

# Final Evaluation

*Belize's Public Awareness and Preparedness Campaign  
on the Question of Referring Guatemala's Claim to the ICJ*

*UNDP/Belize Project 00109852*

J. Ray Kennedy, PhD  
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# Introduction

This document constitutes the final report of the evaluation of UNDP/Belize's Project 00109852, "Belize's Public Awareness and Preparedness Campaign on the Question of Referring Guatemala's Claim to the ICJ", which was implemented in 2018-2019.

As established in the Project Document, "*The Project's overall outcome is to ensure that: the people of Belize have greater access to objective information on the referendum and the state has improved capacity to undertake an effective nationwide Referendum on the issue of whether to submit the border dispute with Guatemala to the International Court of Justice.*"

The project proposed to support the priority areas through the following:

1. Providing comparative experiences on referenda through an international forum;
2. Supporting the national referendum authorities on the communications/voter education plan;
3. Supporting communications targeting youth voters and engaging civil society organizations, through social media, TV and radio;
4. Supporting outreach to rural and marginalized voter populations, promoting their participation in ongoing voter re-registration process

Proposed Activities included:

1. Public discussions / debates / fora with the participation of the various stakeholders and society in general (to be implemented with referendum authorities, CSOs/ Media);
2. Production and broadcasting of TV and Radio debates featuring various opinions on the referendum and voter registry (to be implemented with referendum authorities, CSOs/ Media);
3. Technical advice on the development and implementation of a "Campaign on Awareness and Participation Among Local Youth" (to be developed with referendum authorities, authorities responsible for voter registry and CSOs);
4. Production and dissemination of information promoting citizen participation in national voter re-registration process

This report is based on

- documents provided by the UNDP Country Office (including the project staff)
- documents provided by the UN's Electoral Assistance Division,
- interviews conducted by the consultant in Belmopan and Belize City during a visit 17-21 June 2019,
- further phone / Skype interviews, and
- public sources.

# Background

Belize, previously known as British Honduras, is a small (approximate population 400,000) Central American country that achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1981.

The territory of what is now Belize has been the subject of disputes for centuries, first between England / Great Britain / the United Kingdom and Spain, then between the UK and Guatemala, and, since its independence, between Belize and Guatemala. Tensions remained high along the border even after Guatemala recognized Belize's independence in 1991.

Belize and Guatemala resumed talks on the border dispute under the auspices of the OAS in March 2000. An Adjacency Zone was established along the border under OAS auspices in 2003 to monitor and de-escalate tensions, and by December 2008, Belize and Guatemala signed the Special Agreement to Submit Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime Claim to the International Court of Justice.<sup>1</sup> This original agreement required that the two countries hold simultaneous referendums to ascertain popular support for that referral and stipulated (Art. 7.3) the exact language to appear on the ballots.

In April 2012, both Belize and Guatemala requested OAS support for the awareness campaigns to be put in place to inform the populations of both Belize and Guatemala about the process and what taking the dispute to the ICJ would mean.

In October 2012, both Belize and Guatemala presented their information campaign strategies to the "Group of Friends of Belize and Guatemala". Belize's strategy included the establishment of a Referendum Office within the Belizean Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Boundaries Affairs Unit.<sup>2</sup>

On 23 November 2012, the Belizean Foreign Ministry requested United Nations assistance in ensuring the success of the referendum on taking the issue of Guatemala's claim over Belizean territory to the International Court of Justice that Belize and Guatemala had agreed to hold in October 2013.<sup>3</sup> In response to that request, the Electoral Assistance Division of the UN Department of Political Affairs organized a Needs Assessment Mission in February 2013, the report of which recommended

- UN assistance to the Referendum Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its awareness and education campaign;
- UN assistance to the Elections and Boundaries Department in auditing the voter roll, establishing additional polling centres in order to bring voting centres closer to the population, and ensuring adequate voter information about the process itself.
- UN assistance to the Statistical Office to gather qualitative data in order to provide a baseline and information on the progress in the awareness and education campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oas.org/sap/peacefund/belizeandguatemala/documentos/SpecialAgreement2008allthepagesEng.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://belizereferendum.gov.bz/files/Belize\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://belizereferendum.gov.bz/files/Belize_Action_Plan.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that this 2012 letter was signed by Ms. Orla Coleman, who remained engaged in the preparations through the eventual holding of the referendum on 8 May 2019.

