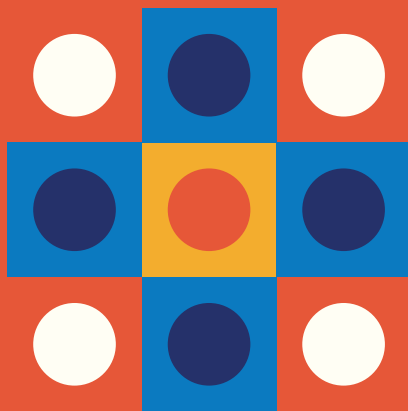
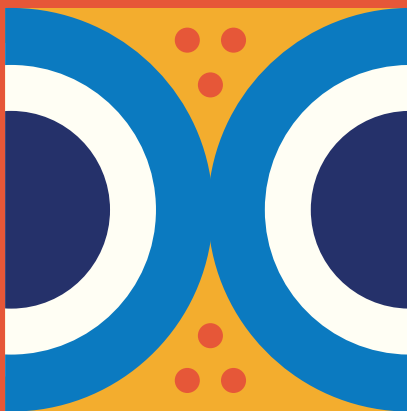


Innovative Open Government Projects

Promoting an Open Government Ecosystem in Belize



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Innovative Open Government Projects



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About us

The Trust for the Americas is a non-profit 501©(3) organization affiliated with the Organization of American States (OAS). Its Mission is to promote partnerships for social and economic inclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean. Established in 1996, The Trust has worked to promote partnerships amongst civil society, public and private sectors, specializing in capacity building to address the region's social, economic and political most pressing issues. To this end, The Trust has implemented a wide range of social, economic and political development projects in 23 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, in areas of educational and economic opportunities, citizen security, good governance, democracy, innovation and human rights. Its vast experience has positioned The Trust as one of the key players in the endeavor to bridge the region's inequality gap; and its affiliation to the Organization of American States has proven to be a unique asset when it comes to operate in complex and difficult political climates. The Trust has offices in Washington, D.C., Colombia and Canada.

Project description

The Project entitled “**Promoting an Open Government Ecosystem in Belize**” lays the foundational groundwork for the development of Open Government policies, access to information and Open Data, transparency, and citizen participation. With funding from the United States Embassy in Belmopan, the project implemented by the Trust for the Americas and the Organization of American States (OAS), made significant progress in promoting collaboration to capitalize on government, private, and civil society to collectively improve, expand, or complement the services delivered by the government (particularly to vulnerable populations), and to improve government transparency. The objective of this project was to establish an Open Government ecosystem that leads to better quality and greater coverage of government services in Belize, resulting in greater public safety and better governance. The elements of the project also served to sensitize national authorities about the importance and benefits of joining the international Open Government platforms.

The three objectives of the project are:

- **Reinforce existing e-government initiatives to guarantee public access to information and effective service delivery.**

Through a series of capacity building workshops for government officials, the Trust provided technical expertise to share best practices and international standards for e-government, how to develop user-friendly websites and open up public data to citizens, and compliance with regulations or other relevant legal frameworks.

- **Strengthen the capacities of CSOs to participate in coalitions and advocate for the improvement of government services.**

Under the Open Government project, the Trust provided capacity-building workshops, led by technical experts to deliver training to a wide representation of civil society groups, including media outlets, domestic NGOs, academic institutions, private sector and labor unions, to enable these organizations to better advocate and build strong relationships government institutions to call for greater public sector transparency and accountability.

- **Promote effective collaboration between government and civil society through coalition-building processes and social innovation mini-grants.**

Through this significant process, the Trust provided sub-grant funds of US\$5,000.00 to eight (8) teams for the best innovative projects, designed to promote collaboration between civil society with public sector actors. The goal was to improve government services and provide innovative solutions to local challenges. The subjects covered included Open Data, citizen participation, transparency and technology, access to public information, and Open Government at the municipal level.

The Trust implemented this project with the technical support of OAS specialists, experts and regional partners working on transparency, accountability, technology, innovation and citizen participation. The subgrant funding for innovative projects enhanced the capacities of a large part of civil society organizations and the public sector to meet local challenges.

What do we mean by Open Government?

