

**THE MINISTRY FOREIGN AFFARIS, FOREIGN TRADE, AND
IMMIGRATION**

**ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT
2021**

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Abbreviations

AG	Attorney General
APIS	Advance Passenger Information System
ATIPS	Anti-trafficking in Persons Committee
ATSG	Advance Targeting System Global
BAHA	Belize Agricultural Health Authority
BDF	Belize Defense Force
BNA	Belize Nationality
BTB	Belize Tourism Board
BZD	Belize Dollar
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBD	Caribbean Development Bank
CSME	Caricom Single Market and Economy
CVQ	Certified Vocational Qualification
DBMIS	Department of Border Management and Immigration Services
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
ICT	Information and communication technology
INS	Immigration and Nationality Department
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IOM	International Organization on Migration
IRM	Integrated Response on Migration
JIOC	Joint Intelligence Operations Committee
MIDAS	Migration Information and Data Analysis System
NAMLAC	National-anti Money Laundering Committee
NIC	National Intelligence Committee
MIT	Mobile Interdiction Team
OCAM	Central American Commission of Migration Directors
PGIA	Philip Goldson International Airport
RCM	Regional Conference on Migration
RDRS	Refugee Data Base and Registration System
RMU	Records Management Unit
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Executive Summary

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and **Immigration** has taken the position to set in place the structure to continue managing migration for the socio-economic development and national security of Belize via laying the groundwork for the development of Belize's first Migration Policy.

Over the past year the government of Belize has implemented several programs in terms of the management of migration via our three technical departments. These include the from the Department of Border Management and Immigration Services the Migrant Worker Protocol January 2021, the COVID-19 Visa Extension Amnesty October to December 2021, the Immigration related operations with the Anti Trafficking in Persons Council, and the legislation on visa requirements for Venezuela, Ecuador, Dominican Republic. Furthermore, from the Refugee Department a project with UNHCR focused on enhancing the technical capacity of the Refugee Department, and the issuing of Special Work Permits to Asylum Seekers that were approved Refugee Status, but never confirmed. Additionally, from the Nationality and Passport Department the Permanent Residence and Nationality Unit heads held two community awareness sessions, participation in IOM Mobile Clinics, laying the groundwork for Amnesty 2022, and commencing the process for a new electronic passport issuance and control system. Finally, the ministry has participated in virtual and in person meetings nationally, regionally, and internationally.

These initiatives represent a comprehensive approach to Migration from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and **Immigration** for safe, orderly, and regular migration.

1. Introduction

Once a unit of the Belize Police Department, the Immigration and Nationality Department (INS) was formed/civilianized with effect from June 26, 1986. Since then, we have grown and expanded to a staff compliment of one hundred and twenty (120) uniformed officers with capability to provide service in all six districts. However, on May 16, 2018, the Immigration and Nationality Department was bifurcated into two separate Departments namely:

- Department of Border Management and Immigration Services.
- Nationality and Passports Department.

The Management Team of the Ministry of Immigration comprises of the following:

- The Chief Executive Officer
- Director – Refugee Department
- Director – Nationality and Passports
- Director – Department of Border Management and Immigration
- Assistant Director Enforcement
- Two Finance Officers
- The IT Manager, and
- Two Administrative Officers

STATION LOCATIONS AND MANAGERS

The following are the ports of entry/exit and offices in the respective district towns and/or cities:

- Phillip Goldson International Airport headed by Port Commander Vanetta Sutherland Kerr.
- Belize Northern Border Station and the Corozal Town Office headed by Port Commander Shanika Norales.
- Orange Walk Town Office headed by Port Commander Sheldon Hudson.
- Belize City Office/Seaport headed by Port Commander Edgar Cano.
- San Pedro Office/Seaport headed by Port Commander Luz Urbina.
- Dangriga Office/Seaport headed by Port Commander Ismael Pulido.
- Belize Western Border Station headed by Port Commander Francisco Rejon.
- Belize Southern Border Station/Seaport (including Jalacte and Hunting Caye) headed by Port Commander Lorine Pott.
- Belmopan Headquarters Services Section is headed by Port Commander George Reynolds and Investigation Unit by the Assistant Director Horace Guzman.

Legal Instruments

The operations of the Ministry are governed by at least ten (10) different legal instruments. There are essentially three (3) types of instruments used and they are as follows:

- Legislation enacted by Parliament establishes the mandate of the Department.
- Regulations promulgated by the Minister responsible for the portfolio outlines procedures for implementing the legislative provisions; and
- Statutory rules & orders that are permanent directives issued by the Department from time to time on matters relating to any of the services offered.

A brief discussion of how each of the various legal instruments is applied and the departmental responsibilities follow.

1. *Belize Nationality Act Chapter 161 of the laws of Belize as of 31st December 2000*

Under this Act the department is required to process applications for citizenship of Belize. Provision is made for applicants to obtain citizenship as follows:

By descent: for persons born before on or after Independence Day; and

- By registration: for persons residing at least five (5) years prior to the date of application, persons married to a Belizean national or who have made substantial contribution to Belize (economic citizenship) This section process was repealed by the 4th Amendment of the Belize Constitution number 39 of 2001.

To facilitate processing the Department maintains a few prescribed forms such as Application Forms and Renunciation Forms. It has also published a Citizenship Test Booklet that traces the history of Belize and gives basic information about the symbols of the country, the structure of government, the make-up of the population and the traditions of the country.

2. *Belize Nationality Act Subsidiary as of 31st December 2000*

The Regulations outlines procedures for application, lists requirements to be met by each applicant and identifies the authority for decision-making with respect to the application. To facilitate processing the department maintains seven (7) prescribed forms listed as A-G, a Certificate of Registration, and a Register of Persons.

3. **Passport Act Chapter 164 of the laws of Belize as at 31st December 2000**

Under this Act, the Department is required to process applications for passports and permits. This exercise involves issuing, revoking, and enforcing the stipulated terms and conditions for passports.

4. *Immigration Act Chapter 156 of the laws of Belize Subsidiary as at 31st December 2000*

Under this Act, the Department is required to manage a consolidation of ten (10) regulations and statutory rules and orders. They are as follows:

- a) Immigration Regulations #67 dated 10th August 1985

- b) Immigration (Visa Abolition Declaration) Order
- c) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Guatemala & Costa Rica) Order #153 dated 30th November 1991
- d) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Chile) Order #45 dated 28th March 1992
- e) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Venezuela) Order #47 dated 24th May 1997
- f) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Diplomatic & Official Passport Holders) (Specified Countries) Order #121 dated 20th December 1997
- g) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Diplomatic & Official Passport Holders) (Mexico) Order #31 dated 18th April 1998
- h) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Diplomatic & Official Passport Holders) (Cuba) Order #38 dated 25th April 1998
- i) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Republic of Turkey) Order #81 dated 17th July 1999
- j) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Republic of El Salvador) Order #18 dated 10th February 2001
- k) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Diplomatic & Official Passport Holders) (Austria) Order #134 dated 2nd November 2002
- l) Immigration (Visa Relaxation Declaration) (Permits & Fees) Regulations #25 dated 13th March 1999.

To facilitate the processing of visas and permits the Department maintains various prescribed forms.

5. *Immigration (Permits & Fees) Revised Regulations #42 of 9th April 2005, # 85 of 2006, #32 of 2011, 42 of 2020.*

These regulations were introduced by the Minister in the form of a Statutory Instruments to revise the fees payable for visas and other permits and repatriation deposit.

Immigration Act Chapter 156 (39) as of 31st December 2000

This Act makes provision for the Minister to prescribe the form of application, fees, offences and penalties by regulation.

7. *Passport Act Chapter 164 Subsidiary as of 31st October 2003*

These Regulations make provision for the issuance of passports to persons resident in or outside of Belize. They stipulate the duration, expiry date, reasons for recall and cancellation of passports and fees payable.

