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It identifies and examines the inequities experienced by both genders and suggest strategies to correct gender disparities. It draws from the Preamble to the Constitution of Belize (1981) which guarantees gender equality for all its citizens and provides them protection from discrimination on the grounds of race, place or origin, political opinions, color, creed, or sex.

The Policy envisions “a society in which all men and women, boys and girls are able to achieve their full potential through the enjoyment of their human rights; live together in mutual respect, dignity and harmony; and are equal partners as they participate in services and resources for realizing and sustaining their economic, social, political, and cultural development for equal enjoyment of all” (National Gender Policy, 2021). The Policy is guided by key principles which include: human rights, gender equality, gender equity, women empowerment, gender mainstreaming, respect for diversity, family strengthening, best interests of the child, full participation of women and men, good governance, accountability of outcomes, coordination and harmonization and human centered development.

It must be noted that the Government of Belize recently declared that the National Women’s Commission will now be deemed a statutory body. It is hoped that under such status, the NWC can now advocate with decision-makers directly to pass the revised National Gender Policy.

¹ Personal communication with National Women’s Commission Acting Director

10.0 Ongoing/Planned Pro-Diversity Public Policy & Initiatives

10.1 National Youth Development Policy (2013)

The National Youth Development Policy of Belize (2012) envisions empowering youths through increased access to opportunities for leadership and self-development and with the support of multi-sectoral partnerships with parents, churches, non-governmental organizations, civil society, development partners and the media. The policy serves as a conceptual framework that guides major stakeholders, including youths themselves through an opportunity-focused approach. The main objectives are to: (1) create a shift in the paradigm from which youth and youth development is positioned to a more holistic strategy that encompasses a positive approach to youth development and well-being; (2) build an integrated, comprehensive and sustainable approach to youth development and youth development initiatives based on multi-sectorial interventions; (3) identify priority areas and possible intervention based on existing programs and experiences as well as regional and international best practices; (4) enable young men and women to initiate actions that promote their own development and that of their communities and broader society and (5) clarify roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in youth development [young people, government, civil society and independent institutions.

The Policy addresses areas for youth's health, wellness and safety, identify and equity, protection, trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, protection of young persons with disabilities, education, access to support services and relationships, social services including psychosocial services and socio-economic opportunities. The latter is closely linked to the country's economic situation and Belize' opportunities for young people to participate in a wide range of economic activities. Although the Government's efforts remain focused on improving education opportunities for youth, the policy speaks to the need to improve opportunities for those young people to participate in the productive sector as well. "While individual agencies appear to collect data on the number of young people participating in the programs they offer, there is no systematic data collection on indicators of participation that will allow policy and decision makers to understand better what opportunities exist for participation and what areas require strengthening (National Youth Development Policy of Belize, p. 40).

10.2 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No 169)

It is important to note that Belize is not a signatory to ILO Convention 169. This convention was adopted on 27 June 1989 (entry into force on 5 September 1991). The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 is an International Labour Organization Convention, also known as ILO Convention 169, or C169. It is the major binding international convention concerning indigenous peoples and tribal peoples, and a forerunner of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

However, the Government in Belize (GoB), established the first ever Commission for Indigenous Peoples under the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs in 2020.

10.3 Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC)

The Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC) was established in 1998 as the focal institution to represent indigenous peoples (IPs) collective rights on national and international policy issues that affect the four indigenous linguistic communities of Belize. Namely, these groups are the Garifuna, the Mopan Maya, the Kekchi Maya and the Yucatec Maya. Whilst its revitalization occurred in December,

2017, members agreed that there is an urgent need to reflect on BENIC's past achievements, identify the relevant best practices to best serve IPs in today's context and develop a strategic plan of how to go forward.

Under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP), BENIC held a strategic planning workshop in 2018 and was activated in their mission to identify the relevant best practices to best serve IPs in today's context (UNDP GEF SP, 2018).

11.0 Needs and Barriers of Women, Youth and Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Descendants

Despite the past or ongoing pro-gender and pro-diversity public policies and initiatives, women, youth and IPADs continue to remain vulnerable and often excluded in national development policies. Women, for example, face multiple barriers to decent work conditions as well as. These challenges are often exacerbated by dynamic of gender inequality and gender-based violence in communities and households. Youth, while often referenced in national policies and programmes continue to experience gaps in services and access to health, education, and skills-training. Indigenous People & Afro Descendants (IPADs) are often disadvantaged by geographic isolation, lower levels of literacy and limited access to government services highly centralized in larger urban areas of Belize, such as Belize City and Belmopan. Thus, IPAD's participation in the formal economy is often less or remains undocumented.