The referendum did not take place in 2013 as scheduled, largely due to disagreement over Belize's requirement at that point for 60% turnout for a referendum to be valid, and the envisaged UNDP project was not undertaken.

In May 2015, the two countries signed a Protocol to the Special Agreement allowing the two referendums to be held simultaneously or separately. In January 2017, Belize removed the 60% threshold for its referendum to be valid. In August of that year, Guatemala's Congress endorsed the holding of a referendum, and in October, the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal formally called for the referendum to be held in April 2018.

Belize's Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to the UNRC on 15 May 2017, again requesting UN assistance with preparations for the referendum. The UN responded by carrying out a desk review (dated 7 July 2017) followed by an Advisory Mission 17-21 July 2017. The report of the Advisory Mission recommended that the UN support the referendum process, on the understanding that "*its assistance / involvement will not be seen to be supporting one or the other referendum outcome, and be seen as strictly neutral with regard to the referendum*" and that "*no UN logos should appear in campaign materials*", with

- An expert assessment of the registration system and registry, followed by advice on cost-effective and sustainable options for a timely update of the registry
- Organization of a forum to share recent experiences and lessons learned on the holding of referenda, particularly on the resolution of border disputes
- Support civil society organizations in their voter education efforts
- Technical expertise in public outreach / communications to assist the Referendum Unit and CSOs in transforming messages into materials and in their dissemination
- Assistance in voter information
- Operational advice

On 11 July, the UN Focal Point on Electoral Assistance (Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs) approved the recommendations and informed UNDP of that approval. In response, UNDP/Belize developed a Project Document that was eventually signed on 2 July 2018. An electoral specialist deployed from UNDP's regional hub in Panama City in late July 2018 to carry out an assessment of the Election and Boundaries Department's voter re-registration campaign; a follow-up mission took place 20-24 August. An Electoral Communications and Coordination Expert was recruited through the EAD roster and arrived in September 2018, marking the effective initiation of the project activities. The Expert's initial Individual Contract for the month of September was followed by a Temporary Assignment (staff) contract in October. She concluded her assignment on 20 June 2019.

Meanwhile, Guatemala held its referendum on 15 April 2018, with nearly 96% approving of referring the border dispute to the ICJ, though only about 25% of the electorate turned out to vote. After a brief court-ordered delay and the passage of new referendum legislation specific to the ICJ vote, Belize held its referendum on 8 May 2019, with over 55% approving of referring the matter to the ICJ on turnout (65.4%) that exceeded even the old 60% threshold.

## Evaluation Elements

In accordance with the Project Document, “*The evaluation will assess the results achieved (direct and indirect, whether intended or not) from its implementation as well as whether the project achieved its intended goals.*”

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation established a number of criteria according to which the project was to be evaluated: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and gender equality. Impact – as an explicit evaluation criterion – was considered to be beyond the scope of this evaluation.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, some understanding of the likely impact of the project is possible as a result of the interviews and is highlighted as and when appropriate.

- **Relevance:**

*“The evaluator will assess the degree to which the project considers the local context and issues. Under this evaluation criterion, the evaluator should, inter alia, assess:*

- *To what extent was the project in line with the national development priorities, the CPD outputs, CPD outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?*
- *To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional, etc., changes in the country?*
- *To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women and youth and the human rights-based approach?”*

- It is clear that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Referendum Unit was the primary “client” of the project. That said, it is difficult, when assessing the project, to determine what results were achieved as a result of the Referendum Unit’s efforts (some of which were funded by the Government of Belize) and what results were achieved as a result of UNDP/Belize’s efforts.
- The Referendum Unit’s initial reticence to engage with UNDP (and preferring to receive donor funding directly) is also fairly typical of electoral assistance but was overcome with a patient demonstration of the value of UNDP assistance.
- The project was implemented in a very fluid context typical of assistance focused on a specific electoral event. Operating in such an environment required speed, flexibility, and careful management, which the project managed reasonably well once it effectively started with the arrival of the Electoral Communications and Coordination Expert in September 2018.

