



International Migration in the Caribbean Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Development: The Belize Case

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Equality and Inclusion

Presentation Overview

- Understanding the Migration Landscape in Belize
- Overview of Opportunities and Challenges for Migration and Development

SUMMARY

Belize has a complex migration situation.

It is attractive to immigrants from the region due to a stable economic situation, higher living standards and job availability.

On the other hand, deteriorating economic conditions, such as high levels of poverty and unemployment are factors stimulating migratory movements towards the USA and Canada

Migration Landscape in Belize

ABOUT BELIZE:

CAPITAL	CURRENCY	POPULATION	AREA (km2)	GDP PER CAPITA (USD)	MAIN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES
Belmopan	Belize Dollar (BZD)	441,471	22,065	\$7,020.00	Tourism and Agriculture









MIGRATION DATA:

IMMIGRANT POPULATION	IMMIGRANT POPULATION (% of total population)	WOMEN (% of Immigrant population)	EMIGRANT POPULATION	INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION	REMITTANCE RECEIVED (USD)	REMITTANCE RECEIVED (% of GDP)	NET MIGRATION RATE
60,000	15.4	49.7	68,100	3,500 IN 2016	142,127,892	5.2	3.2





Migration Landscape in Belize

- Migrants in Belize are primarily from Guatemala (approximately 26,000), El Salvador (approximately 9,900), Honduras (approximately 9,500), United States of America (approximately 5,500) and Mexico (approximately 4,000).
- Reported in the last country census, primary reasons persons migrated to Belize were:
 - employment or to reunite with family that were already living in the country.
 - personal safety or because of high crime rates in their countries of origin.
 - came to the country as dependents of other persons who were also migrating.



Convention or Treaty		Year of Ratification
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families		2001
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Its Two Protocols		1996 but two protocols not ratified
International Convention on the Rights of the Child		1990
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women		1990
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities		2011
Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment		1986
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances		2015
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination		2001

Migration Policies and Adherence to International Standards

ORGANIZATIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK		
Legislation governing migration		Immigration Action (Chapter 156, revised in 2000)
National migration policy in a programmatic document		Migration Policy being supported by IOM
Inter-ministerial Coordination Mechanism		National Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee
National laws dealing with extradition and agreements for extradition facilitation		Mexico, Guatemala and United States of America

Belize's Current Migration Policies and Adherence to International Standards

- **Migration Strategy and regulatory framework**

- ✓ The primary immigration legislation is the Immigration Act (Chapter 156, revised in 2000).
- ✓ There is no documented migration strategy
- ✓ The National Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee is the formal inter-ministerial coordination mechanism for migration

- **Antidiscrimination**

- ✓ The Constitution of Belize prohibits discrimination based on place of origin, however, it does not include migration status

- **Records and data collection**

- ✓ Existing migration data are collected through the national census. These data provide only an approximation of the immigration population, as migrants with irregular status are not considered.

- **Residence and Citizenship**

- ✓ Permanent residency can be obtained by foreigners who are 18 years and older and have resided in Belize for one year immediately preceding the application.
- ✓ Citizenship can be obtained by descent and by virtue of registration.

- **Access to Political Rights**

- ✓ Every Belizean citizen or a citizen of any Commonwealth country who fulfils certain residency requirements and who has attained the age of 18 years has the right to vote.
- ✓ Belizean citizens who reside abroad are not permitted to vote.
- ✓ Migrants have access to legal recourse, can present cases in court regardless of their migration status and may secure legal representation (not provided by the Government).

Challenges to Migration and Development

- Belize has no Migration Policy
- The immigration law of Belize, which is criminal, governs immigration offences and there is no dedicated detention center for individuals suspected of immigration offences. However, migrant detainees are held in a separate section of the central prison, and women and men are held separately.
- Limited Data on the characteristics and needs of the migrant population.
- Limited research and analysis of the remittances and need for strategies to incorporate diaspora into the socioeconomic development of the country.

Opportunities

Labor

- Belize is part of the CSME free movement regime, and the CARICOM Agreement on Social Security facilitates the portability of social security benefits for CARICOM nationals in Belize.
- The Government is working on Seasonal Worker's Programme promote ethical recruitment.

Protection

- Belize has protocol to support unaccompanied and accompanied migrant and refugee children.
- The TiP (Prohibition) Act and CSEC (Prohibition) Act are currently being amended

Diaspora Relations:

- Government of Belize set up a Diaspora Unit in 2020, which has been actively strategically and systematically engaging the diaspora (e.g., diaspora data, investment, documentation, voting, participation in governance, etc.)

Opportunities

Regularization and Integration

- The 2022/early 2023 Amnesty Program sought to address the issue of migrants who are residing in Belize irregularly, or recommended asylum seekers. Those who qualified for the amnesty would be offered Permanent Residence status with a path to citizenship. As of 31 January 2023, a total of 11,352 individuals, including 900 asylum-seekers, filed their applications to obtain permanent residence in Belize.



A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark skin and hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a blue t-shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing an outdoor setting with a table covered in books and papers. A person in a white t-shirt is partially visible on the left. The overall scene suggests a book fair or a community event.

Thank You