11.1 Women

Despite some progress in gender mainstreaming, important gender gaps remain, from physical violence and deprivations to unequal opportunities in work or political life. Women in Belize, lag behind men in positions of power and political leadership. Women face barriers to economic empowerment and are the main victims of gender-based violence (GBV). Women's access to health and education has improved, yet there are gaps to be filled in adolescent health, mental health and in girls and women's access to non-traditional training and job opportunities.

In addition, there are few credit lines accessible at lending institutions for fisherfolks, and if less so for women and youth who often lack any collateral to become eligible for credit. To date, there is no micro-financing institution in Belize, with the only document institution, the Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology (BEST) dormant.

There are also cultural constraints supporting stereotyped roles so that men are seen as fisherfolks and women are employed to process and selling of the products. Thus, men are expected to go deep-sea fishing while women must return home to look after children highlighting the burden of care duties imposed on women.

During the WIFF in 2017, participants reported that women in fisheries are not recognized as a profession with no support for social security benefits, (such as maternity leave, sick leave, retirement plans, health, and life insurance). In addition, participants reported that women do not usually attend organization meetings and do not speak up when they attend; at times their opinions are overshadowed by men. Yet, one of the greatest barriers remains the double burden of care as women cannot engage in deep-slope fishing as desired given that they must return to their households daily to care for their children. See Annex B for a SWOT analysis on women's participation in the fisheries sector.

11.2 Youth

A wide range of factors affect adolescent health. Education, which is a protective factor for adolescent health, is inadequate, as not all students who enroll in primary school complete high school. Overall health of adolescents is also impacted by the environment in which they grow and develop. At organizational level, there are major areas of weakness, which manifest in the absence of a well-structured adolescent health programme with multisectoral collaboration and accountability mechanisms. “High rates of violent crime and gang activity, particularly on the south side of Belize City (the main metropolis), affect adolescents and youths, at times to the extent of losing family members and peers to gun violence” (UNICEF, n.d.)

According to the ILO (2018) mapping of youth employment interventions in the Caribbean, “[b]oth work experience opportunities and job matching services were found to be limited in the country while those that do exist have considerable problems which would hinder their effectiveness including low reach and capacity.” There are urban-centric programmes to support job placement or job-matching, but these do not cater for the poor youth in rural areas. This group, the poor youth in rural areas, is more likely to find work in unskilled occupations which are lower paying, decent work for rural and ethnic minority youth, and the phenomenon of youth who are neither in education, nor employment, nor training. See Annex C for a SWOT analysis on youth’s participation in the fisheries sector.

11.3 Indigenous Peoples and Afro Descendants

According to UN’s Promotion and Strengthening of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies (2021), “the incorporation of traditional knowledge and building on traditional practices provides opportunities for community participation and increases the available knowledge base.” Maya and Garifuna peoples in Belize are dependent on local natural resources to practice their culture and support their livelihoods. While Maya specialize in a subsistence agriculture known as milpa, a form of shifting cultivation, Garifuna have traditionally engaged in subsistence fishing and small-scale farming. Both groups have depended on the land and natural resources not only for their physical and economic survival, but also for the continuation of their spiritual lives and unique cultures. Upon colonization, however, the British government suppressed indigenous cultures and livelihoods. Foreigners controlled and exploited most of the land for logging and cash crop farming. By independence, the indigenous peoples of Toledo found themselves economically and socially marginalized in an export-based economy, with land and other natural resources increasingly scarce.

Today, Toledo is one of Belize's most impoverished and marginalized district, and Mayas and Garifunas now have some of the lowest incomes and highest unemployment rates in the country. As such, many IPADs migrate from their communities to urban areas in search of employment and other opportunities such as education and health services for their families.

Discrimination against indigenous peoples in Belize is further compounded by gender inequalities. Maya women's high rates of poverty, particularly when they are single heads of households, are a leading cause of violations of their rights. Afro-descendant women in the Americas, like Garifuna women, experience intersectional discrimination based on their gender, poverty, and identity as Afro-descendant. Both groups of women experience limited access to health care. Throughout the Americas, indigenous and Afro-descendant women face barriers in accessing justice, including when they have been victims of violence.