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<sup>4</sup> *“Impact, as an evaluation criterion, will not be utilized in this evaluation. Impact results – describing changes in people’s lives and development conditions – are considered beyond the scope of this evaluation. Results at the impact level would need to control for the vast array of factors that may have influenced development in this area and would not be feasible nor cost efficient to discern the project’s and UNDP’s contribution to such change.”*

- The timing of expenditures ended up being an important factor: due to conditions established by the funders, EU funds generally had to be expended first (through OAS), then UK funds; US funds remain available through September 2019. Some activities that might otherwise have been funded through UNDP ended up being funded through OAS simply because they fell earlier in the schedule, and the EU funds were the most appropriate.
- Working through / supporting the work of YWCA, TMWC (Toledo Maya Women’s Council), and POWA in particular – organizations that work more broadly to enhance the role of women in Belizean society – helped to ensure that the project contributed to gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Supporting the awareness efforts of the University of Belize was likewise critically important to the empowerment of young voters in the referendum. UB faculty understood the importance of encouraging critical thinking among the students and the important role that students – from all over the country – could play in mobilizing local communities for awareness events, conveying key information about the referendum to their friends and families, and, more broadly, participating in the re-registration and the referendum.
- Youth working from the Department of Youth Services (DYS) ended up producing (with funds from the DYS budget) two radio ads for the Elections and Boundaries Department that also helped raise the level of youth participation in the referendum.
- While the project successfully targeted women and youth in its work, in relation to a “human-rights-based approach”, it should be noted that on 29 June 2012, the UN Focal Point for Electoral Assistance (Undersecretary General for Political Affairs) signed a guideline entitled “*Promoting the Electoral Rights of Persons with Disabilities through UN Electoral Assistance*”. The guideline “*outlines how the United Nations shall promote the electoral rights of persons with disabilities through electoral assistance in order to ensure consistency and coherence across the UN system*” and applies to “*all UN departments, funds, programmes, entities, trust funds, commissions, peacekeeping missions, special political missions, peacebuilding missions, and other bodies.*”

Further, the July 2017 EAD Desk Study recommended that “*Focus should be given to reaching key target populations, such as women, youth, the disabled and linguistic minorities.*” [emphasis added]

Despite this guidance, the subject UNDP/Belize project was designed without an explicit component to ensure implementation of the 2012 guideline and the recommendation of the July 2017 Desk Study regarding outreach to people with disabilities. Fortunately, in the end, the disability community did benefit from outreach from the MFA’s Referendum Unit.

- The low-profile approach taken was appropriate, especially since UNDP did not have full responsibility for implementation and outcomes. This minimized the reputational risk to UNDP.
- Given the high sensitivity of the subject matter, frequent reporting to HQ (UNDP and EAD) is important. This is also necessary to ensure that the project remains within the boundaries set by the Focal Point for Electoral Affairs.

- **Effectiveness:**

*“The evaluator will assess the extent to which results have been achieved. In evaluating effectiveness, it is useful to consider: 1) if the planning activities are coherent with the overall objectives and project purpose; 2) the analysis of principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives. Under this evaluation criterion, the evaluator should assess:*