8. *CARICOM Free Movement of Skilled Persons Act # 45 of 10th December 1999*

The Act makes provision for free movement into Belize of Caribbean skilled persons. To facilitate the processing of visas and permits the department maintains a list of approved Qualifications and Occupations, a list of Qualifying CARICOM States and issues a Certificate of Recognition of CARICOM Skills to approved persons.

9. *Retired Persons (Incentives) Act #11 dated 19th April 1999*

This Act makes provision for granting incentives to retired persons aged 45 years and over, in receipt of a pension or annuity from specified countries. To facilitate the processing of incentives the department maintains a list of Incentives and a list of the approved countries.

10. *Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act #18 dated 23rd June 2003*

This Act makes provision for implementing the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children. Under the Act the department is required to collect and publish annual statistical data in December on the following:

- a) Number of arrests, prosecutions, convictions and acquittals of traffickers;
- b) Number, age and sex of victims;
- c) Trafficking routes and patterns including countries of origin and transit countries;
- d) Method of transportation; and
- e) Border crossing issues.

Section 22.1 of the Act also requires the department to mount a 'Public Awareness Campaign,' to produce Information leaflets, to place the leaflets at ports of Entry and to evaluate the programs periodically. Accordingly, the department must produce an approved Public Awareness Program, Information leaflets and evaluation reports.

11. *Refugees Act Chapter 165 of the Laws of Belize Revised Edition 2000.*

This Act makes provision for the recognition of or the refusal of recognition of refugees in accordance with the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees dated 28th July 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees dated 31st January 1967. Under the Act, the department is required to establish and operate a Refugee Eligibility Committee and maintain prescribed Application Forms.

Refugee International Legal Instruments

1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and

1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees

Belize has also adopted and signed on to several related regional instruments such as:

- The 1984 Cartagena Declarations on Refugees
- The Brazil Declaration of 2014 (Cartagena +30)
- The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, 2016
- The San Jose Action Statement, 2016
- The San Pedro Sula Declaration, 2017
- The Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (known by its Spanish acronym – MIRPS), 2017
- The Global Compact on Refugees, 2018
- The Mexico City Declaration, 2019
- The San Salvador Declaration, 2020
- Declaration of the City of La Antigua Guatemala, 2021

12. The Aliens Act Chapter 159 of the Laws of Belize Revised Edition 2000

The mandate of the Department is outlined in the various legal instruments enacted by Parliament. It finds expression in the stated mission, vision and goals of the department.

It is important to note that the bifurcation of the Immigration and Nationality Department on May 16 of 2018, into two Departments (i.e., Department of Border Management and Immigration Services, and the Nationality and Passports Department) resulted in some functions of both departments remaining interconnected. Certain functions of the Nationality and Passports Department are still carried out by officers of the other Department, e.g. the Investigation work.

2. Mission statement and Priorities of the Ministry

The strategic objectives of #planBelize are well noted as:

1. Poverty reduction
2. Complete Economic transformation
3. Trade deficit reduction
4. Citizen security
5. Protection of the environment
6. Elimination of corruption

Of relevance for the Ministry of Immigration from #PlanBelize, the key points can be summarized as:

1. Adopt a comprehensive Migration policy
2. Upgrade systems and technology in the Immigration and Nationality Service to eradicate corruption
3. Introduce legislation to regularize the status of farm workers
4. Implement recommendations from the Senate Immigration Report which strengthens the system, and
5. Simplify residency procedures for genuine investors and their families as part of the investment attraction strategy.

MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION

VISION: To enhance citizen and migrant services by becoming a modern, innovative, and interconnected organization to facilitate human mobility.

MISSION: To manage migration flows.

REFUGEE DEPARTMENT

VISION: To be the leading Government Department for dialogue and implementation of matters regarding Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belize.

MISSION: The Refugees Department engages in strategic work to strengthen national efforts to safeguard the rights and well-being of persons in Belize seeking asylum and safe refuge from persecution. It participates in national, regional, and international discussion and cooperation to respond to emerging trends and challenges of forced migration in Belize and the region.

NATIONALITY AND PASSPORT DEPARTMENT

VISION: To provide all Belizeans with a secure, internationally acceptable and recognized travel document and to provide for the integration of those who choose this nation as a place to work, live and grow.

MISSION: We commit to the fulfilment of our vision of social responsibility through sound management practices, motivated and professional staff demonstrated by skilful and respectful public service delivery with integrity and accountability; and the management of the citizenship process through community participation, for the sustainable development of Belize.

DEPARTMENT OF BORDER MANAGEMENT & IMMIGRATION SERVICES

VISION: To become a modern, proficient, Immigration organization which contributes to the sustainable development of Belize by providing world class border protection and travel facilitation services.

MISSION: Facilitate, within the laws of Belize, the travel of nationals and visitors; promote regular migration hence contributing to sustainable development of Belize while maintaining the national security by enhancing border security.

3. Main Achievements of the Ministry by Department

Department 1: Border Management and Immigration Services

Migrant Worker Protocol January 2021

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and **Immigration** recognized the harvesting season as it relates to the agroindustry. During the harvesting season, we at the Department are cognizant that this industry attracts approximately two thousand (2,000) farmhands, whose labour is traditionally sourced from within the Central American region, seeing migrant workers mainly from the following countries:

- Guatemala
- Honduras
- El Salvador and
- Nicaragua (at minimal)

Notably, with the situation in respect to the Sars Cov2 Pandemic in Belize, we recognized the need for sustained activity in the productive sector in order to ensure economic recovery, post lock down of the country. Whilst our land borders and seaports remain closed with the exception

for the movement of cargo and emergency/essential travel, we had to continue to collaborate with stakeholders. We therefore recognized the need to collaborate with industry stakeholders to allow for the entry of migrant workers, but we had to ensure that ALL necessary measures were in place and that the Ministry of Health protocols were observed to allow for the safe entry of these Migrant workers. The primary aim of this protocol was to outline the protocols and procedures to be observed by all stakeholders which included the Department of Border Management and Immigration Services, Ministry of Health, Farm Owners, or their representatives. This was an effort to facilitate the entry of migrant workers in response to the COVID 19 Pandemic and to achieve the following objectives:

- Prevention of the entry of infected individuals from a country where the virus is having sustained community transmission.
- Belize's National Security and safety.

COVID-19 Visa Extension Amnesty October to December 2021

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration had embarked on Special Regularization Period being October 1, 2021, which closed December 31, 2021, in relation to the SARS COV2 a Pandemic which resulted on a full shut down of the country of Belize on March 21, 2020. This of course led to an economic downturn which precipitated a financial crisis resulting in a reduction in staff, salary cuts, reduced work hours, lay-offs and even closures of some businesses. The impacts were felt by Belizeans as well as the migrant population employed in Belize, as they too began experiencing economic hardships. Consequently, to address the situation of those migrants thrust into an irregular situation and in keeping with the Global Compacts for a safe, orderly, and regular migration.

We also included those migrants who have settled in Belize under the following conditions to seek corrective measures to their irregular status. Consideration had granted, whether they had entered illegally or legally but have somehow failed to continue a path to legalize themselves:

- They have children born in Belize
- They are married to a Belizean or
- Have been here for five years or
- An asylum seeker denied refugee status.

The table below shows the total number of persons by nationality who took advantage of the Regularization Program.