12.0 Recent Milestones in Gender Policies in the Fisheries Sector

12.1 Gender Strategy, Action Plan and M&E for Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector

The Gender Strategy, Action Plan and M & E for the coastal zone and fisheries sector of Belize (2022 – 2027) has recently been completed under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) readiness project entitled, “Enhancing adaptation planning and increasing climate resilience in the coastal zone and fisheries sector of Belize.” The project is being executed under the Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation, in partnership with, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as the implementing agency. It aims to identify how gaps such as increased capacity building, education, and awareness around adaptation planning at various levels including community level can be addressed as well as how institutional programs of the Blue Economy Unit, Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute and the Belize Fisheries Department can be enhanced from a gender perspective (Gender Strategy, Action Plan & M&E Framework for the Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector of Belize 2022 – 2027).

12.2 Gender Analysis of Belize’s Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector

There is also a Gender Analysis of Belize’s Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector in the pipeline as a key deliverable under the GEF’s readiness project but has yet to be reviewed by the steering committee at MBECA before it is publicly released (personal communication FAO, J. Gomez, September 18, 2022). This analysis makes recommendations on key points related to gender along the value chain (see Annex III).

13.0 Findings from Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions conducted in February 2023 allowed for greater identification of priority areas among fisherfolks and insights into opportunities and recommendations from respondents. While the number of respondents remain small (with only fifteen participants), the discussions validated either entry-points and interventions presently being proposed under BL-L1042 or highlighted the need to further explore interventions that can be designed particularly under **Component II: Direct support to fishers and fishing groups for sustainable and inclusive development of the fisheries sector of Belize**. Using a thematic approach, the following areas are discussed:

Economic Interest

13.1 Respondents expressed agreement with **need to improve landing sites** and meet both sanitary conditions as well as support refrigeration systems. Fishers in Belize City agreed that the site of the present landing site is seen as a historic landmark but needs upgrading to ensure sanitary requirements for handling seafood is met. Fishers in Dangriga expressed interest in relocating and establishing a landing site that meets sanitary requirements as well as provides refrigeration system on-site.

13.2 Respondents generally expressed **interest in receiving matching grants** as less fisherfolks opt for commercial loans. Respondents described how they often make informal loans from relatives or friends to invest in their equipment, supplies, etc. A few respondents reported using savings from credit union and also discussed the limitations of becoming eligible for loans as their income is not fixed.

13.3 Respondents expressed **interest in support of diversification** either associated with the sector (e.g. sea cucumber) or linked indirectly (e.g. establishing a restaurant). While there were no discussions on business plan formalization, respondents shared various business ideas to assist in offsetting the longer hours at sea with less produce as compared to times when they could go out to fish for two (2) hours and yield enough for a day's catch either as subsistence or commercial fishers.

Social Protection

13.4 Respondents reported that they **do not have any medical or insurance schemes to cover injury or sick benefits** for fishers. They do not pay towards sick or injury benefits under the Social Security (SS) Act. While fishers can pay as self-employed under SS laws, few opt to as their income is not fixed, and they would be unable to meet monthly contributions under such scheme.

13.5 Respondents also confirmed that **no subsidy or direct financial support has been provided** by the Government of Belize. While stakeholders in other sectors (e.g. tourism) received assistance post-pandemic, fishers have not received such support.

Health & Safety

13.6 Respondents **expressed concerns for personal safety** which is often reported to the Belize Fisheries Department (e.g. illegal fishing and pirating). Women fishers described concerns about being out at sea but most reported joining their parents, husbands, or sons when fishing.

13.7. Respondents **reported that all fishers must carry a first aid kit** onboard as it is required by law; however, when asked about skills in first aid, **only three (3) of the fifteen (15) respondents had training in first aid**. These respondents explained that they had learned such skill at their previous (e.g. a former fisheries officer or student) or present roles/jobs (volunteer at the Belize Defence Force).

Grievance Mechanism

13.8 Respondents confirmed that **a grievance mechanism exists** which allows fishers to report directly to Belize Fisheries Department (BFD) or via their fishers' association. However, of those who responded, there were reports of little to no satisfaction with the process (many respondents opted not to comment). Respondents described personal grievances as well as reports made on observations of illegal activities which had been lodged at BFD but had not received any follow-up to date.

