

THE EVENT

From 2 to 7 October 2016, the Costa Rican Government hosted a South-South Study Tour entitled Promote Child and Adolescence Protection through National and Local Policies: the Experience of the CAI Project, Costa Rica. Belize participated in the event with a delegation comprised of Hugo Patt, Minister of Local Government, Labour and Rural Development; Eugene Palacio, Director of Local Government from the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development; mayors of the cities of Belmopan, Corozal, Orange Walk, Dangriga and Belize City; rapporteurs for the cities of San Pedro, San Ignacio, Benque and Punta Gorda; Kay De Vaughn, Project Manager for the Sustainable and Child-Friendly Initiative (SCFM); Sylvia Noralez, representative of the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB); Ivan Yerovi, UNICEF Belize Representative, and Paulette Wade, UNICEF Belize M&E Specialist. During the five-day tour, the delegation visited six municipalities that have been certified as child-friendly.

LESSONS LEARNED

At the end of the tour, Minister Patt highlighted a few key take-aways for Belize to successfully implement child-friendly municipalities. He identified 8 components for municipalities to be child friendly:

1. **Data and Evidence.** We need to understand the demography of each municipality and the issues being faced by its residents; to have data disaggregated at local level to make the various layers of visible; to assess the performance and impact of the initiatives undertaken by the municipalities; and to complete a longitudinal study of the children within the municipalities certified as Cantones Amigos de la Infancia (CAI) – the equivalent of SCFMs.
2. **Documentation.** We need to document lessons learned and best practices to ensure institutional memory and provide guidance to other municipalities/countries. All six municipalities shared the this was an area that was a gap, however was a valuable component to ensure the longevity of the initiative over time and as people transition or as new people enter the council.
3. **Strong Partnerships.** As demonstrated by the success of the Municipality (Canton) of Siquirres, we need to have strong partnerships with key actors working in the municipality. Strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Human Development, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Faith-Based Organizations, the private sector and children/adolescents are key to drive the social mobilization necessary for a municipality to be certified, as well as to continue improving the lives of children. A Technical and Steering committee should have:
 - Inter agencies representation
(department /agencies/NGOs that are part of the social protection net)
 - A champion to drive the initiative
 - Committed members
 - A policy for local government engagement
4. **Capacity Building.** We need to ensure that all council members share a common understanding of human rights and have the tools necessary to advance CAI/SCFM. Continuous opportunities for capacity building should be embedded in strategic plans. Knowledge of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Human Right Based Approach to planning and programming; financial

management; monitoring and evaluation, reporting and drafting policy are needed to advance SCFM.

5. **Children/Adolescent Participation.** This component is critical. We need to ensure that opportunities are in place for the voices of children to be heard. As clearly demonstrated by the Municipality (Canton) of Pococi, establishing a Children Advisory Board is a prerequisite for a successful SCFM. There were difficulties associated in establishing a platform for children's active participation but such platform also resulted in added value. The following steps need to be taken into account when ensuring children/adolescent participation:
 - Developing/Passing of a policy for children and adolescents
 - Ensuring children/adolescents, and the people working with them, are knowledgeable about human rights, CRC and the national constitution
 - Being innovative to make the membership reflective of the population and inclusive (i.e. including children/adolescents from various youth groups; children out of school; children with disabilities; adolescents with diverse sexual orientations; adolescent in conflict with the law
 - Guaranteeing the meaningful engagement of children/adolescents – giving them a voice in development planning, monitoring and evaluation.
6. **Consultation.** We need to ensure that consultation at the local level is continuous and on a regular basis. Building awareness at national and local level can accelerate the impact of our SCFM initiative.
7. **Investment.** We need to ensure that city councils use the resources already available to them (human and infrastructures). City councils should prioritize children.
8. **Inter-sectoral advocacy.** We need to support municipal authorities in building a bridge between national programmes and local needs.

CHILD FRIENDLY MUNICIPALITIES IN BELIZE

Khalid Belisle, Mayor of Belmopan, shared the efforts made in Belize so far towards Child Friendly Municipalities, identified gaps and mapped the way forward.

CURRENT SITUATION

Building on efforts initiated in 2014, the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development, UNDP and UNICEF have continued supporting the mayors of Belize's nine municipalities in employing the CFM strategy to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and monitor child right achievements at subnational level. To date, this successful partnership has resulted in all nine municipalities being recognized for their commitments and efforts to become child friendly. Each of the nine municipal governments has:

- A signed agreement, endorsed by the Minister and UNICEF, committing the local government to work towards being certified as child friendly
- A Technical and Steering Committee – a child rights coordinating mechanism whose primary goal is to ensure the advancement of the SCFM agenda
- A Children Advisory Body (CAB) – a mechanism to maximize children's participation in decision-making processes within the local government

- A costed action plan highlighting priority areas to improve the lives of children
- A Rapporteur responsible to ensure that SCFM issues are addressed at city council meetings and that the CAB is involved in the decision-making process within the local government
- A certificate of recognition for the effort demonstrated by the municipal government

With a view to ensure a gender equity approach to the development agenda of SCFM, the municipalities, in collaboration with SIB, have drafted a monitoring tool to track and report the inequities faced by children living in those municipalities. The evidence produced will inform decision-making and the implementation of policies by the municipal government aimed at improving the lives of children. In addition, the information generated by SIB will serve as evidence for the certification of municipalities as child friendly.

GAPS

Where we are	What we need to do
Project Steering Committee (MLG; BMA; UNICEF; UNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand partnership to include US Embassy, PAHO, Belize Chamber of Commerce, etc • Develop a fundraising strategy
Project Manger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand team – M&E and proposal writing
Signed agreement of mayors to work towards CFM status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garner commitment from mayors • Lobby for greater support
9 Technical and Steering Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review membership and include agencies working with in the municipalities – social net. • Have TOR signed by upper management
9 Action plans and costing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategic plan with budgeted operational plans
9 Children Advisory Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review membership and include children from youth groups in the municipality that are not represented. • Validate TOC with CAB Members
Draft Monitoring Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use friendly Monitoring Tool • Finalize the certification process

WAY FORWARD

Short- and medium-term commitments include:

- Establishing a formal relationship between the Ministry of Local Government (Belize), Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI) and the National Institute for Decentralization (IFAM) (Costa Rica) to establish areas of synergies and collaboration
- Establishing a two-year roadmap
- Presentation on the South-South Exchange to the Belize Mayors' Association
- Partnership mapping (NGOs and private sector)
- Finalizing the SCFM toolkit
- Presenting to the CEO Caucus/NCFC
- Presenting to the UNCT
- Consolidating documentation: SCFM National Plan of Action for Children 2015+
- Hosting a knowledge exchange in Belize