- *To what extent were the outputs achieved taking into account the highly sensitive nature of the project?*
  - *To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective for the project?*
  - *What foreseen and unforeseen factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the project?*
  - *In which areas did the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what were the supporting factors?*
  - *In which areas did the project have the least achievements? What were the constraining factors and why?*
  - *Were the project’s objectives and outputs clear, practical, and feasible within its frame?*
  - *To what extent were stakeholders involved in project implementation?*
  - *To what extent was the project appropriately responsive to the needs of the national constituents and changing partner priorities?*
  - *To what extent did the project contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of youth?”*
- Among the key elements to be considered in an evaluation of this type of project are the level and the composition of voter turnout. In terms of overall voter turnout, the referendum process succeeded beyond all expectations. While concerns over the possibility of meeting or exceeding the 60% voter turnout threshold that was previously included in Belize’s referendum legislation had led to the elimination of that threshold in January 2017, the turnout on 8 May 2019 reached 65.4%. This is all the more remarkable given that the political parties did not play their traditional role in driving voter turnout e.g. by providing free transportation to voters to reach the polls.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In this regard, it should be noted that the Elections and Boundaries Department had increased the number of polling locations in order to reduce voters’ need for transportation in order to reach the polls. It will be interesting to see if EBD maintains a higher number of polling locations in future elections.

Unfortunately, due to legal restrictions,<sup>6</sup> the Elections and Boundaries Department is precluded from analyzing the voter turnout e.g. in terms of age and gender.

- Given the high voter turnout for the referendum (> 65%) and the low rate of spoiled ballots (< 1%), the general sense is that Output 1 (*“Support to the design and implementation of the national strategic communication plan to promote peaceful means of addressing the long-standing border dispute between Belize and Guatemala”*) was particularly successful in motivating and informing the electorate about the referendum and the voting process.
- The ballot language was pre-determined (in 2008) but was too legalistic for widespread understanding; a major element of the work carried out under the project was helping Belizean officials develop simpler language to make the question more widely understandable. Our assessment is that this element of the project was fully successful.
- Another key element was to help the population understand what the ICJ is and the bases on which it would make a determination. Our assessment is that this element of the project was largely successful, particularly in getting relevant information to those who were interested in that level of detail.
- Valuable knowledge was transferred -- both technical and on national history in general. The critical-thinking skills, especially of youth, were strengthened, particularly through the efforts of the University of Belize faculty who were engaged in the Public Awareness Campaign.
- UNDP played an important role in helping ensure the impartiality of the public awareness campaign, including through its monitoring efforts, which occasionally detected bias in presentations that were attended, which was immediately brought to the attention of the Referendum Unit.
- The media training delivered through the project was also noteworthy, and the guide developed by the media consultant has been shared with colleagues working on support to the Bougainville Referendum in Papua New Guinea. The Media Center itself was less successful, as Elections and Boundaries Department personnel were reportedly not present to respond to questions.
- While some of the public forums may have had less attendance than initially anticipated – due possibly to weak publicity of those events – the general sense is that the door-to-door campaign was quite successful, reaching over 100,000 people.

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<sup>6</sup> The legal framework for the referendum provides that the voter rolls are to be sealed in the envelopes along with the marked ballots. These can only be opened by court order. Without that information, the EBD is unable to determine who turned out to vote and can therefore not provide any statistics on the turnout of e.g. women and youth.



- The international forum to present comparative international experience with referendums was not held due to the need, given limited capacity of national counterparts, to prioritize other activities that were likely to have greater impact.
- And while a quick reading of Output 2 (“*Technical support for improved voter registry and re-registration system in Belize*”) against the project outcomes could leave an impression that the project did little to advance any improvement in the voter registration system itself (which would have required the project to start much earlier, rather than simultaneously with the start of the re-registration process), a closer review makes it clear that the objective set out in the Project Document was less in terms of providing any substantive input into the registration system itself – even though this may have been the intent of the recommendations from the Needs Assessment Mission and Advisory Mission – and more in terms of support for messaging around the registration process, which seems to have been successful, especially when considering that the rural areas, which were the main concern before commencement of the project, seem to have participated in the re-registration process at higher rates than the urban areas. According to a media report<sup>7</sup> of the Elections and Boundaries Department’s 14 September 2018 press conference, 53.89% of those who had registered by 8 September were from rural areas, which is roughly in line with the proportion of the overall population that lives in the country’s rural areas.
- The variety of messages and materials developed and disseminated was quite substantial. While part of this was the result of extensive planning, the project was sufficiently flexible to allow for significant adjustments as the process moved forward. These adjustments were primarily initiated by the Referendum Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on their sense<sup>8</sup> of what was proving successful and what areas (topical, demographic, and geographic) required additional efforts.
- The Communications and Coordination Expert was able to play a valuable role in identifying synergies between the Referendum Unit and the Elections and Boundaries Department.
- While the project did support the production of some materials and messages in languages other than English<sup>9</sup>, more could have been done in this regard; a clear example of this is the ads on electoral offences and on polling-station locations, which were produced only in English but, from an equity perspective, should have been produced in other languages as well, particularly given the importance of the subject matter.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://amandala.com.bz/news/breakdown-re-registration-process/>