Risks as Perceived in Collaboration with the Government

13.9 Respondents **described several risks as perceived and based on experience** with past government projects. Generally, respondents listed several risks ranging from corruption among government officials to 'little to no support' to fishers if the Government of Belize (GOB) becomes an intermediary. Several examples of past projects were cited where fishers were consulted but no tangible investment was ever completed in their communities. Respondents claimed that the GoB used finances to purchase vehicles and were still not amenable to visit associations when associations requested that government officials provide information sessions or training.

13.10 Respondents also **expressed a lack of trust in government and non-government organizations (NGOs)** if future project funds were to be directed via such department. A few respondents recommended that more consultation be done with fishers directly before projects are designed as fishers are seldom consulted in many processes. Respondents reported that most grant funding are spent on advocacy and trainings with no money for equipment to benefit the fisher. Without equipment after trainings there is no application and benefit to stakeholders.

Assets Owned

13.11 Of respondents interviewed, **only three (3) owned their own boats** with the majority either borrowing boats or going along with relatives or friends when they need to fish.

Gender Characterization

13.12 Of the fifteen (15) fishers interviewed, seven (7) were not members of association. Of these seven (7) six were women.

14.0 Specific Gender Responsive Entry-Points & Interventions

The desk review, along with the focus group discussions, underscored the need to assess specific approaches to ensuring that there is gender inclusion. While there are three thousand, three hundred and fifty-nine (3,359) licensed fisherfolks, 97.35% are males, and 2.62% are females. It is essential to identify specific gender entry points and interventions to address limitations faced by women aligned to the outputs established under the proposed loan operation. *Table 1* presents indicators in support of interventions that may be supported under BL-L1042 loan operation.

It must be noted that diversity indicators are not included given that in Belize, any Belizean is eligible to apply for a fisherfolk license. There are no reported or perceived barriers among IPADs and engagement in the fisheries sector is linked to communities and cultural preferences. For example, most coastal communities are home to afro descendants whose cultural and traditional practices continue to align to their preference for productive activities such as fishing. There are also indigenous fishing communities in northern Belize; these are small pockets of Yucatec Maya communities. However, indigenous peoples (IPs) also live inland (i.e. Orange Walk, Toledo and Cayo Districts) and focus on other productive sectors such as agriculture. Yet, no data exists to justify critical gaps for IPADs to access fishing activities. Thus, the indicators proposed are for greater gender inclusion only. Each indicator is proposed in light of outputs as per below:

Result 2.3: Share of beneficiary fishers attending collective trainings provided by the technical assistance

Indicator: 5% women participation in training

Rationale: The 2017 WIFF Report underscored the need for women fishers, where interest exists, to be engaged in a more targeted approach during the process of information sessions, communications events, and outreach activities. The Government of Belize (GoB) can ensure that during its

implementation women are encouraged to participate in trainings and access technical assistance to learn about activities listed under sub-components of BL-L1042 – e.g. matching grants.

Output 2.1.2: Individual and Business Plans are prepared for women

Indicator: 5% of individual or business plans are prepared for women

Rationale: Based on the literature review, women fishers in Belize, face additional barriers when accessing credit given the lack of ownership of land or assets such as boats. In addition, during the focus group discussions, women fishers reported being mostly able to fish on boats owned by male relatives (i.e. husbands or parents). According to the Gender Strategy, Action Plan and M & E for the Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector of Belize (2022 – 2027), women have less access to resources which undermine their standards of living, food security and poverty at the household level increasing their vulnerability. With a targeted approach, a specific percentage of individual or business plans must be prepared to include women fishers under BL-L1042, and in so doing securing women’s access to funding.

By preparing individual and business plans for women, women fishers (whether in associations, cooperatives or as independent fishers) will have additional support to engage in productive activities along the value chain and increase likelihood of greater participation in the fisheries sector.

Output 2.1.3: Individual and business plans developed for women with the support of the technical assistance

Indicators: 5% of plans are prepared for women

of women fisherfolk who increase sales by 24²% over 3-year period

Rationale: By increasing women’s access to funding, women fishers can secure greater financial solvency and decrease vulnerabilities such as household poverty. According to the Gender Strategy, Action Plan and M & E for the Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector of Belize (2022 – 2027), other vulnerabilities such as gender-based violence can be exacerbated by women’s financial dependency.

[See table 1](#) for indicators under present outputs of BL-L1042 and specific to gender response entry-points and interventions.