Table 1. COVID 19 Visa Extension Regularization Program

NATIONALITY	AMOUNT		
Nicaragua	5	Venezuelan	4
Honduran	81	Israeli	2
Guatemalan	105	Russian	3
Salvadoran	34	Moroccan	1
Nigerian	3	Colombian	10
Mexican	7	Ugandan	1
American	8	South African	5
Indian	3	Chinese	2
Jamaican	5	Argentinian	2
Canadian	3	German	1
Brazilian	3	Haitian	1
Dominican Republic	2	Serbian	1
Lebanese	4	British	1
Jordanian	1		
TOTAL		298	

This Regularization Program yielded a total of **BZ\$184,100.00** and a total of **298 irregular migrants** took advantage. The figure below shows that Central Americans remains the largest irregular population:

- Guatemalans amounted to 105 or 35.2%.
- Honduran amounted to 81 or 27.2%
- Salvadoran amounted to 34 or 11.4%
- Colombians amounted to 10 or 3.4%
- Other Nationals amounted to 68 or 22.8%

Legislation for Visa Requirements: Venezuela, Ecuador, Dominican Republic

There has been an increasing number of migrants primarily from Central America, South America, Ghana and other countries that are arriving in Belize primarily via the Philip Goldson International Airport, using Belize as a transit point to move northbound. In Belize, we have seen a small but significant increase in numbers of nationals from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Brazil, Ghanaians, Jamaicans and most recently Venezuelan nationals. Those nationals for the most part, are utilizing the Philip Goldson International Airport and arriving from Panama on COPA Airlines flights but departing via the Belize Northern Border Station or the Belize Western Border Station either by regular or irregular means. The Mobile Interdiction Team (MIT) apprehended and handed over a group of three (3) late last year and another group of five (5) Ecuadoran nationals

who entered Belize via PGIA on January 15, 2022 and was caught that same night at around 10:30pm along the banks of the Rio Hondo. Consequently, two Belizean taximen were convicted in the Magistrate Court for aiding said individuals.

The recent situation on January 18, 2022, is perhaps the most serious incident. 35 were Venezuelan nationals sought to enter Belize on COPA Flight CM280. They were Refused Leave to Land on two or more of the following grounds:

- i. No return ticket or cancellation of tickets upon arrival in Belize. They would have had an itinerary on hand but proved useless.
- ii. Insufficient funds.
- iii. Bogus hotel reservations when confirmation was done with respective hotel establishment; and
- iv. Giving untrue answers to Immigration Officers.

The Department of Border Management and Immigration had been monitoring this situation over the last six months. Records on our border management system MIDAS are showing the arrivals and departures of nationals of interest arriving on COPA Airline, since they restarted operations last July 2021 to current.

As it relates to an impending migrant wave, the Ministry of Immigration will impose visa requirements for nationals of Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador in March 2022.

ENHANCEMENT OF BORDER SECURITY

Despite the Global Pandemic the Officers of the Department Border Management and Immigration continue to work alongside the Belize's security forces (Police, BDF Coast Guard and Customs) to safeguard our air, land, and maritime borders. This is to combat any illicit activities, transnational criminal activities particularly as it relates to criminal gangs, human smuggling and trafficking in persons. We must recognize and commend their efforts and steadfastness at the frontlines, in the face of these adversities.

We have also seen the deployment and integration of the Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) with our Border Management System (MIDAS). This MIDAS/APIS Integration will be accessible by way of our online servers at all the major ports of entry being:

- 1. Phillip Goldson International Airport
- 2. Belize Northern Border Station,
- 3. Belize Western Border Station,
- 4. Belize Southern Border Station and

5. Headquarters in Belmopan.

The information that is received via the APIS consists of mainly the passengers Full Name, Gender, Date of Birth, Nationality, Country of residence, Travel document type, document number and flight details which include Airline and flight number. In the near future we intend to complement and enhance this APIS system with the Advance Targeting System Global (ATSG). **The APIS Legislation was signed since 2017.**

Belize through the Department of Border Management and Immigration has since March 1, 2021, supported through the deployment an officer to the Grupo Conjunto Inteligencia Fronteriza (**GCIF**), a multinational border intelligence group that includes El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, all countries within the Northern Triangle but not limited to those countries. This was with the aim of combatting transnational criminal activities within the region which include gang related activities, trafficking in persons, human smuggling as well as other illicit activities. **This agreement was signed from December 11, 2019.**

AIRPORT AND LAND BORDER FACILITATION

Despite the Covid19 pandemic which resulted in the closure of our airport, seaports, and land border between March 21 and 23, 2020 human mobility continued. There were persons who needed to travel for the following reasons:

- Medical purposes
- Transportation of cargo into and from Belize. (Cargo Protocol established in 2020)

The Government of Belize approved the soft opening of the Belize Northern Border Station and the Belize Western Border Station for the facilitation of tourists which commenced on May 31, 2021. A Tourist Protocol was established to ensure compliance with the Immigration entry requirements, Quarantine regulations and Gold Standards for entry were set by the Ministry of Tourism.

Records on MIDAS shows that between January to December 2021 there were a total of 1,177,089 persons that traversed our airport and land borders. When compared to that same period in 2020, where we had seen some 1,157,79 which translates to an increase of some 19,298 persons or 1.6% higher than the previous year 2020. When compared to the Pre Covid19 Pandemic, the numbers were at a record high 4,751,703 persons. In 2021 tourist arrivals rebounded from 147, 052 in 2020 to 200,501 in 2021. This amounts to a total of 53,449 or 27% increase in Tourist Arrivals.

Table 2. Belize Border Movement Statistics 2019 - 2021

ARRIVALS				DEPARTURE	TOTALS
YEAR	BELIZEANS	TOURISTS	OTHERS	TOTALS	TOTALS
2019	1,591,850	555,808	207,005	2,397,040	4,751,703
2020	375,103	147,052	47,963	587,673	1,157,791
2021	346,863	200,501	35,765	593,960	1,177,089

Table 2 shows movement statistics for Belizeans, tourists and other visitors (business, medical brigade, consultants, migrant workers, Cargo truck drivers etc.) that traversed the ports of entry/exit for the past two (2) years via the major ports being PGIA, BNBS and the BWBS in comparison to pre-pandemic year being 2019.

Figure 1. Belize Border Movement Statistics 2019 -2021

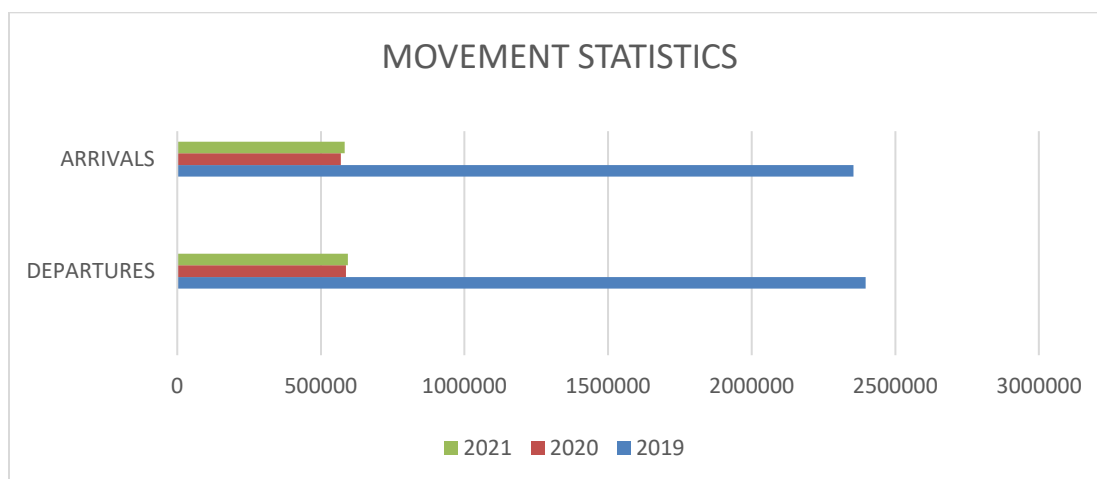
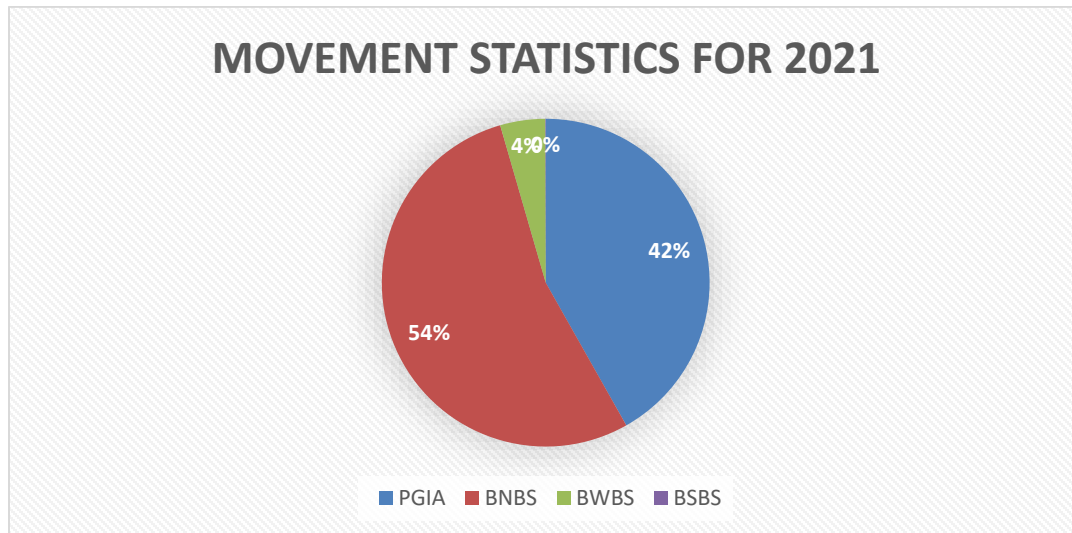


