

## **Necessary Condition 1.6: Adequate Skills and Capacity to Support Economic Growth, Sustainable Development, and Resilience**

The Government of Belize, acting through the Ministry of Education (MOE), will continue to implement the Education Sector Strategy 2011-2016 prioritizing specific actions designed to accelerate progress toward universal primary and secondary education, increase rates of successful school completion, prepare people to work in a growing Belizean economy; and build the basis for lifelong learning skills, entrepreneurship, socially desirable values, and a strong sense of national identity.

### ***Action 1: Increase spaces at the pre-primary level***

In the medium-term, the MOE will work to increase spaces for Early Childhood Education (ECE) by establishing additional government-owned institutions and encouraging and facilitating the establishment of private and community pre-schools in underserved and low-income areas. Financing will be provided, in part, through the Social Investment Fund and the EU Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol Countries. The MOE will continue to provide support to such institutions through grants and the payment of teachers' salaries. Given the cost of establishing new centers, the Ministry will also explore alternative modes for delivery of ECE and ACE programs, including the Roving Caregivers model used by the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation (MHDSTPA) to target households with training and assistance in early childhood stimulation (ages zero to three). The target is to increase enrolment in ECE by 2000 places by the end of the current medium term planning period.

### ***Action 2: Increase enrolment at the primary level (pursue universal primary education)***

To move from current high levels of primary school enrolment to universal enrolment, the MOE will work to identify out-of-school children, particularly those with special needs, and determine the nature and level of assistance that would be required to enroll them. The MOE will continue to provide support services to facilitate access, including school transportation, feeding programs, and textbooks; along with assistance provided through the BOOST program. The MOE will complete its school mapping exercise, identify areas where additional spaces are needed, and work towards providing those spaces, subject to the availability of resources and with priority given to areas of greatest need.

### ***Action 3: Increase enrolment at the secondary level***

The MOE will continue to provide fee subsidies for needy students and provide assistance through the BOOST program, as well as providing transportation services where necessary to facilitate access. As with primary enrolment, the need for additional spaces will be determined based on the school-mapping exercise.

### ***Action 4: Reduce drop-out and repetition rates at the primary and secondary education level***

The target is to contain the dropout rate and halve the repetition rate at the primary level; and to reduce both dropout and repetition by 50% at the secondary level. Actions to improve quality are expected to contribute to these objectives, but additional assistance will be provided to secondary schools through the new school financing formula to support student achievement. Schools will provide additional support services for students at risk of repeating or dropping out.

#### ***Action 5: Improve efficiency of services***

Some gains in access are expected to be realized through efforts to improve efficiency and management, resulting in the better utilization of existing resources or the freeing-up of resources that can then be rechanneled to other areas. To this end, the MOE will continue to pursue further opportunities to amalgamate institutions that function below capacity. MOE will also give consideration to the expansion of existing institutions, as opposed to constructing new ones, in those cases where it is deemed a more efficient and effective option. Necessary but costly support services will be reviewed to ensure the intended objectives are being met and that the expenditure is justified. The review of the textbook policy will be finalized and a decision taken on the most efficient and effective solution for providing teaching and learning materials. MOE will also study alternative means through which school feeding and nutrition programs could be resourced. Subject to the availability of resources, MOE will make every effort to expand these programs to other schools.

#### ***Action 6: Enhance targeting mechanisms for financial assistance***

The Secondary School Financing Reform project, which is addressing the more equitable targeting of government assistance to secondary schools, will continue.

#### ***Action 7: Increase enrolment at ITVETs***

The MOE will continue activities to promote exposure to TVET through the inclusion of more technical options in the secondary school curriculum. The aim is to produce a standard core curriculum which will include more technical options. MOE will establish a national framework of qualification equivalencies that will provide options for the alignment of existing education programs and allow multiple pathways to certification. This action will include the development of a National Secondary Certificate to be awarded to secondary school students upon completion of the core curriculum and options including one TVET program. Opportunities for acquiring this certificate will also be made available to un-enrolled youth and ACE students. The Ministry of Education will also continue steps currently underway to offer the Caribbean Vocational Qualification through secondary and technical institutions in Belize.