² adoption of climate change adaptation strategies (Rahman et al. (2021))

Table 1: Indicator Matrix for Gender

Component	Results/Outputs	# of proposed beneficiaries/units	Indicators for Gender & Diversity
Component 2: Direct support to fishers and fishing groups for sustainable and inclusive development of the fisheries sector of Belize	Result 2.3: Share of beneficiary fishers attending collective trainings provided by the technical assistance	450 plans	5% women participation in training
	Output 2.1.2: Individual and Business Plans are prepared for women	300 plans	5% of individual or business plans are prepared for women
	Output 2.1.3: Individual and business plans developed for women with the support of the technical assistance	300 plans	5% of plans are prepared for women # of women fisherfolk who increase sales by 24 ³ % over 3-year period

³ adoption of climate change adaptation strategies (Rahman et al. (2021))

15.0 Socio-cultural Considerations

In light of public consultations as part of the requirement for Stakeholder Engagement and Disclosure of Information, the Government of Belize must also be mindful of diversity needs when disseminating information on BL-L1042. Below are key steps in support of socio-cultural considerations for public consultations.

Step 1: Identification of indigenous or community leaders (where applicable)

In each pre-selected community, there is a local government leader (i.e. village chairpersons) but no Alcalde system exists. However, it will be key to establish direct communications with leaders (chairpersons and other executive members of fishers' associations or cooperatives in the pre-selected communities).

Step 2: Language Adaptations

It will be essential that sessions in northern Belize be facilitated primarily in Spanish as it is predominantly spoken in that part of the country. However, there are indigenous persons (e.g. Kek'chi Mayas) in northern Belize who would also need to have information shared in standard English.

In central Belize, the sessions will need to be facilitated in Kriol primarily; however, all participants are expected to speak English as a second language.

In southern Belize, the sessions will need to be facilitated in standard English as participants are expected to speak English as a second language. It is not expected that any translation will be needed for the Garinagu language.

Step 3: Communication Channels

In order to disseminate information about the public consultation sessions, both radio and TV ads must be developed in both English and Spanish and in a timely manner (i.e. at least 1 week prior to the consultation date). Additionally, it will be key to send individual invitations (e.g. flyer in jpg or png) to the executive of each fishers' association or cooperatives via WhatsApp™. Thereafter, chairpersons can disseminate to their membership via WhatsApp™ groups or make individual calls.

Step 4: Confirmation of Participation by Key Stakeholders

In order to ensure confirmation of participants, follow-up calls with each fishers' association or cooperatives in the pre-selected communities must be conducted to secure number of expected attendees. In the event that BFD does not have confirmation, the consulting firm can make cold calls based on BFD's registry.

Annex I: Participants for Focus Group Discussions

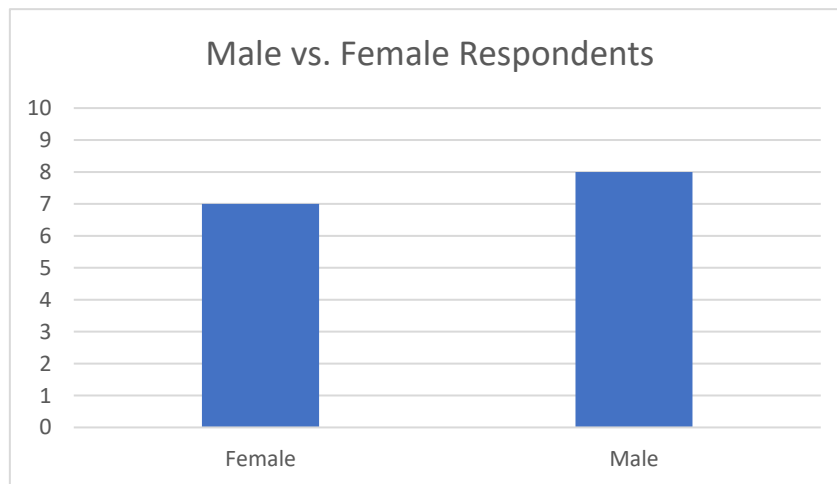
Respondent ID	Gender	Age	Community	Ethnicity
001	Male	50	George Town Village, Stann Creek District	Garifuna
002	Male	49	Sandhill Village, Belize District	Creole
003	Male	45	Dangriga, Stann Creek District	Garifuna
004	Female	45	Riversdale, Stann Creek District	Creole
005	Male	40	Corozal Town, Corozal District	Mestizo
006	Male	51	Riversdale, Stann Creek District	Mestizo
007	Female	27	Orange Walk Town, Orange Walk District	Mestizo - Maya
008	Female	24	Dangriga, Stann Creek District	Creole
009	Male	19	Belize City, Belize District	Creole
010	Female	19	Belize City, Belize District	Creole
011	Female	42	Dangriga Town, Stann Creek District	Creole
012	Male	61	Belize City, Belize District	Creole
013	Male	62	Esperanza Village, Cayo District but born in Punta Negra, Toledo District	Creole
014	Female	27	Riversdale, Stann Creek District	Mestizo
015	Female	39	Dangriga Town, Stann Creek District	Creole