Figure 1 above shows arrivals and departures for the last three (3) years at the major ports being Philip Goldson International Airport, Belize Northern Border Station and the Belize Western Border Station.

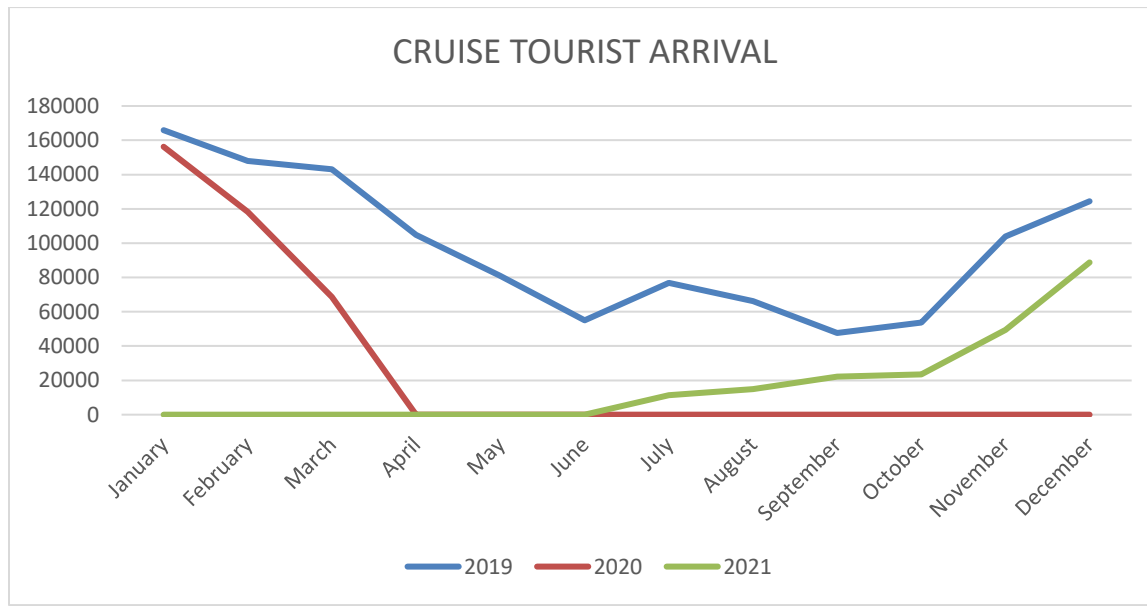
Chart below shows traffic at respective border control. Belize Northern Border Station being most trafficked, followed by Philip Goldson International Airport, the Belize Western Border Station and other stations.

Figure 2. Belize Border Movement 2001



SEAPORT

Figure 3. Cruise Arrivals 2019 - 2021



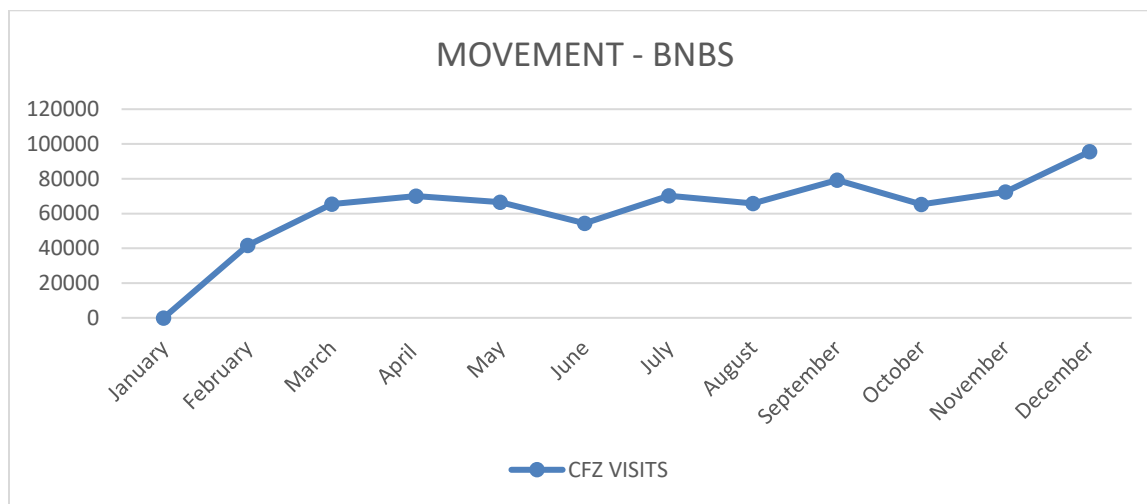
Looking at the Cruise Arrivals over the past three (3) years, the following shows arrivals as follows:

- 1) In 2019 records shows cruise arrivals at some 1,170,558 as was recorded for that year.

- 2) In 2020 numbers fell to 343,099 in the first 3 months and subsequent “no sail” order was announced after the Pandemic struck.
- 3) In 2021, there was a gradual return in the months between July – December. This saw some 210,206 cruise passengers at the ending of 2021.

COROZAL FREE ZONE

Figure 4. Movements within the Corozal Free Zone 2001



The graph above shows Movement Statistics within the Corozal Free Zone, Santa Elena, since its opening in 2021. On February 1, 2021, the Government of Belize decided to open the border to Mexicans as well as other nationals who wished to access the Corozal Free Zone as follows:

February	41, 668	March	65,362
April	70,129	May	66,550
June	54,481	July	70,290
August	65,730	September	79,287
October	65,247	November	72,375
December	95,583.		