Open Government is the set of mechanisms and strategies that contribute to **public governance and good governance**. Based on the pillars of transparency, citizen participation, accountability, collaboration and innovation, it focuses and includes citizens in the decision-making process, as well as in the creation and implementation of public policies, to strengthen democracy, the legitimacy of public action and collective welfare. It is the platform that offers citizens tools and means to get involved in the decision-making process. These processes use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) platforms to bring the government closer to its population through improvements in government services.

The process of Open Government in Belize is born upon the recognition of the need to strengthen the processes of transparency and government responsibility, to optimize the use of data and to improve basic services; through the inclusion of representatives from different sectors. To this end, the Government of Belize through its Central Information Technology Office (CITO), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has engaged the services of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) to design a National E- Government Policy, Strategy and Plan of Action to leverage the power of ICT as a driver of economic and social transformation.

What do we mean by Open Data?

Open Data refers to data available online, unprocessed, in open, neutral and interoperable format. It allows its use and reuse, is available for download in full without cost or registration requirements. And it is processable on computer. It is made available with the necessary technical and legal characteristics so that they can be used, reused and redistributed freely by anyone, at any time and in any place.

The International Open Data Charter provides the principles on which Open Data initiatives are governed, as well as resources for their implementation.



Open Data concepts respond to topics of various kinds. Contained in the Open Data Institute guides.

The main benefits of opening data are:

- Better decision making for the public, private and social sectors.
- Provision of public services faster, innovative and efficient.
- Greater government accountability and greater public confidence.
- Empowerment of the general population and civil society.
- Increased public participation and commitment.
- Entrepreneurship and social innovation.

Since Open Government and Open Data initiatives are relatively new concepts at the local level in Belize, the training was focused on providing a solid foundation on concepts, uses, best practices and on identifying the benefits of Open Government and Open Data policies implemented in Central America and the Caribbean.

Open Government Initiative Sub-Grants

The non-reimbursable sub-grants aim to sponsor the participation of civil society in the implementation of specific projects under the principles of Open Government (transparency, collaboration and citizen participation), which improve municipal services.

These funds are intended to encourage initiatives linked to promote collaboration between civil society and government, to provide innovative and high impact solutions to public services or needs identified in each district. The financed initiatives were proposed by social organizations in Belize in alliance with a government counterpart partner.

According to the global trend, it seeks to promote initiatives linked to the promotion of collaboration between civil society and the government to provide innovative and high-impact solutions to identified needs in each Municipality, which specifically demonstrate the benefits and opportunities represented by government openness.



BAVIA Online, an Integrated National System Registry and Website

BAVIA – National Institute of Culture and History

The Belize Audio Visual Industry Association (BAVIA) is an association of professionals and collaborators that provide services to the Belizean audiovisual industry; with the mission of establishing and maintaining a vibrant and internationally recognized audiovisual industry.

Problem identified

The issue at hand revolves around the need to fill in the gaps and strengthen the process that currently exists within the government institution responsible for supporting the development and growth of the film and audiovisual sector. Specifically, the lack of a functional online film registration system, a database directory of national service providers for the film and audio visual industry (BAVIA members) and a gap in information sharing between the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH), international film registrations and national production companies and suppliers.

Proposal description

Name: BAVIA Online, an Integrated National System Registry and Website.

Objectives:

Develop and launch a web based portal (with a mobile phone application) and electronic database registry system for the registration and certification of service providers in the Film/Audio-Visual Industry in Belize.

The integrated online platform will publish records of service providers, promote the work of the association, provide information for its stakeholders (including the Belize Coalition of Service Providers, BCSP) and engage members in policy development and other governance matters.

Location: Belize City, district of Belize, Belize.

Population: 57 169.

Public entities involved:

- National Institute of Culture and History (NICH).
- Institute of the Creative Arts (ICA).
- Film and Media Arts Unit (FMAU).

Results (qualitative/quantitative)

One of the main achievements was the effective creation and acquisition of the web domain BAVIA.org, along with the creation and launch of the online services directory. In order to achieve this, the database of service providers and potential stakeholders was created and implemented. Another of the main milestones was the formalization of the alliance with NICH. Finally, 9 in-person and virtual meetings took place with the team of programmers, for the development of the mobile application.

The next phase seeks to attract more users by incorporating additional features to the website, and expanding on the number of services offered. In addition, the sustainability strategy is being worked out, while seeking alliances with potential investors for the site and data base's next phase of development.