Annex II: Demographics on Participants in Focus Group Discussions (author's elaboration)

Notes/Observations:

- There was equal interest to participate in the FGDs by both male and female fishers.
- Respondents age ranged from 19 to 62.
- There were respondents from 5 district with the exception of Toledo.
- More than 50% of respondents belong to an association.
- Fisherfolks may have access to more than 1 fishing zone.

Figure 5: Male vs. Female Respondents



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Figure 6: Age of Respondents

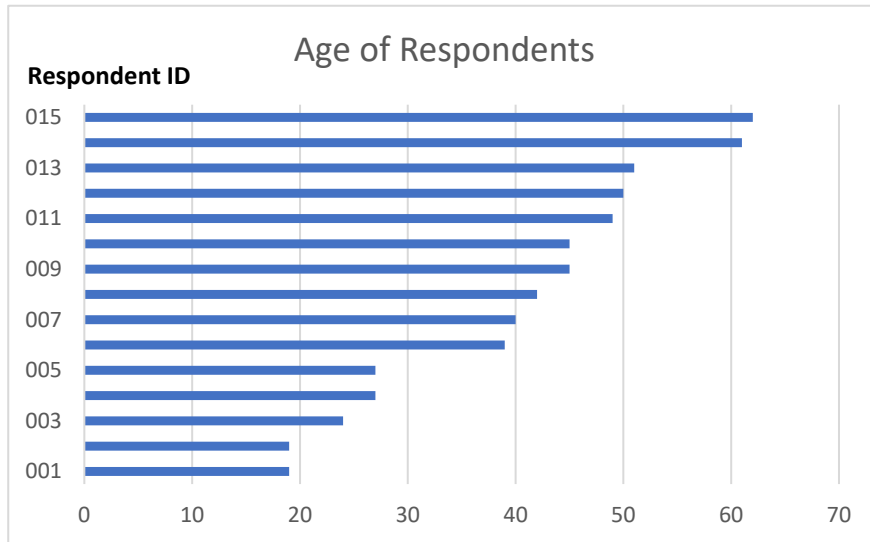


Figure 7: Respondents by District