Total movement into the CFZ included **746,702 persons.**

VISA REPORT

Table 3. Visas by Nationality 2021

NATIONAL	APPROVED	DENIED	DEFERRED	NO VISA	WITHDRAWN	TOTAL
Albanian	1					1
Angolan		28				28
Argentinean	11					11
Armenian	3					3
Bangladeshi	42	15	2			59
Bolivian	14					14
Brazilian	26					26
Cameroonian	1	28				29
Chilean	10		1			11
Chinese	24	7	7			38
Congolese		4				4
Colombian	41		1			42
Costa Rican	17	1				18
Cuban	153	10	12			175
Dominican	7	1			1	9
Egyptian	2	1				3
Ethiopian	15					15
Filipino	59	8				67
Guatemalan	16					16
Guinean		1				1
Haitian	48	53	4	9		114
Honduran	95	11	10			116
Indian	115	36	1			152
Indonesian	3					3
Israeli	1					1
Japanese	12					12
Jordanian		1	1			2
Kazakhstan	1					1
Kenya	2					2
Korean	1					1
Lebanese	23	18	2			43
Libyan	1					1
Morocco	2		1			3
Mexican	38					38
Malaysian		1				1
Nepalese	11	6				17

NATIONAL	APPROVED	DENIED	DEFERRED	NO VISA	WITHDRAWN	TOTAL
Nicaraguan	62	1	2			65
Nigerian	11	83	3			97
Pakistani	7	2				9
Palestine	4		2			6
Panamanian	38					38
Peruvian	8	2				10
Romanian	1					1
Russian	9	1	3			13
Rwandan		1				1
Salvadoran	86	5	4			95
Serbian	2					2
Sri Lankan	9	9				18
South Korean		1				1
Swiss	2					2
Syrian	7	1				8
Taiwanese	32					32
Thai	2					2
Turkish	6	1				7
Ukrainian	26	2	1			29
Uzbekistani	1					1
Venezuelan	17					17
Vietnamese		1				1
TOTALS	1,125	340	57	9	1	1,532

Table 2. above shows the nationals that applied for visas to either enter and/or remain in Belize and the decision made in respect to those applications that were reviewed.

The Visa Vetting Committee convened thirty-one (31) sessions and a total of **1,532 visa applications** have been reviewed for period February – December 2021 and of that amount the following must be noted:

- Visas approved – 1,125
- Visas Denied - 340
- Applications Deferred – 57
- Withdrawal – 1
- No Visa required - 9

CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)

Table 4. CSME Certificate Decisions 2021

BELIZEANS		OTHER NATIONALS			TOTAL
Approved	Denied	National	Approved	Denied	
11	1	Jamaica	7	-	
		Trinidad & Tobago	2	-	
		Guyana	2	-	
11	1	*	11	*	23

Table 3. above shows the number of CSME Certificate approved or denied for 2021 by nationality.

The Free Movement of Skills Committee convened several sessions and a total of **23 applications** have been reviewed for said period January – December 2021 and of that amount the following must be noted:

- Applications received: **23**.
- Of the total applications received 12 were Belizeans.
- 1 Belizean denied (Comparable qualification rejected)
- Other Community nationals received 11 of which all 11 were approved.

Other services:

- Indefinite Stamp issued 4: (3 Jamaican and 1 Vincent and the Grenadines)
- Upgrade of Stamp – 1 Jamaican

A total of 18 Belizean applications were deferred that did not meet the requirement Certified Vocational Qualification (CVQ) brought forward from 2020.

SPECIAL PERMITS ISSUED TO RECOGNIZED REGISTERED ASYLUM SEEKERS

Under the Recognized Registered Asylum Seekers program, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration approved that the Department of Border Management and Immigration regularize said individuals. In that regard we have issued a total of Three hundred and fifty-three (353) Special Permits. These individuals were issued said permits with authorization to work in the Banana, Citrus or Sugar industries at **no cost** to the individuals. The work authorization was aimed at alleviating the shortage of workers within the agro-industry but primarily to have these individuals gainfully employed.

Table 5. Registered Refugees Authorized to Work in Agroindustry

NATIONALITY	ADULT (Authorized	MINORS	TOTALS
Nicaragua	4	2	6
Honduran	13	9	22
Guatemalan	2	2	4
Pakistani	1	0	1
Salvadoran	235	85	320
TOTALS	255	98	353

Table 4. above shows the number of Registered Refugees that were regularized by nationality and authorize to work in the agroindustry.

Figure 5. Recommended Asylum Seekers Regularized by Nationality

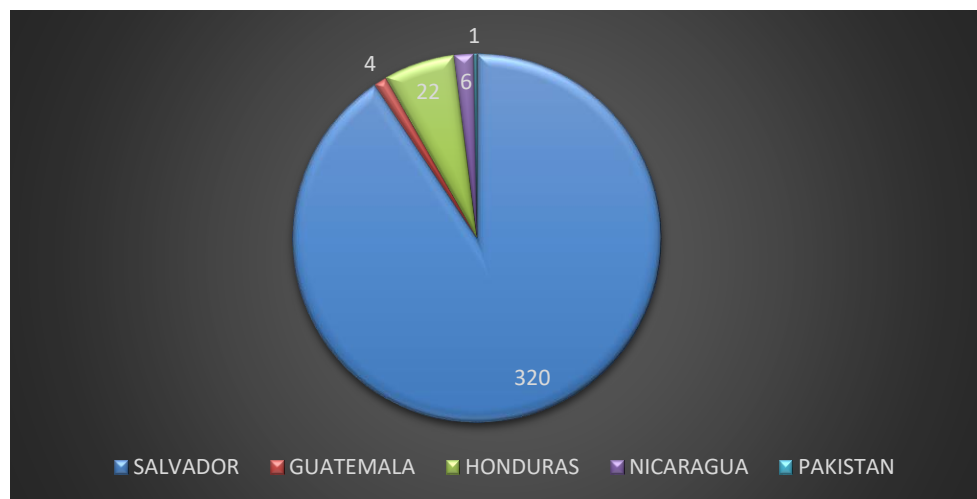


Figure 5 above shows the number of recommended registered asylum seekers who were regularized by nationality; with El Salvador accounting for 320 or 90.7% of those approved.

Nicaragua and those countries within the Northern Triangle of Central America which includes Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala has been experiencing a humanitarian crisis because of gang violence, gang recruitment, extortions, persecution, poverty and organized transnational criminal activities. These factors have in the past and continue to impact the North America, Belize, and the rest of Central America as this has resulted in a growing refugee crisis.

Many of these Central Americans are economic migrants, simply looking for a better way of life. This has resulted in a new phenomenon of “migrant caravans” in 2018 and early 2019. Included

in those caravans are the vulnerable population and among those are the criminal element masked as refugees, when in fact they are running away from their criminal past.

In Belize we continue to see members of the MS13 and 18th Street gangs who are mainly from El Salvador who enter Belize and either claim asylum, try to get into the system through the agroindustry, or simply remain illegal to avoid detection. We must as a country continue to monitor our borders and work along with the Police Department to monitor this situation with these gang members who remain in sleeper mode, at this time.

REPORT ON DATA FROM THE ENFORCEMENT UNIT

In keeping with our commitment to ensure that convicted migrants are repatriated upon serving their sentences or paying their fines, the Investigation Unit continue to liaise with the Belize Central Prison who provides daily updates. Likewise, the unit conduct weekly repatriations. The following are the overall figures in respect to other operations of the unit:

- Refuse Land to Leave- **236**
- Order to Leave - **371**
- Prosecutions- **171**
- Belizean Deportees – **52**
- Convictions – **220**
- Expulsions – 1 (signed for Alfonso Bulux Vicente - Sept 17, 2021)
- Vary of Sentence - 0

The Expulsion was signed by Minister Eamon Courtenay in respect to a Guatemalan fugitive that was living and working in Belize. He was wanted in connection to an incident that occurred on December 1982 in Dos Eres village, where 200 villagers were massacred at the hands of the Guatemalan Kaibiles.