Direct participants:

17 user profiles created to date, and 75 profiles in the process of verification.

Indirect participants: Despite not having an approximate number, throughout the creation of the site many requests for information and intentions to get actively involved have been received.



Historia de éxito

Working with the new BAVIA.org website has done nothing but open my world of possibilities to an endless threshold. I am currently working in the capacity of Director of Photography and Camera Operator/Camera Assistant in the country of Belize. In Belize, filmmaking is in its genesis phases of being competitive with the world markets as it pertains to supplying professionals to the workforce in the industry. I started in this business some 10 years ago as an aspiring artist trying to learn more about audio visual platforms and how I can find my niche within this industry. This far, it has been an uphill battle to first get the necessary training and experience needed to be competitive as well as finding a certification hub that is recognised locally, and globally.

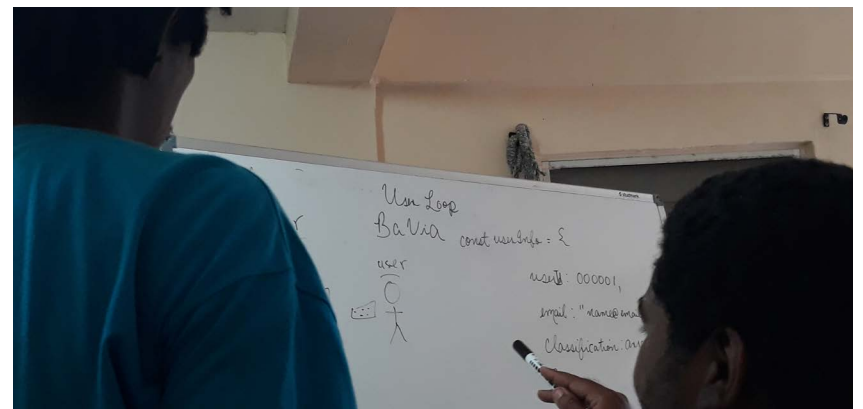
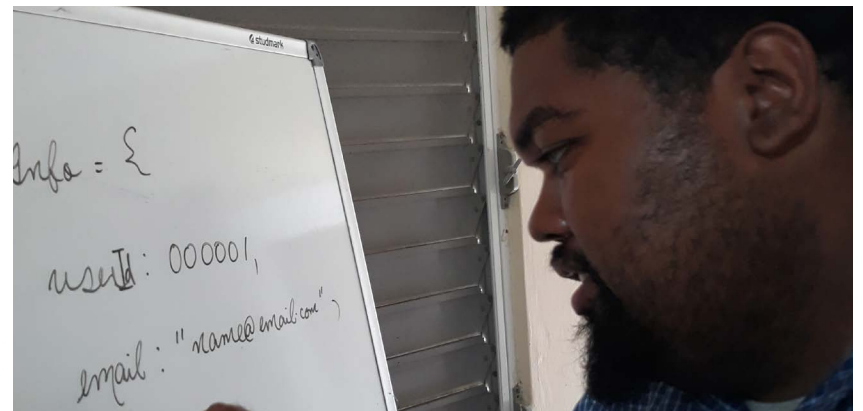
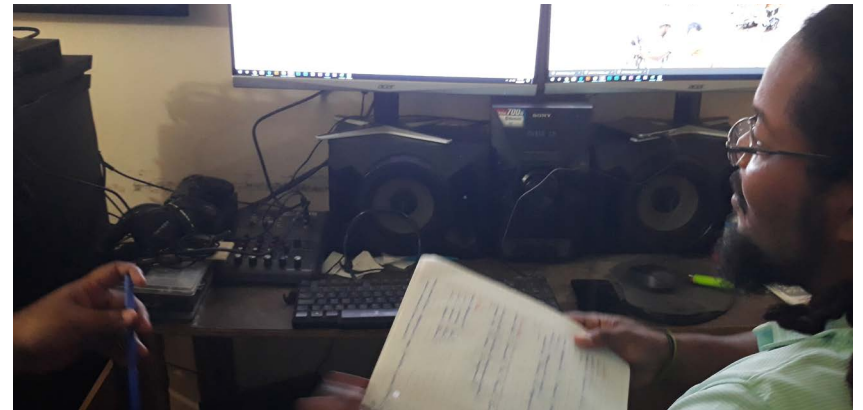
Immediately I was blown away by the efficiency of the planning phases of this website. It was exactly what I needed to take the next step of making my expertise available to clients. The aesthetics, the user friendly options and the exclusive access that it gives to members made me feel a part of something bigger than just making videos. I am now a proud member of the BAVIA.org community and I will continue to encourage those who have not registered with BAVIA or just want to get their CV'S OUT THERE....SIGN UP TODAY!!!