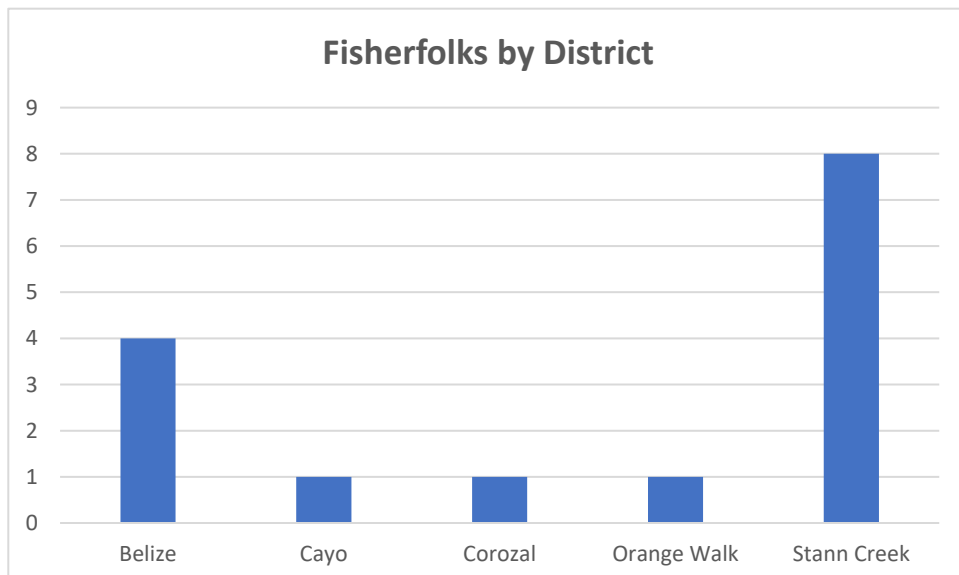


Figure 8: Fishers belonging to Associations vs. Independent Fishers

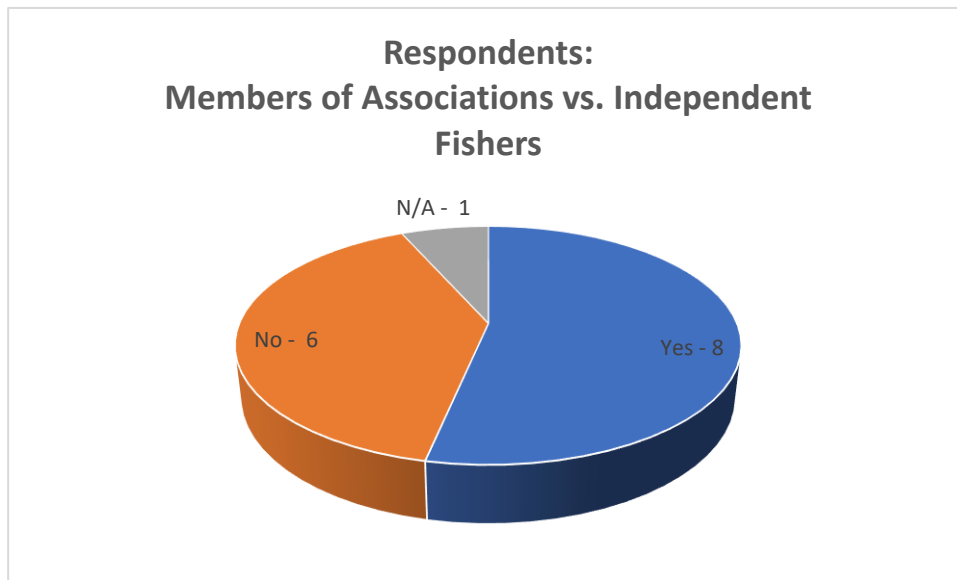


Figure 9: Respondents by Associations

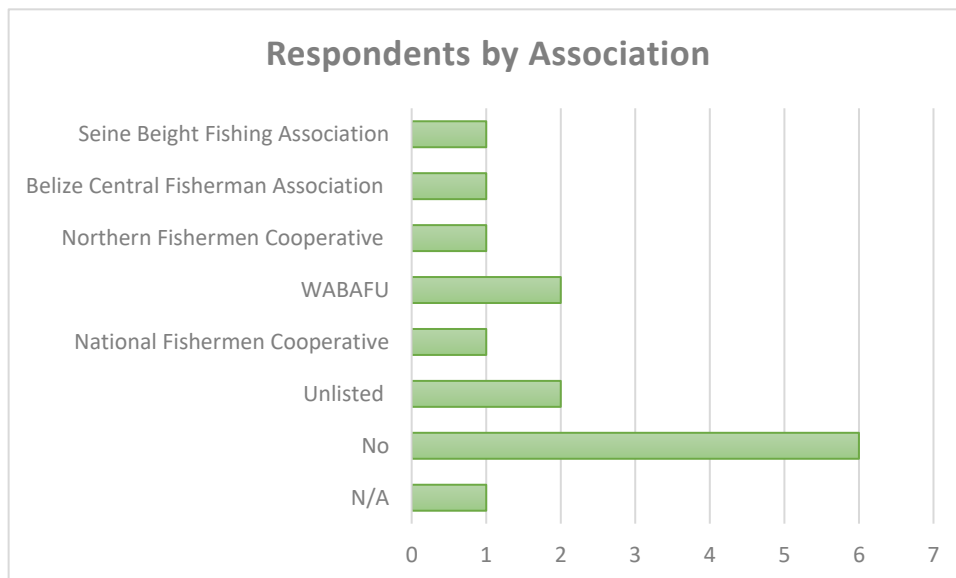


Figure 10: Respondents by Fishing Zone

Respondent ID	Fishing Zone Area
001	Area 3 and Area 4
002	Area 6
003	Area 3 and Area 8
004	Area 3 and Area 7
005	Area 2, Area 8 and Area 9
006	Area 3 and Area 7
007	Area 2 and Area 6
008	Area 3 and 8
009	Area 6, Area 7, and Area 9
010	Area 2 and Area 7
011	Area 8
012	Area 6
013	Area 6 and Area 7
014	Area 3
015	Area 3