MIGRANT INCARCERATIONS

In respect to information on incarcerations of migrants at the Kolby Foundation, the Department of Border Management had been complementing the Police with immigration charges in some instances where:

1. An illegal migrant, who may have entered Belize legally and remained irregular, has engaged in CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES and subsequently charged criminally or
2. During the Border Closure and State of Emergency, where they have entered nonetheless or

3. Where there were Police Checkpoint and irregular migrants detained over these irregular migrants.

Notably during the State of Emergency in 2020-2021, the Police was charging both Belizeans and foreigners for Illegal entry. Despite the Quarantine Regulations, an Order to Leave (OTL) Protocol was established to minimize the incidences of prosecutions primarily for Guatemalan and Mexican nationals who had “only an immigration violation.” The information below reflects on migrant inmate population of **Ninety-seven (97)** at the Belize Central Prison as of December 2021 as follows:

- 1) Immigration violation – 46 or 47.4%
- 2) Criminal violation – 6 or 6.2%
- 3) Both criminal and immigration violation – 45 or 46.4%
- 4) Six (6) females (1 Mexican – Manslaughter; 1 Guatemalan – Murder; 1 Honduran – Ammunition Charges)
- 5) Ninety-one (91) male (42 with varying criminal offences)

Table 6. Migrants’ Immigration and Criminal Violations

Nationality	Immigration violation only	Criminal violation only	Criminal and immigration violation	TOTAL
Cuban	1	0	1	2
Costa Rica	1	0	0	1
Ethiopian	1	0	0	1
Haiti	1	0	0	1
Iraq	1	0	0	1
USA	0	2	0	2
Mexico	1	4	0	5
Salvadorans	15	0	10	25
Guatemalans	11	0	21	32
Honduran	14	0	13	27
TOTALS	46	6	45	97

Table 5 above shows the numbers of migrants who have committed immigration violation, criminal violation or both criminal and immigration violations.

REVENUE COLLECTION

Revenue collected from the sales of the various permits for the year January – December 31, 2021, from respective station, amounted to a combined total of **\$9,857,884.36**.

Table 7.1 Country-wide Revenue Collection Calendar Year 2021

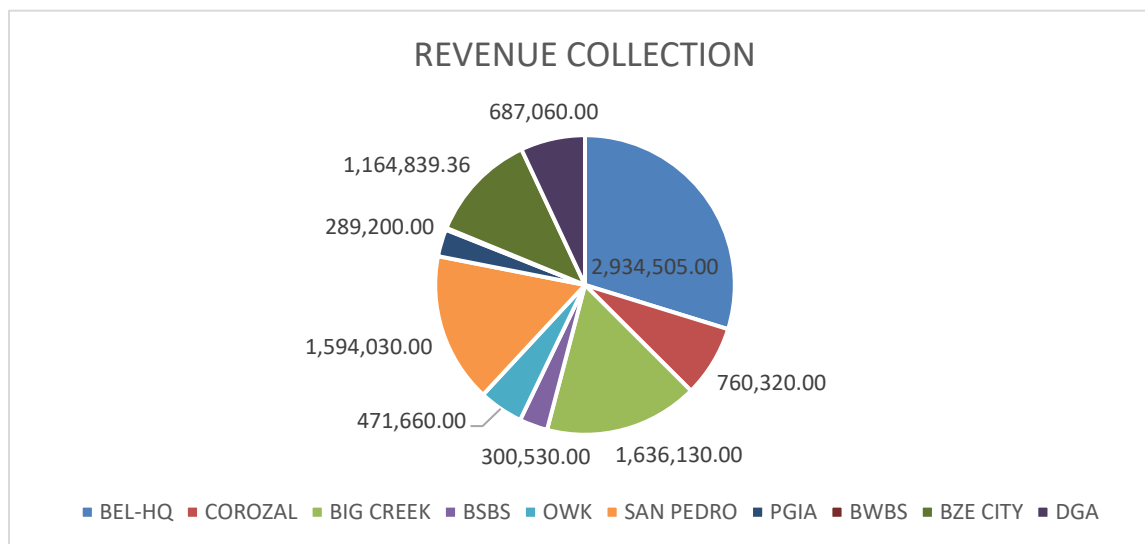
	Cost Center 30271	Cost Center 30271	Cost Center 30271	Cost Center 30271	Cost Center 30271	Cost Center 30271
	Item 11608	Item 11608	Item 11608	Item 11608	Item 11608	Item 11608
	Program 130	Prog. 130	Prog. 130	Prog. 130	Prog. 130	Prog. 130
	Activity 14	Activity 14	Activity 14	Activity 14	Activity 14	Activity 14
	VISA	Dep Permit	V/Permit Extensions	Temp B/Permit	Industry TEP	Regular TEP
Offices						
BELMOPAN	\$155,450.00	\$82,100.00	\$2,280,850.00	\$280.00	\$0.00	\$377,625.00
BNBS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$18,700.00	\$280.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
COROZAL	\$0.00	\$9,500.00	\$690,850.00	\$4,040.00	\$3,000.00	\$23,450.00
O. WALK	\$2,700.00	\$27,050.00	\$354,700.00	\$5,160.00	\$6,300.00	\$69,750.00
PGIA	\$7,400.00	\$0.00	\$257,600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
BZE CITY	\$20,200.00	\$39,950.00	\$594,750.00	\$1,400.00	\$0.00	\$402,950.00
San Pedro	\$3,400.00	\$15,600.00	\$1,443,400.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$128,550.00
BWBS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$18,250.00	\$120.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
DANGRIGA	\$2,400.00	\$10,200.00	\$544,200.00	\$160.00	\$86,200.00	\$40,900.00
BIG CREEK	\$3,900.00	\$17,800.00	\$1,260,900.00	\$40.00	\$238,400.00	\$102,850.00
BSBS	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$268,400.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$26,550.00
TOTAL	\$195,450.00	\$206,200.00	\$7,732,600.00	\$11,680.00	\$333,900.00	\$1,172,625.00
Grand total					\$1,506,525.00	

Table 7.2 Country-wide Revenue Collection Calendar Year 2021

	Cost Center 30258	Cost Center 30258	Cost Center 30261	Cost Center 30271	Cost Center 30271	
	Item 11606	Item 11606	Item 11607	Item11608	Item 11608	
	Program 130	Prog. 130	Prog. 130	Prog.130	Prog. 130	
	Activity 14	Activity 14	Activity 14	Activity14	Activity 14	
	PR?	Nationality	MISC. CHARGES	Visa Permit	S/Permit	Totals
Offices						
BELMOPAN	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,800.00	\$34,400.00	\$2,934,505.00
BNBS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,800.00	\$0.00	\$26,780.00
COROZAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$800.00	\$1,900.00	\$733,540.00
O. WALK	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,400.00	\$3,600.00	\$471,660.00
PGIA	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$22,800.00	\$1,400.00	\$0.00	\$289,200.00
BZE CITY	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$12,339.36	\$1,400.00	\$91,850.00	\$1,164,839.36
San Pedro	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,080.00	\$0.00	\$1,800.00	\$1,594,030.00
BWBS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	\$19,570.00
DANGRIGA	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,400.00	\$600.00	\$687,060.00

BIG CREEK	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$9,540.00	\$400.00	\$2,300.00	\$1,636,130.00
BSBS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,080.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$300,530.00
Total	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$46,839.36	\$21,600	\$136,950	\$9,857,844.36

Figure 6. Revenue Collection by Station 2021



Headquarters in Belmopan is the office with largest collections, followed by Big Creek Station and San Pedro Office. When compared to the year 2020 being **\$9,692,255.00** we have seen some **\$165,629.36 or 1.7%** increase in revenue collection from the sales/issuance of permits.

In the breakdown Table 2, it shows that revenue from Visitor's permit extensions remains the largest revenue earner to the tune of \$7,732,600.00, followed by temporary employment permits with \$1,506,525.00. When combined, visitor's permit extensions and temporary employment permits account for \$9,238, 765.00 or 93.7% of the total revenue collected.

Major Accomplishments

- A total of five additional booths equipped with computers and passport readers were negotiated and donated by the Belize Airport Concessionary Company (BACC). This was done to increase efficiency in the processing of passengers during the high season. Two went to the Departure Terminal 2 and three for the Arrival Hall.
- Meetings were held with the IOM to iron out the way forward as it relates to programs to be implemented, as well as the Migration Policy.
- The Human Rights Commission was informed of an allegation made that needs to be retracted. They continue to intervene on behalf of migrants who are in violation of the Immigration Act and upon release later make good their way up to the Belize/USA border.