Brady Young, camera operator.

Multimedia



Photographic support in the Project folder.



Development of an Online News-Agency-Styled Policy-Tracker to Improve General Public's Ease of Access to Policy Changes

Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI) - The Department of Public-Private-Sector Dialogue (DPPD)

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) is the largest private sector membership based organization in Belize. One of its primary objectives is to foster the social and economic development of Belize through the empowerment of sectors such as industry, commerce and services.

Problem identified

In Belize, the primary source of information regarding changes in legislation is the the Belize Government Gazette; which is provided with paid subscriptions and it is printed version only. Moreover, the information is provided in raw format, to the degree that the average citizen finds difficulty in understanding the contents, and thus it is of little use to the general public and the media.

Project description

Name:

Development of an Online News-Agency-Styled Policy-Tracker to Improve General Public's Ease of Access to Policy Changes.

Objectives:

To provide an independent News-agency-styled online platform that provides Belizean citizens and journalists with easy-to-understand coverage of primary and secondary legislation presented in The Belize Government Gazette; thereby, increasing the aforementioned stakeholders' timely access to public information.

Location: Belize City, district of Belize, Belize.

Population: 374 681.

Public entities involved:

- The Department of Public-Private-Sector Dialogue (DPPD).

Results (qualitative/quantitative)

For this project, strategic alliances with key actors were established for the development of the website. BCCI partnered up with IdeaLabs, a local company, for the development of the website's infrastructure. The site required a substantial amount of content, therefore a steps to develop content efficiently were taken; so that both the process of building the site and creating content were conducted concurrently. Finally, the initiative was shared with the members of the Chamber so that they can benefit from its functionality.

In the future, an analysis tool will be incorporated that offers detailed reports of the impact that policy changes have on business activity.

Direct participants: No metrics were recorded.

Indirect participants: No metrics were recorded.



Historia de éxito

"The policy tracker has been very useful for my job as a lawyer. It keeps me updated on every law change."

Marissa Longsworth, lawyer.

