

Project Name	Belize-Education Sector Improvement Project (@)
Region	Latin America and Caribbean Region
Sector	Secondary Education
Project	BZPE6106
Borrower(s)	GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE
Implementing Agency	Address BELIZE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS (MOE) Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Administrative Building, Belmopan, Belize Contact Person: Mr. Ernest Raymond, Project Director, Belmopan, Belize Tel: 501-2-32062/2-36485 Fax: 501-2-31762 Email: Moeproject@Btl.Net
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1. Country and Sector Background

Background

Belize is the only anglophone country in Central America. It is small and ethnically diverse, with a sparsely distributed population of about 240,000 of which slightly more than half reside in urban areas, and is nestled between the Mexican Yucatan peninsula and Guatemala. In spite of a substantial influx of poor people migrating from strife-torn Central American countries during the late last decade substantial progress in the social conditions has been achieved in Belize. Nevertheless, Belize continues to be faced with major development challenges, in part due to its small size. Its 1999 GNP per capita was US\$2,730. Notwithstanding the positive accomplishments, Belize is faced with major development challenges during the coming decade. Based on 1996 and 1998 surveys, it is estimated that about 33% of the population is poor, most of whom live in the rural southern districts of Toledo and Stann Creek, and the central district of Cayo bordering Guatemala. The poor are mainly the indigenous Mayans (about 11 percent of the population), and agricultural workers (about 20 percent of the population) who migrated from the neighboring Central American countries. In addition, as there is continued decline in real prices for bananas and sugar, the livelihood of another 3% of population, most of whom are near-poor small farmers and manufacturing

workers, is also in jeopardy in the preferential markets.

As part of the GOB's strategic poverty reduction program the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOES), with participation of over fifty major stakeholders from the public and private sectors and supported by the Bank and the British Department for International Development (DFID), developed a National Strategy for Education Sector Reform (NSER) over the past two years. The resulting action plan is the proposed Belize Education Sector Improvement Project (BESIP). The GOB intends to implement a menu of education sector transformation measures through BESIP to improve quality, relevance, efficiency and equity in education. The GOB emphasizes the compelling need for an improved financial management strategy to achieve its vision within current fiscal constraints, and the need to address existing inequities in education, which are expressed in social, gender, geographical and completion rate differences between the richer and poorer groups of the population and between districts.

Education Sector Issues

The GOB's education sector strategy document includes an assessment of its performance, and concludes that, at present, the goals for primary and secondary education have not been articulated in a way that motivates individual schools (notably private schools) to pursue their mission of delivering improved quality and relevance of learning output. Education access at primary level has increased significantly over the last decade, and net primary enrollment (NER) stands now at 95% of the relevant age group. Still many children, especially from the poorest households and districts, repeat too often and drop out as soon as they reach 14 years (when compulsory education ends). At secondary level, Belize significantly under performs for its level of economic development, and has a net secondary enrollment of only 35% of the relevant age group. This indicates also the high inefficiency and inequity within the system. Belize compulsory education, especially at secondary level, appears to have too many subjects and a lack of well-defined core knowledge targets, and its relative quality is difficult to assess. Courses offered at secondary level and examinations are largely driven by the requirements of external (CSEC/CXC) examinations, tertiary institutions, and what is learned is not very relevant to respond to labor market and societal needs. Over 30% of 12-14 year old children are out of school without basic skills requirement.

In addition, there is a weak governance, management and administration at central and district levels with the following consequences: (i) limited opportunities for interventions by participating community stakeholders; (ii) ineffective incentive structures to increase public and private quality, efficiency and access; and (iii) inequitable public financing of private and public primary and secondary education

2. Objectives

The BESIP objectives are:

1. to increase access and improve the equity and quality of service delivery in basic and secondary education;
2. to reform the public financing of education to ensure greater equity and cost-efficiency.

3. Rationale for Bank's Involvement

The Bank's approach to support the GOB's education sector reform has been to emphasize equity and helping the most disadvantaged students achieve higher levels of education. The Bank will bring in its experiences with other countries in the LAC Region, and can ensure that lessons from similar projects will be applied. In the area of monitoring and evaluation of output the Bank is contributing its in-depth experience of performance indicators and assessment of learning outcomes. International comparative assessment of what pupils are learning in primary and secondary education will be financed under this Loan and will benefit the GOB by enabling the comparison of the Belize system's performance with the OECD and other countries.