#### ***Action 8: Apply ICT in education service delivery***

The Ministry of Education with assistance from the CDB, will consider options for the use of ICT in promoting access to education in hard-to-reach villages and settlements and will develop a strategy in this regard. This action will include reviewing the use of ICT to deliver options for out-of-school children, secondary students, tertiary level programs, and for adult and continuing education.

#### ***Action 9: Improve the effectiveness of teachers***

The MOE will continue activities to ensure teachers throughout the system have the necessary pedagogical and content training to effectively deliver the curriculum, and that they are appropriately licensed. Additional assistance on this Action will be provided through programs financed by the EU and the IDB. The former will target teachers in northern Belize; and the latter will provide training for teacher trainers, in-service and pre-service teachers. This assistance program will also include activities to attract qualified and motivated persons into the teaching profession, especially males at the primary level.

### ***Action 10: Improve the effectiveness of school leaders***

Training for school leaders will also continue over the medium-term planning period through the Quality Child Friendly Schools Initiative, the IDB Education Quality Improvement Project, and the certificate programs being offered at various institutions. The Belize Education Sector Reform Project (BESRP) will seek to equip school management authorities and school leaders with effective management and school improvement skills as part of its work to strengthen the system's regulatory and institutional framework.

### ***Action 11: Improve school governance***

The management capacity of the Ministry of Education will be enhanced by investing in its capacity to monitor and evaluate programs in order to improve effectiveness and to inform subsequent strategy. MOF will work with MOE to develop options for resourcing this capacity development. The education system's regulatory framework will be strengthened, through the actions of the BESRP and MOE, with the drafting of education rules, standards and regulations; development of an appropriate sector-wide monitoring and evaluation system; and improvement of the Ministry's capacity to oversee and support schools and managing authorities in achieving the system's objectives.

## **Necessary Condition 1.6.1: Align Education and Training to Labor Market Needs**

### ***Action 12: Improve linkages between programs offered and the needs of the economy***

A first step towards achieving increased relevance of the system is the identification of the skills required to support economic development in the short and long term. In that regard, the Ministry of Education will pursue the development of a Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) as part of the Education Sector Reform Project. This will be complemented by an exercise to evaluate and make recommendations with respect to the rationalization and diversification of the secondary curriculum. The HRDS should be completed within the strategy period. Guided by these initiatives, along with the development of a National Qualifications Framework, actions will be taken to address the challenges associated with the provision of skills to match the needs of the economy. These challenges include those related to the efficiency with which skills training can be conducted locally especially with regard to the ITVETs and UB, given issues of economies of scale; and addressing the special training needs of priority sectors such as tourism and agriculture. With respect to tourism training needs, while a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a tourism polytechnic institute is planned, the decision to move forward will be further informed by the assessments that will emanate from the HRDS. Thus, efforts will be made to promote quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of delivery at the ITVETs and the UB (which could include pursuing alternative delivery modes in support of the flexibility in offerings required if the ITVETs are to provide programs based on demand) and adjustments to the programs offered at the UB. Consideration will need to be given to the staffing arrangements and additional resources that will be required MOF will conduct a review to ensure that funds provided to support tertiary level education are directed to areas considered relevant to the national growth and sustainable development agenda, and that they reflect market considerations. This review should also consider current subsidies, scholarships, student loans provided through the DFC, and other financing mechanisms to ensure that these are directed to areas of importance to the economy. For example, subsidies may be provided on a "sliding scale," with greater levels of funding targeted to programs of greater importance. The review

should also consider measures to ensure that Belize receives returns on these investments, e.g. by linking financial support to commitments to work within the country in targeted sectors after graduation for minimum periods of time.

### **Necessary Condition 1.6.2: Encourage Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation**

#### ***Action 13: Promote an entrepreneurial culture and inculcate desired social values***

The MOE will review and strengthen the core curriculum and its delivery so that education in Belize contributes to inculcating an entrepreneurial culture. This strengthening will include the addition of practical approaches to motivating students and expose them to business practice, problem solving, and critical thinking. The MOE will develop and implement new strategies to resource such programs, for example through the use of volunteers and partnerships with the community (as advocated by the Quality Child Friendly School Initiative); and collaboration with the private sector.