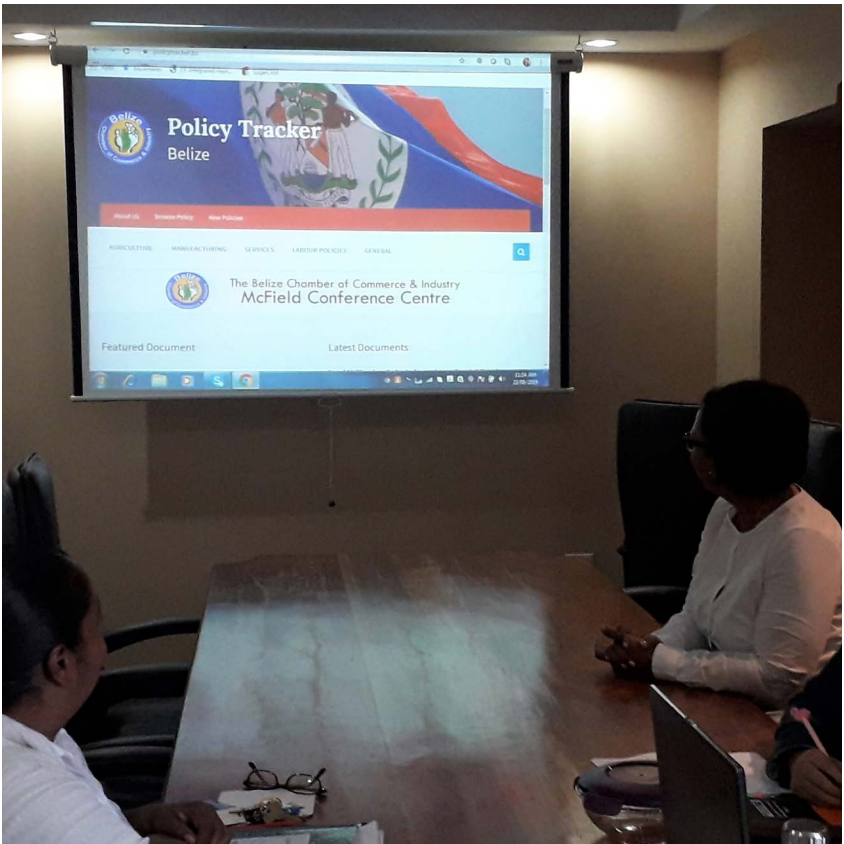
Multimedia



Photographic support in the Project folder.



Plataform



Creating an Enabling Environment to Prevent Violence Against Women

The Child Development Foundation (CDF) – Ministry of Education and Community Policing Unit

CDF is a registered Christian non-profit social justice organization operating in Belize. The organization's mission is to establish a community based response to child sexual abuse, human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children; through partnerships that provide public awareness, rescue, rehabilitative and training services to victims and their families as well as stakeholders and community based organizations providing care.

Problem identified

A 2014 report from the Special Rapporteur on Human Trafficking indicated that collaboration between Government and NGOs for the detection and reporting of Human Trafficking is still at its infant stage and still very limited; especially regarding women and children. Both schools and communities have shown to have limited capabilities in identifying and reporting these situations. Highlighting the existing need to improve collaboration between community organizations and government organizations to detect and provide better intervention services.

Project description

Name: Creating an Enabling Environment to Prevent Violence Against Women.

Objectives:

To improve coordination between Government and Non-Government actors in detection and reporting of human trafficking and violence against women to ensure effective interventions that emphasize victim center response, and which minimizes corruption and other impediments to justice for victims.

Location: Belmopan, district of Cayo, Belize.

Population: 17 222.

Entidades públicas involucradas:

- Police Department.
- Ministry of Education.
- Women's Department.
- SHINE.
- BTB-BTIA.
- Community Leaders.
- Orange Walk Town Council.
- Department of Youth Services.
- Ministry of Health – Community Health Workers.
- The Red Cross.
- Sugar Industry Association.

Resultados (cualitativos/cuantitativos)

Throughout the project, 5 training workshops were developed in San Ignacio, Benque Viejo Del Carmen, Orange Walk, Belmopan and San Pedro. These workshops focused on the dynamics of violence against women and on the presentation of a draft standing order to be used by the police department. In addition, meetings with senior police officers, community leaders and other participants, were carried out to organize logistics, planning of activities, development and design of toolkits, and distribution plan. Meetings were also held to discuss effective response strategies in cases of high risk of domestic violence and to analyze the strategies used in other countries.

Engaging content was developed for all training workshops, community outreaches, toolkit and visibility materials (brochures and pamphlets), M&E tools, registration tools and for the police response protocol.

It is important to point out that community involvement was achieved thanks to alliances with schools; where presentations with students and teachers on issues of domestic violence and reporting mechanisms were conducted.

Additionally, sessions were held to gather information on the main challenges officers face, and to discuss the main aspects of the proposed protocol. Finally, the institutional capacity of the police was strengthened through a 3-day workshop and a toolkit developed specifically for the project: a) copies of the domestic violence legislation. b) copies of the police response protocol, developed by CDF in collaboration with police high command. c) copies of the power and control wheel to assist police officers to identify indicators of domestic violence and digital presentations on legislature on domestic violence, impact and effective intervention strategies.

Direct participants: 357 (W: 246 / M:111)

Indirect participants: 3,500 reached through social media campaigns and community awareness programs.