- The Department of Border Management and Immigration received six new entrants to be deployed as follows: Belize Northern Border – 2; Orange Walk Town – 1; Belmopan – 3.
- With the advent of the tourist season, we employed an additional six officers on a temporary basis to meet the need for services with the return of tourism and increase in the number of flights to Belize. Orientation for the new entrants entailed lectures on the following topics: Migration Management; Immigration Procedures, Law, Permits etc.; Nationality, Residence, Passport processes; Practical port visits/work experience in Belize City and PGIA.
- Creation of a Long Stay Work Visitor Program – Amendment of our existing Immigration Legislation was passed to allow for persons to work from Belize remotely for a period of up to 180 days per calendar year. Target Populations includes Digital Nomads, Freelancers, Self-Employed Professionals and Winter Visitors from the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, and European Union countries, only. I was called before the House Committee for insight.
- A Migrant Worker Entry Protocols have been established in January 12, 2021 to allow for and to facilitate the entry of Migrant workers particularly within the Agroindustry: the banana, citrus and sugar industries as the department saw the need to support the agricultural industry which had replaced tourism, as the number one income earner for Belize.
- Protocols have been established to allow for the movement across the Northern Border for investors and patrons of the Corozal Free Zone declared open on February 1, 2021, and Casinos which reopen their doors on April 15, 2021.
- Tourist Protocols have been established to allow for the entry the Northern Border for tourists. Soft opening declared May 31, 2021.
- The Skilled Persons Regulation has been completed, reviewed and is now in the final stages.
- DBMIS partook in a bilateral meeting with the United States in December
- Immigration continues to work with the National Intelligence Committee (NIC), Joint Intelligence Operation (JIOC), Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee (ATIPS) and Operations, NAMLAC, the Attorney General Ministry on matters of the Mutual Legal Agreement, BTB, the Civil Aviation Committee among other agencies.
- On the international level, the DBMIS continues to engage with the RCM, OCAM and CBP on matters of Migration.

Figure 7. Minister and Minister of State Visited Staff at the PGIA



The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration Eamon Courtenay along with Deputy Minister Ramon Cervantes and Director visited staff at the Phillip Goldson International Airport on August 27, 2021, as shown in photograph above.

Likewise, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration Ramon Cervantes, the Chief Executive Officer and Director also visited staff at the Belize Western Border Station. These visits were to demonstrate our commitment and support to staff welfare as well as to hear and address their concerns, during this Covid19 Pandemic.

At the end of June 2021, the Phillip Goldson International Airport experienced an outbreak of a variant of the SARS COV2 virus which caused the entire staff to have been removed and replaced. Our contingency plan was put in place which saw staff replacement from throughout the country that had experience working at the airport. To date 99.9% of our staff are fully vaccinated. We have not seen or requested information on those that have been boosted.

Eighty (80%) of Staff at the entry level have completed and continue to receive Clerical and Clerical Promotional Training.

Figure 8.1 Department of Border Management's Participation in the Belize Investment Summit 2021



Figure 8.2 Department of Border Management's Participation in the Belize Investment Summit 2021



The photos above showcased the Department's information booth at the Investment Summit 2021; the Director (Figure 8) and the Port Commander and Staff of San Pedro Office (Figure 9).

The Department of Border Management and Immigration Services participated in the first ever Investment Summit held in San Pedro on November 11, 2021. This high-profile occasion was led by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance, Investment and Economic Development under the theme: "Belize is Open for Business", a call to both local and international investors for identifying opportunities and for the government to showcase Belize's readiness to support global investment through vastly improved service delivery. The Port Commander and Staff of the Immigration Office San Pedro was there to inform investors of the various services offered by the Department.

Figure 9.1 Director Visited the Belize Western Border and Staff at a Joint Vehicular Checkpoint



Figure 9.2 Director Visited the Belize Western Border and Staff at a Joint Vehicular Checkpoint



In Figures 9.1 and 9.2 above the Director visited the Belize Western Border and staff at joint vehicular checkpoint during border closure.

Figure 10.1 New Signage for PGIA

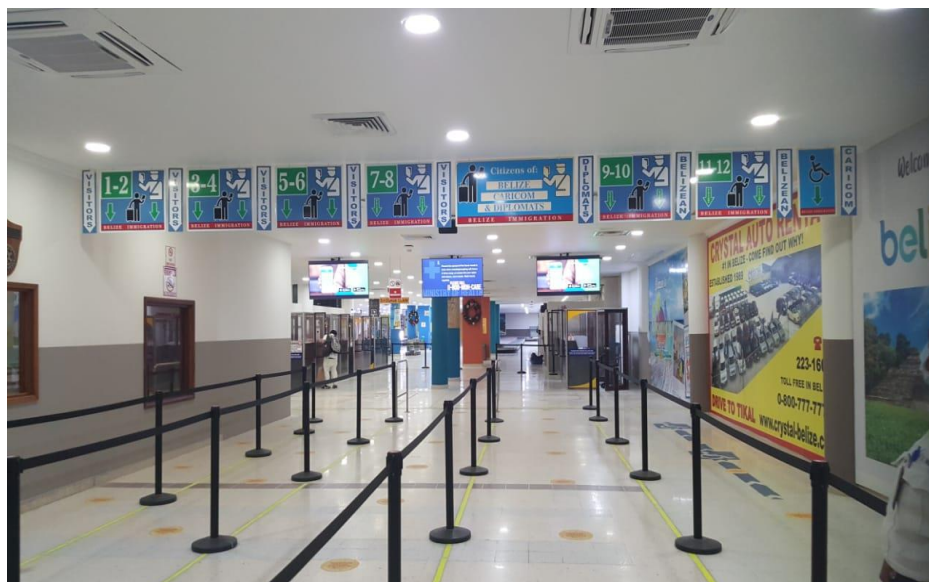


Figure 10.2 New Signage for PGIA



Figure 10.2 New Signage for PGIA



Department 2: Nationality and Passport Department

The Permanent Residence and Nationality Unit heads held two community awareness sessions in the Cayo District, namely, Arenal, and San Ignacio Town.

An Immigration official participated in an IOM Mobile Clinic.

Amnesty 2022

Amnesty 2022 will be carried out for migrants who are residing in Belize illegally, or recommended asylum seekers. Those who qualify for the amnesty would be offered Permanent Residence status with a path to citizenship. The registration period is scheduled from April to July 2022, and the processing is scheduled from August 2022 to January 2023.

Belize has had two amnesties. The first was in late April 1984, where eight thousand six hundred and eighty (8,680) undocumented migrants were registered. Fifteen years later in 1999, another integration exercise resulted in granting approximately eleven thousand one hundred and sixty-eight (11,168) newly registered migrants, permanent residence. Yet another exercise was planned for 2010 when an estimate of over 20,000 undocumented migrants were expected to be registered. Unfortunately, the amnesty never occurred.

Whilst some of the migrants have since 2010 regularized their status, it is believed that many more have entered the country and have an irregular immigration status. Using the figures from the two amnesties and the estimate in 2010, the Ministry of Immigration estimates that the number of irregular migrants in Belize in 2021 would be approximately 40,000-60,000 migrants.

Irregular migration breeds illegality and abuse. Many migrants find themselves victims of human trafficking – modern day slavery. Irregular migrants, because of their vulnerability, are often employed at very low wages, and work in dreadful conditions, additionally, many are paid ‘off the books’ and therefore generate little tax revenue. Some of the migrants are gang members or former gang members and engage in serious criminal activities in Belize. Many have children in Belize and enter relationships which leads to complications. There are families where both or one parent is irregular, but their children are regular. Registering the children in school exposes the parents, and there is a tendency not to enrol them. Of course, any irregular migrants’ access social and other services and therefore add to the cost-of-service delivery.

It is emphasized that migrants contribute positively to Belize and the economy. They work in many sectors of the economy, and many operate small and micro businesses contributing to economic activity and employment.