4. Description

The objectives of the project would be achieved by implementing the following four project components:

Increasing Access and improving Equity in primary and secondary education, through:

developing and implementing improved and effective student support services

improving and augmenting existing compensatory school financing

increasing access to schools by constructing new secondary schools and rehabilitating existing primary and secondary schools

providing learning materials and equipment to schools based on eligibility criteria

Improving Quality and Relevance of Teaching and Learning in primary and secondary education, through:

improving teacher qualifications, teaching quality, and relevance of learning

improving training delivery by the Belize Teacher Training College within the University of Belize Faculty of Education

developing and implementing a core-curriculum for public and private secondary schools and completing the ongoing primary curriculum reform

improving assessment, certification and examination system at primary and secondary level

implementing pilot mechanisms for the provision of learning opportunities for out-of-school Youth

Making the delivery of primary and secondary education services equitable and cost-efficient and strengthening Institutional Capacity at central and district level, through:

introducing equitable school financing mechanisms in primary and secondary schools, and standardizing improved budgeting and accounting systems within schools and improving monitoring

of incurred costs
rationalizing teacher and staff in primary and secondary schools, and revising the "Teacher / School Rules"
enhancing institutional capacity at central and district level by (a) providing training , (b) establishing a national Education MIS, (c) establishing a school inspectorate, (c) developing and implementing school-based secondary school performance improvement plans, and (d) operationalizing the district education centers by providing equipment and staff training;
Providing support for project management, through:
providing training and consultant services to the MOES and its project implementation unit
establishing effective skills and knowledge transfer mechanisms for the central, district and school levels.

5. Financing

Total (US\$m)

Total Project Cost

The total project cost is US\$23.29 of which IBRD will finance US\$12.0 million and DFID grant funding will finance up to US\$5.0 million.

6. Implementation

Overall responsibility for oversight of the project would be vested in a Project implementation Unit (PIU) integrated in the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports.

7. Sustainability

The sustainability will be ensured by the high return of human capital investment and by the measures that would be taken to improve the cost efficiency and financing of the education system.

8. Lessons learned from past operations in the country/sector

The lessons learned from the Belize Primary Education Development Project (PEDP) are the following:

(a) The MOE needs to rapidly institutionalize transparent processes of decision making and develop procedures that include reasonable consultation with key stakeholders in the education sector and with Communities.

(b) The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the PEDP based in Belize City worked too much in isolation and was not sufficiently integrated into the Ministry of Education's structures in the Capital of Belmopan. The PIU for the BESIP will need to be integrated into the MOE services and will have to be part of the MOE's decision-making structures.

(c) Belize is a small country, but it still has isolated and difficult to reach areas, where some of the poorest population live. To provide support structures and training to teachers and principals, and to maintain contact with parents and small communities, it will be

necessary to utilize the District Education Centers (DECs), which were constructed under the PEDP. The DECs will need to be provided with adequately trained staff and equipment. The use of modern technology to connect the DECs to the MOE's central administration will need to be developed rapidly.

(d) Under the PEDP the MOE did not really have a policy and targeting mechanisms for reaching out to students from the disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, the social and economic inequity of the education system continued to grow, and the poorest students were the victims. The BESIP should emphasize the rapid implementation of support measures for reducing inequity of the system, and adequate measures to monitor the outcomes.

(e) The MOE's monitoring and evaluation capacity for measuring the outcomes in education remains weak and could not be sufficiently strengthened under the PEDP (because its focus was only on primary education, and mainly curriculum reform). The GOB will need to build institutional capacity for setting up an effective system of measuring learning outcomes and the cost efficiency of the education system, and linking this evaluation to the MOE decision-making process.

(f) The Belize primary and secondary education system is composed of several denominational and private groups who own and are running the schools. An institutionalized structure of feedback and coordination exists, but should be further developed and integrated in the process to ensure ownership for the reform process.

9. Program of Targeted Intervention (PTI) N

10. Environment Aspects (including any public consultation)
Issues : N

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Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not be necessarily included in the final project.

This PID was processed by the InfoShop during the week ending January 26, 2001.