Historia de éxito

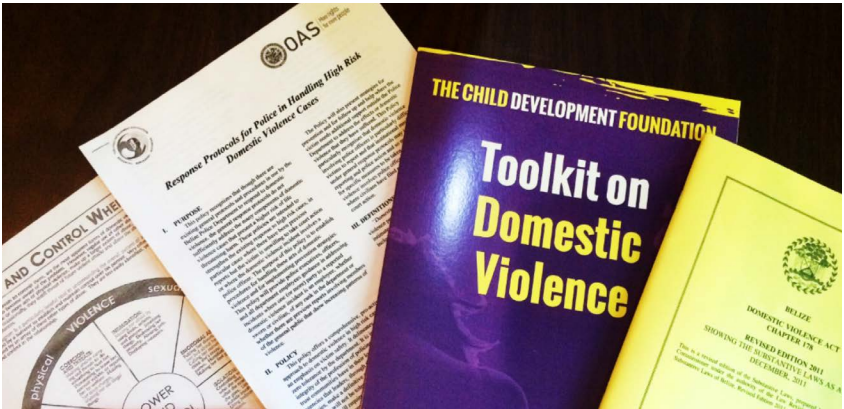
"My name is Naomi Eljio, policewoman, I work in Corozal, in the domestic violence unit. I attended the training, and it was a very educational experience for me. Despite having been already trained, in each training you learn more. I believe that once all the ends are tied in regards to domestic affairs, we will all be benefited. In general, it was a very informative and educational session and together with my colleagues we believe that even more visibility should be generated."

Naomi Eljio, Domestic Violence Unit police officer.

Multimedia



Photographic support in the Project folder.



PING

Dot Slash, Students from Corozal Junior College Ministry of Trade and Investment

The Corozal Junior College (CJC) provides post-secondary study services to students in the northern districts. Within the CJC, Dot Slash is a group of students specialized in Computer Science. The group is the recipient of the Belize ICT Web Challenge conducted by the Ministry of Trade and Investment.

Problem identified

It has been identified that, communication between local governments (municipalities) and the general population can be difficult, and irregular at best, due to communication gaps that end up deepening governance issues and shrinking effective citizen participation. This affects public perception, reproducing the notion that municipalities provide slow services, or directly lack them. Additionally, there is a feeling in the community that their ideas, suggestions and demands are not easily and properly communicated to their representatives, in a timely and effective manner.

Project description

Name: PING.

Objetives:

Build and strengthen the communication between the general populace and their local governments, improve the dissemination of information with respect to events, notices, law amendments and quick statistics, obtain quality information from the general populace with respect to issues and requests for better decision making.

Location: Corozal Town, district of Corozal, Belize.

Population: 8800.

Public entities involved:

- Ministry of Trade and Investment.
- Corozal Town Council.
- Orange Walk Town Council.

Results (qualitative/quantitative)

To strengthen effective and efficient communication between civil society and governments, the mobile application (enabled for iOS and Android) was developed. Through the app, citizens can access in real-time to relevant information, while also have a direct and uninterrupted channel of communication with the institutions responsible for the decision-making in their communities.

A back office (web app) was also built to allow easy management on the municipalities' end. Also, the web app allows the local governments to push notifications for events or any information they want to disseminate to the mobile app in real time.

Finally, the app has two very important sections: one that will allow the general public to report an issue, and another one to make a direct request to their local governments.



Historia de éxito

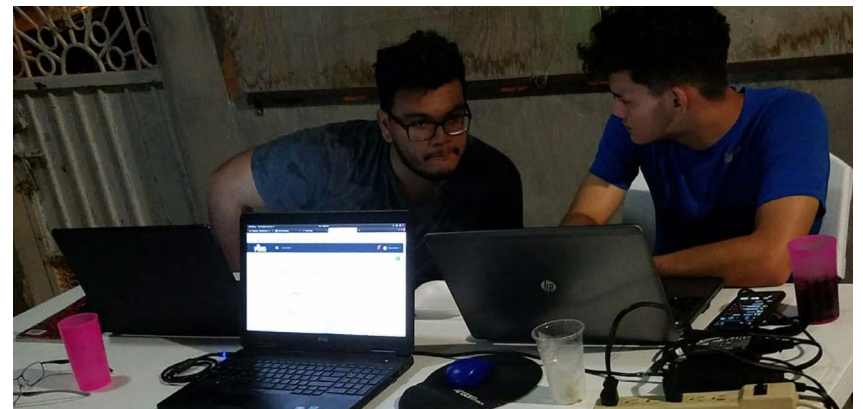
"I am very excited to see the completion of this project, because I can see the potential benefits offered to improve communication between the community and the municipality. The Council is also proud of the students involved in the Project, which showcases the talent coming from northern Belize."

Rigo Vellos, Mayor of the Council of Corozal Town.

Multimedia



Photographic support in the
Project folder.