<sup>8</sup> The Ministry, as I understood from my conversation with them and others, did commission private survey research to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of their public awareness campaign. That survey research was used by the Ministry to fine tune the Public Awareness Campaign and thus had an impact on UNDP’s support project. A survey instrument was also developed with Project assistance to capture information from those visited as part of the door-to-door campaign, and information from that also influenced the course of the project.

<sup>9</sup> See the appendix “Materials Produced and Distributed”

- The selection of an expert originally from the Caribbean and with such wide experience in UN electoral activities proved to be important to the success of the project, yet there was nothing in the terms of reference that established country or regional experience or knowledge as a requirement. Having a consultant from the region meant that there was a deeper understanding of the challenges of working in the Belize context and of what approaches were more likely to succeed or fail. The UNDP Country Office was able to put an IC contract in place to speed the arrival of the expert. While recruiting through an IC for such a project is good for the project, it's less so for the contract holder, who loses out on benefits that are not available to IC holders. Fortunately, a TA contract was put in place shortly after the IC.

- **Efficiency:**

*“Measures how resources or inputs are converted to results. An initiative is efficient when it uses resources appropriately and economically to produce the desired outputs. Under this evaluation criterion, the evaluator should, inter alia, assess:*

- *To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the Project Document efficient in generating the expected results?*
  - The project management structure outlined in the Project Document, the primary elements of which were the Project Board (comprising the Referendum Office, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the UNDP Electoral Expert), the Project Management Team (comprising the UNDP Electoral Expert and UNDP Governance Associate), Project Assurance (comprising the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative or Assistant Resident Representative, and the US Embassy), and Project Support (comprising the UNDP/Belize Governance Unit and UNDP Operations), was generally effective in ensuring the timely and efficient implementation of the project to achieve the expected results.
  - It is unusual for the Electoral Expert, who is part of the Project Management and thus subject to direction from the Project Board, to also be a full member of the Project Board; more commonly, the Electoral Expert would be an advisor to the Project Board, and the “Senior Supplier” seat on the Project Board would be assigned to the ResRep or Deputy ResRep.
- *To what extent was UNDP’s project implementation strategy and execution efficient and cost effective?*
  - UNDP was able to demonstrate the value of its assistance and to develop and manage the relationships necessary to carry out the project. Even though much of UNDP’s work focused on managing payments and ensuring accountability (key elements from the donor perspective), there was valuable substantive input as well – particularly in providing actionable advice on the effectiveness and neutrality of messages and in facilitating linkages between Elections and Boundaries Department and the MFA.