Annex III: Key Points Related to Gender Along the Value Chain (extracted from The Gender Analysis of Belize's Coastal Zone and Fisheries Sector)

Issue	Discussion and Recommendation
Men dominate across the supply chain. Women's work remains invisible and undervalued. Women are most visible in the processing nodes earning mostly minimal wages and in undetermined working conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender mainstreaming must remain at the forefront in the development or revision of policies and programmes.• Traditional practices and perceptions that are discriminatory to women, must be challenged to gain gender equality and equity in the sector.• Workshops targeting women, to highlight the rights afforded to women in Belize, and sessions to change their own views of women's roles are needed.• Affirmative actions need to be taken to ensure that women and youth are represented at decision-making spaces at the national, community and group levels.• Project planning and implementation must take an intersectional approach regarding women's involvement in the sector. Factors such as age, ethnicity, geographic regions, or the gender power dynamic that impede their participation must be factored in.• Further research/analysis (from the labour side) is needed to determine the situation of work conditions and labour rights of women in the processing node.• Activities such as the Women in Fisheries Forum can be scaled up and diversified. More forums are needed so that women (both duty bearers and right bearers) can come together more frequently to discuss the issues that affect them. Adding a separate forum for men would allow for comparisons of concerns and allow a better understanding of the issues on the ground for both men and women.

Women are more comfortable at the post-harvesting node; an area that lacks sex disaggregated data.

- A clear definition as to who are recognized as “Women in Fisheries” within the Belizean context would help to identify participants and measure project impacts.
- Many women are not too enthusiastic to be part of the harvesting node. The labour-intensive nature of the work, distance from home, the vulnerabilities they can face at sea or during harvesting activities, and the harsh exposure to elements for prolonged periods are factors cited as deterrents. To shift this thinking, support and capacity building could be provided to help them recognize their own work beyond complementary or support roles and increase their knowledge of market access.
- The post-harvesting node traverses greatly with the tertiary sector (wholesale, coastal tourism, restaurant industry, etc.) therefore, finding ways in which projects can allow women to provide products and services directly to these sectors is recommended (such as Pesca Tours in Sartaneja, Sartaneja Homestays, Food tours, etc.).

Low savings behaviour and high levels of worry about lack of income impact fisherfolk families.

- Further research is required at the post harvesting node to better understand the roles of women, men, and youths within the sector.
- Men and women are involved in sales of catch whether it is at the open market, through a middle salesperson, cooperative or exclusive buyers. Financial transactions take place in all sorts of ways and in many different contexts. Men and women fishers and spouses would benefit from financial literacy programs especially considering that most do not have safety nets.

Safety out at sea concerns

- Concerns for personal safety and dangers at sea (piracy, gang violence, etc.) are real threats in the Belizean context. Therefore, clear guidelines regarding safety systems and reporting mechanisms could be established. For example, women need to know what supports are available to them if they experience sexual violence (reporting mechanism, mental health support, etc.).

Women and youth have little access to decision-making spaces such as, advisory committees, leaders in cooperatives and community groups.

Lack of interest of women to join organized fishing groups. Weak associations and threatened fishing cooperatives

- Intermediary support and conflict resolution trainings are required to minimize gun violence being experienced out at sea, especially by men. Increased patrols by regulating agencies may also deter violence experienced out at sea.
- There is need to increase women and youth participation in the sector.
- More assertive measures can be taken to encourage inclusion of women in key decision-making spaces such as fishing cooperatives, community groups, managed access committee, coastal planning committees, public meetings etc. For example, 50-50 representation in leadership positions would reduce gender disparity and be more representative of the men and women using the resources.
- Youths could participate in internships, be youth representatives on boards and councils, in project steering committees, in project planning committees etc.
- Public consultation meetings can be gender responsive and provide support to increase participation of women, and youths in these spaces.
- Women are underrepresented in organized fishing groups such as fishing associations, cooperatives etc. Actions to educate and motivate women to organize themselves to increase their voice within the sector is recommended.
- Established groups, such as fishing associations also need strengthened for men and women fishers to have more agency within the sector.
- There is a need to empower fishing cooperatives to ensure its viability thereby protecting the livelihoods of those working in the sector and increasing benefits to its members.

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