501 Bus

Belize High School – Belize Ministry of Transport

Belize High School (BHS) is an educational institution that aims to provide students with a love for learning, a drive to enthusiastically explore and become responsible global citizens. BHS provides an environment where students are continually stimulated and inspired where expectations are high, where students are always encouraged to fight for the best.

Problem identified

The public transportation system is inefficient, inaccurate, and improperly regulated by the traffic department. Meaning there isn't access to reliable information, or to a standardized system, that fixes prices, implements better systems of delay notification, and combats corruption.

Project description

Nombre: 501 Bus.

Objetivos:

Create a platform for citizens to verify public transport schedules in a mobile app, in addition to allowing transport companies to have a clear and direct communication channel with users. Additionally, the app will collect data from bus trips, which will allow to develop statistics of the different schedules, allowing to generate even more accurate data.

Location: Nationwide access in Belize.

Population: 387 879 habitantes.

Public entities involved:

- Belize Ministry of Transport.

Results (qualitative/quantitative)

For the development of this project, there was constant coordination and support with the Ministry of Transportation, which reviewed the concept and approved the development of the 501 Bus application. The list of bus schedules was consulted and documented to include all bus schedules in the country.

The geo-tracking service is still aimed to be completed and integrated sometime around mid-2020. Finally, focus groups were held for the beta test of the app and the observations from these groups were incorporated. The app was launched using Mobincube Store hosting.

Direct participants: 127 app downloads so far.



Historia de éxito

"I can't believe this was done, it's so useful. This will be of great help to people in my community." Deandra Nicholas, participant.

Multimedia



Photographic support in the
Project folder.



Improving Stakeholder Access to Fisheries Resources Management Data via E-Services

Wildlife Conservation Society – Belize Fisheries Department

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of wildlife and wild places around the world through science, conservation action, education and inspiring people to value nature. WCS focuses its work on several priority regions around the world, one of which is Mesoamerica and the Western Caribbean.

Problem identified

There is misinformation from the general public about the statistics of fish stocks, due to the lack of access to information about the state of these natural resources, on a constant basis. Normally, the Fisheries Department collects a series of data relevant to the small-scale fisheries sector, from licenses to infringements. Although many of these are now collected in real time using electronic media, there is still older data that is still only on paper. This information may be available to the public, however, they are not found digitally.

Project description

Name: Improving Stakeholder Access to Fisheries Resources Management Data via E-Services.

Objectives:

To provide the public with up-to-date fishery management statistics and reports to increase public participation in the management of the fishery resources in Belize. The project collects data available from the Fisheries Department and presents it in a simple and easily accessible format.

Location: Belize.

Population: 387 879.

Public entities involved:

- Belize Fisheries Department.
- Central Information Technology Office (CITO).

Resultados (cualitativos/cuantitativos)

The execution of the project, required the incorporation of the data from the Fisheries Department, the updating and reviewing of the servers of the Fisheries Department and the production of an annual report regarding the production of the fishing industry. It is important to mention that the Fisheries Department had not issued an annual report since 2012. The development of this annual report made us better understand the volume and the condition of data within the Fisheries Department. This knowledge allowed us to assist the Fisheries Department in chartering a way forward to manage, secure, and publish their data.

*Belize Fisheries Department Annual Report 2018:
Report under Subgrants – Reports – Final Reports – WCS: annex 4.*



Historia de éxito

"Producing the annual report will allow us to share data with the public while at the same time we allow the public to know how much work the management of the fishing sector requires." Adriel Castañeda, beneficiary.

Multimedia



Photographic support in the
Project folder.



Improving Crop Production Yields Using Climate-smart Agricultural Practices

Ya'axché Conservation Trust Central Information Technology Office (CITO)

Ya'axché Conservation Trust is a non-profit, community-oriented NGO, with a community outreach, focused on protected areas management and biodiversity conservation impact in the Golden Maya Landscape (MGL) in southern Belize. Ya'axché was created based on the need for communities to use their natural resources in a sustainable way so it can continue to serve them and future generations. Ya'axché believes that people can get access to healthy food, clean water, adequate housing and money to support their families without depleting natural resources for future generations. Therefore, it exists to serve the communities and the environment and to fulfill its mission: harmony between nature and human development for the benefit of both.