- The Government, UNDP/Belize, the project staff, and donors all recognized the importance of flexibility in the planned timeline for expending funds given that funds from each donor had different deadlines. Prioritizing spending from sources with earlier deadlines allowed the project to make maximum use of those funds with later deadlines.
- A question remains regarding the speed with which UNDP/Belize was able to put a project in place following the May 2017 request from the Government of Belize and the July 2017 authorization from the UN Focal Point on Electoral Assistance. When there is a hard deadline, as in the case of support to a specific electoral event, speed in project inception is critically important.
- It is important when working to support an electoral event under tight deadlines to ensure that all donors and implementing partners are aware of relevant UNDP policies and procedures. To ensure that these are effectively communicated, they should be briefed as early in the project as possible, both verbally and in writing.
- *To what extent were resources used efficiently? Were activities supporting the strategy cost-effective within the context of the project?*
  - In general, the project seems to have made good use of resources to significantly increase the public's knowledge of the issues surrounding referral of the boundary dispute to the ICJ – particularly in the case of youth, but judging from the high voter turnout, among the electorate more generally as well. Much of the success of the project can be attributed to the effective use of a large number of information channels for the delivery of information, particularly low-cost channels such as social media. Live-streaming events via Facebook not only enables a larger audience (comprising both those attending the event in person and those following it live online) to benefit from each event in real time, but it also leaves the event accessible online for those not able to attend or watch in real time.
  - The utility of re-printing book-length texts and dated journals may be questionable (key excerpts might have been more useful), but if those re-prints were responsive to requests from the Referendum Unit, this may be less of a concern.
- *To what extent were project funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?*
  - Given that the project was supporting a specific electoral event with a (relatively) hard deadline, timeliness was critically important to its success. The general sense is that the project succeeded in providing timely support within the constraints of the context (i.e., the need to mobilize funding, and the fact that most of the public-facing activities were carried out by implementing partners with donor financial support channeled through UNDP). That said, it is likely that Government of Belize resources that were expended prior to the initiation of the project could have been better utilized had advisory support embodied in the project been put in place earlier.

- Nevertheless, EAD and UNDP should review the timeline between the Focal Point's 11 July 2017 positive reply to the Government of Belize's request for support and the 2 July 2018 signature of the Project Document (by which time the voter re-registration process had already begun) to ascertain whether it would have been possible to initiate delivery any sooner.
- *To what extent did the monitoring processes utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?"*
  - The project would have benefitted from better monitoring processes if it had been initiated early enough to allow for earlier development of an effective monitoring plan. As it was, monitoring improved during the course of the project.
- ***Sustainability:***

*"The evaluator will (a) identify to what extent are government partners prepared to manage future consultations and/or referendums and elections, (ii) to what extent intervention benefits will continue even after the project is concluded.*

  - *To what extent were lessons learned documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?*
    - Adjustments were primarily initiated by the Referendum Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on their sense<sup>10</sup> of what was proving successful and what areas (topical, demographic, and geographic) required additional efforts.
    - UNDP/Belize's regular reports to donors included valuable lessons learned.
  - *To what extent the lessons learnt will provide a long-term benefit to the implementing partners?"*
    - From discussions with implementing partners, it was clear that they benefitted significantly from the comparative experience that the Communications and Coordination Expert brought to the project and will be able to implement future awareness projects more effectively and with less external assistance as a result.
    - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gained valuable experience with communications and project management that could prove useful to it in the future.

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<sup>10</sup> The Ministry, as I understood from my conversation with them and others, did commission private survey research to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of their public awareness campaign. That survey research was used by the Ministry to fine tune the Public Awareness Campaign and thus had an impact on UNDP's support project. A survey instrument was also developed with Project assistance to capture information from those visited as part of the door-to-door campaign, and information from that also influenced the course of the project.

- The University of Belize’s reputation was bolstered by its involvement in the process, and key staff at the university gained valuable experience with this type of public awareness campaign.
  - The YWCA had no prior experience in election-related public awareness campaigns and benefitted significantly from their involvement in the 19 constituencies of Belize and Cayo Districts, including the training their staff received from the Referendum Unit. In particular, staff gained confidence in conveying factual information while avoiding the introduction of personal biases into their presentations.
  - The population in general, and particularly Belize’s youth, are much more aware of their own national history than they were before the process. There is also a greater understanding of traditional rules of debate from the debates held as part of the Public Awareness Campaign, which will likely help keep temperatures down during future electoral campaigns. Additionally, the success of the referendum demonstrated the value of referendums for addressing issues of great national importance.
- **Gender equality:**

*“The evaluator will assess the project’s capacity to contribute towards and advance equality. Under this evaluation criterion, the evaluator should, inter alia, assess:*

    - *Is the gender marker data assigned to this project representative of reality?*
    - *How was the gender perspective mainstreamed throughout the project activities?”*
    - The gender marker data (2, *Gender equality as a significant objective*) was appropriate for this project in the Belizean context.
    - 52.6% of registered voters as of April 2019 were women<sup>11</sup>, which is slightly higher than their proportion of both the general population and the voting-age population.
    - As mentioned previously, working through / supporting the work of YWCA and POWA in particular – two organizations that work more broadly to enhance the role of women in Belizean society – helped to ensure that the project contributed to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

## Additional Comments

- Project staff appear to have maintained good records.
- Donors appear happy with the project and its results, though concerns were expressed regarding the quality of work from UNDP/Belize’s back office – apparently documents had to be returned for corrections in a number of instances.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://elections.gov.bz/modules/wfdownloads/singlefile.php?cid=293&lid=1237>

## Recommendations

- Clarify that those subject to the decisions of the Project Board should not also sit on the Project Board but should, as appropriate, advise the Project Board.
- Ensure that all relevant DPA/EAD policy guidance (e.g., “Promoting Women's Electoral and Political Participation through UN Electoral Assistance”, “Promoting the Electoral Rights of PWD through UN Electoral Assistance”, etc.) is shared with those responsible for developing project documents and implementing project activities. A single up-to-date list of those documents with a brief introductory text on the nature of the documents and instructions on how to access or request them would likely be useful.
- EAD and UNDP should discuss mechanisms through which existing staff (e.g., from HQ or regional offices) could be deployed more quickly and for the time necessary to support rapid initiation of electoral projects with hard deadlines (i.e., those supporting specific electoral events). Alternatively, a reasonable number of rostered experts could be retained on “As-and-When Needed” contracts to facilitate rapid deployment as needed.
- Donors should consider the effects of not recognizing any retroactive charges in such a time-bound context.
- UNDP should discuss with donors the possibility of follow-on activities to promote continued youth understanding of and engagement with the ICJ process.

Researchers in recent years have concluded that the greatest difficulty in getting people to vote consistently is to establish it as a habit in the first place. Youth, who constitute a significant majority of the Belizean population, turned out to vote in significant numbers<sup>12</sup> -- a good first step towards establishing the habit of voting. If Belize can capitalize on the significant youth turnout for the ICJ referendum and continue to encourage strong youth turnout in the upcoming general elections, based as much as possible on critical / factual analysis of current issues, it could set a positive example for the region and see a more engaged electorate well into the future.

It would also be useful to undertake targeted survey research to determine the role that University of Belize students played in mobilizing their home communities to participate in the re-registration process, awareness events, and the referendum itself, as this could provide solid evidence of the utility of engaging universities in voter awareness activities in other contexts.

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<sup>12</sup> While we don't have precise figures, the fact that overall turnout was unexpectedly high and the fact that the age breakdown of the electorate, at January 2018 (prior to the re-registration, but the latest date for which those statistics are available) was 10% 18-24, 26% 25-34, 23% 35-44, 41% 45 and above would suggest that young voters turned out in significant numbers.