Problem identified

Current agricultural practices negatively affect soil health, pollute water systems and affects livelihoods, when agricultural yields decrease. The use of inorganic chemicals affects the ecosystems and health of the surrounding natural and communal areas. Therefore, the initiative seeks to strengthen and equip farmers with climate-smart agricultural practices to mitigate unwanted effects on natural resources at landscape level, improving subsistence.

Project description

Name: Improving Crop Production Yields Using Climate-smart Agricultural Practices.

Objetives:

To monitor crop production yields in order to ensure that there is an increase in staples to meet the needs of the population at the local level, fostering micro-business at the household level by contributing to the local economy within the Toledo District. The objective is centered around the recollection of data, evaluation of production performance comparable to data collected over the years, to exemplify how households are benefiting from organic farming.

Location: Maya Golden Landscape, Toledo District, Belize.

Population: 387 879.

Public entities involved:

- Central Information Technology Office (CITO).

Results (qualitative/quantitative)

The first step taken was to meet with consultants to discuss the developmental phase and to assess available information within the Community Outreach and Livelihood's program (COL): existing farmer profiles, demographics, socioeconomic and agricultural data; to visualize the components for the construction of the online platform. Ya'axché current list of farmers was in excel format and had to be reviewed and compared with a Access database developed in 2018. This step paved the direction for the development of a digital application. It is important to indicate that the project generated an increased stewardship by continuously promoting climate-smart practices.

Alongside field visits and meetings, two workshops with Ya'axché and with MGL farmers, respectively, were held for capacity building on the management of the platform. Lastly, a commitment with the community and farmers was recognized, for the entry of digital data, in order to have information stored, managed and easily available.

Direct participants: 31 farmers (W:3 / M:28)

Indirect participants: 80 farmers (W:8 / M:68)



Historia de éxito

"Al invertir en agricultura de subsistencia y recibir capacitación de Ya'axché para diversify the home income, I have benefited from cocoa agro-forestry, which gave me the opportunity to expand to the area of beekeeping for the production of honey and building my organic farm to create a local tourist experience."
Martin Chiquin, farmer.

Multimedia



Photographic support in the
Project folder.



Vital Statistics Web Application

Student Group from University of Belize – Central Information Technology Office

The group is comprised of Bachelor's level Information Technology students that have a passion for the development of Belize's digital economy and information technology capacity. This project is being supported with technical assistance from the Belize Association of ICT Professionals, who will provide input on the analytical considerations in developing a functioning application system for the Vital Stats Dept.

Problem identified

There is an overall inefficiency when providing certain government services, that leads to the general public's increasing frustration and dissatisfaction. Therefore, there is a demand for enhancement of administrative functions and services provision, particularly vital statistics, driven by the understanding that the implementation of a fully virtual platform that provides vital statistics in an easy and accessible format, would decrease the demand for services provided by black market/underground agency services; and, consequently, reduce corruption.

Project description

Name: Vital Statistics Web Application

Objectives:

To build and strengthen e-government between the general populace and the Vital Statistics Department, by creating an easy to use platform that increases the efficiency and effectivity of the Vital Statistics Department. This will facilitate the submission of virtual applications and improve the efficiency of vital statistics by training employees on how to use the platform, thus allowing to provide improved services, such as one-day delivery, pre-verification and off-site payments.

Location: University of Belize, Belmopan, district of Cayo, Belize.

Population: 17 222.

Public entities involved:

- Central Information Technology Office (CITO).
- Vital Statistics Belize.
- Directorate General for Foreign Trade.

Results (qualitative/quantitative)

The mapping of the system currently used by vital statistics was carried out and a prototype of the system was developed, which was subsequently improved. To this end, two meetings were held with representatives of the Belize Department of Vital Statistics, as well as with personnel from the CITO. Finally, a platform was created to facilitate the online app process for birth certificate applications, and marriage and death certificates.

The next steps will be to test the app with an increasingly high number of users, to later officially launch the application.



Historia de éxito

"Al invertir en agricultura de subsistencia y recibir capacitación de Ya'axché para diversificar los ingresos de mi hogar, me he beneficiado de agro foresta del cacao, la cual me brindó la oportunidad de expandir hacia el área de la apicultura para la producción de miel y la construcción de mi granja ecológica para crear una experiencia turística local." Martin Chiquin, granjero.

Multimedia



Photographic support in the Project folder.