- More broadly, the “Democracy and Governance Youth Leaders Project” (US\$15,000) developed by CARICOM Youth Ambassador Kylah Ciego in collaboration with the Department of Youth Services, could be considered for funding.
- Other general follow-on activities could also be useful to ensure the population is aware of progress towards an ICJ decision, which may take some time.
- UNDP/Belize may wish to seek South-South Cooperation Funding to bring a representative of the Autonomous Bougainville Government’s Department of Community Development to Belize to learn first-hand about the work of Belize’s Department of Youth Services.
- UNDP/Belize and donors should support the Elections and Boundaries Department to become fully engaged in UNIORE ([www.uniore.org](http://www.uniore.org)), the Inter-American Union of Electoral Bodies. UNIORE comprises 31 electoral bodies from Central America, the Caribbean, South America, and North America and actively promotes the sharing of experiences and information among its members. It was surprising to learn that EBD was unaware of UNIORE and its activities.
- I have also recommended to the Commonwealth Secretariat that Ms. Josephine Tamai, Belize’s Chief Elections Officer, be included in the Commonwealth’s Election Observation Mission for Bougainville’s upcoming (est. November 2019) political status referendum.
- UNDP/Belize and donors should take note of the recommendation in the Commonwealth Observer Mission’s Interim statement calling on Belizean stakeholders “to conduct a post-referendum review to further strengthen Belize’s governance institutions” and support such a review to the extent possible.

## Appendices

- Letters of Request from Government of Belize
- Project Document
- Evaluation Terms of Reference
- UNDP Support Project to the Referendum on ICJ: Materials Produced and Distributed
- Meetings
- Timeline
- Select Bibliography

# Meetings

## 17 June 2019

- UNDP/Belize

## 18 June 2019

- UK High Commission (donor)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- University of Belize

## 19 June 2019

- YWCA
- OAS
- Department of Youth Services

## 20 June 2019

- US Embassy
- Elections & Boundaries Department
- Love FM

## 21 June 2019

- UNDP/Belize (Debrief)
- POWA (Productive Organization for Women in Action)
- BAPDA (Belize Assembly for Persons with Diverse Abilities)



## Timeline<sup>13</sup>

- 1859: UK and Guatemala sign Convention establishing border
- 1981: Belize Independence
- 1991: Guatemala recognizes Belize's independence
- March 2000: Belize-Guatemala dialogue resumed under OAS
- November 2000: Adjacency Zone / Adjacency Line established
- 2003: OAS established Adjacency Zone Office
- February 2003: Foreign Ministers of Belize and Guatemala signed a second [Agreement to Establish a Transition Process and Confidence-Building Measures](#)
- September 2005: February 2003 agreement amended via [Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence-Building Measures between Belize and Guatemala](#)
- July 2008: Belize's Referendum Act amended to include a 60% turnout threshold
- 8 Dec 2008: *Compromis* ("[Special Agreement between Guatemala and Belize to submit the territorial, insular and maritime claim of Guatemala to the International Court of Justice](#)") signed (including the language to be included on the ballot in both countries)
- 27 April 2012: both countries agreed to hold their referendums on 6 October 2013
- 23 November 2012: Belizean Government requests UN assistance
- February 2013: UN Electoral Needs Assessment Mission
- March 2013: NAM report recommends limited assistance through UNDP project
- 6 October 2013: Original Referendum Target Date
- May 2015: amendment to the 2008 agreement allowing both countries to hold their referendums on separate dates
- January 2017: Belize amended its Referendum Act to remove the 60% minimum voter turnout requirement
- 15 May 2017: Belizean Government again requests UN assistance
- July 2017: UN Desk Study and Advisory Mission
- 30 March 2018: Public awareness campaign launched in Belize
- 15 April 2018: Guatemalan voters approve referring the border dispute to the ICJ
- 30 April 2018: Belize sets 10 April 2019 as referendum date
- 1 July 2018: Voter re-registration process initiated
- July 2018: UNDP Project signed with MFA
- July 2018: US funding received
- August 2018: UK funding received
- August 2018: Recruitment of Communications and Coordination Expert initiated
- September 2018: Communications and Coordination Expert arrived (on IC)
- March 2019: Voter re-registration closed
- 3 April 2019: Court ruling delaying the referendum
- 10 April 2019: Initial referendum date
- 16 April 2019: New Referendum Act signed by Governor-General
- 8 May 2019: Referendum held in Belize

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<sup>13</sup> For further information, including key source documents, see <http://belizereferendum.gov.bz/dispute/timeline>

## Select Bibliography

<http://belizereferendum.gov.bz/dispute/timeline>

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