The Ministry of Immigration believes that this moment is propitious to implement an amnesty program that will offer permanent residence status to undocumented migrants residing in Belize leading to citizenship over an extended period and under conditions that require that the continue in regular status.

The Permanent Residence and Nationality Unit heads held two community awareness sessions in the Cayo District, namely, Arenal, and San Ignacio Town.

NPD performed two information clinics in the Cayo District at the request from area representatives of densely populated migrant communities namely Cayo Northeast and Cayo North. The initiative aimed to provide information on how persons can become qualified to obtain Permanent Residency as outlined in the Nationality Act Chapter 161 of the laws of Belize. Advice was also offered on how persons can qualify for Belizean citizenship.

Ms. Anselma Gullap, Officer in Charge Nationality Section and Ms. Yesenia Paredes, Officer in Charge Residence Unit, conducted these consultations. The first consultation held on 21 August 2021, in Arenal Village approximately seventy villagers originally from the Central American country Guatemala attended and expressed that they have been living in Belize for over two decades. Majority of attendees inquired about transitioning to a permanent status such as; Permanent Residence and Nationality through registration. There were also cases in which Belizean nationals wished to naturalize their foreign-born children through descent.

Similar circumstances were revealed with the second consultation which occurred on 27 August 2021, in San Ignacio Town. At this consultation, the team attended to approximately one hundred and eighty persons from the Central American countries of; El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

An Immigration official participated in an IOM Mobile Clinic.

We partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and visited the remote villages of Jalacte and San Antonio in the Toledo District on the 24th and 26th April 2021 approximately three hundred persons were addressed. Kimberly Timmons, Nationality Assistant, along with IOM's partner organization Humana Belize of Bella Vista Village under its Integrated Response on Migration (IRM) Project, spearheaded by Ms. Jacqueline Castillo, visited these two villages to assist migrants with information and the necessary tools that foster their integration into Belizean Society. NPD offered advice on how or who can qualify for Permanent Residency and/or Nationality in Belize. Additionally, advice was given on how those holding Permanent

Residency or Nationality documents can update and/or replace those documents which have become outdated.

COUNTER INFORMATION

The Counter Supervisor is the hub of all incoming applications from the central and district offices. This desk is pivotal in regulating the flow of traffic to the service clerks, as well as prompting applications to the Records Management Unit for safekeeping and eventual processing by respective units. The institution of the desk has allowed for key observations in the process flow of applications. Key observations are discussed below:

1. In 2021 the section received a total of 2,517 applications. This represents a one hundred twelve percent increase when compared to the total number of applications received (1,184) in 2020. The twenty-twenty one application figures surpassed the total number of applications received pre-COVID with an approximate seventeen percent increase when compared to applications received in 2019. Almost every category of application experienced an increase in submissions made. The largest increase was observed in the submission of decent applications with an increase of 307 applications from previous year or by one hundred and three percent. Submissions for both descent certificate replacements and renunciations declined by seventy two percent and nine percent respectively when compared to 2020.
2. The Department saw a significant increase in the number of Nationality applications through Registration Section 10/11 and Residence applications for 2021. In reference to Nationality applications, a total of 402 applications were received, which is an eleven percent increase from the 361 applications received in 2020. Relating to Residence applications, a total of 1017 applications were received in 2021, which is a twenty nine percent increase from the 786 applications received in 2020. The increase may be attributed to the travel restrictions brought on by COVID-19 that enabled many persons to satisfy relevant resident requirements.
3. The gradual relaxation of movement restrictions is expected to continue in 2022 which will cause the department to experience increasing demand for its services.

Table 8 below shows the total number of applications received by the Nationality and Passports Department for the period January – December 2021

Table 8. Applications Received by the Nationality and Passport Department

APP TYPE	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
Nationality Sec 10/11	30	29	35	25	34	31	34	47	33	24	42	38	402
Sec 10/11 Replacement	26	25	24	35	31	29	45	38	21	23	47	26	370
Descent	31	41	30	52	39	61	89	78	36	47	36	65	605
Descent Replacement	8	3	7	7	5	12	4	8	3	12	9	4	82
Renunciation	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	10
Residence	93	87	119	84	107	89	78	99	60	58	74	69	1017
TOTAL	188	187	215	205	216	222	250	271	153	166	211	202	2486

Figure 11. Fluctuation of Applications Received by the Nationality and Passport Department

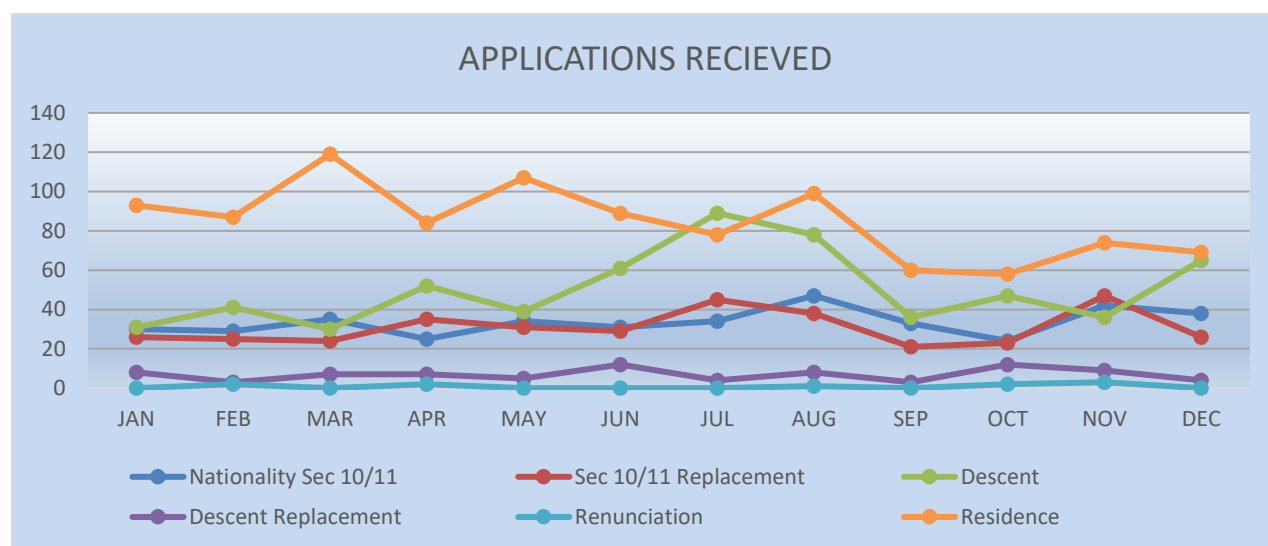


Figure 11. above shows the fluctuation of applications received by the Department of Nationality and Passports for the period January – December 2021.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT UNIT

The Records Management Unit remains a vital component to the overall functions of the Department as it relates to the creation, movement, and preservation of files for use by all

internal units. The unit holds similar importance to external customers, namely Elections and Boundaries, Social Security, Vital Statistics, etc. for verification purposes and for the completion of their various application processes.

Table 9. Applications Processed by RMU

	BELMOPAN			COROZAL			ORANGE WALK			BELIZE CITY			SAN PEDRO			DANGRIGA			PUNTA GORDA		
	SEC 10/11	DESC	RES	SEC 10/11	DESC	RES	SEC 10/11	DESC	RES	SEC 10/11	DESC	RES	SEC 10/11	DESC	RES	SEC 10/11	DESC	RES	SEC 10/11	DESC	RES
JAN	28	13	57	1	0	8	4	6	1	9	3	1	8	4	4	3	0	0	0	4	0
FEB	29	32	68	1	1	2	7	2	4	4	9	5	1	0	12	3	3	3	1	4	1
MAR	48	24	71	0	3	1	0	0	3	7	12	10	0	0	0	2	2	12	1	0	1
APR	30	29	91	0	3	2	3	0	0	10	23	7	2	0	13	5	6	4	0	0	2
MAY	34	26	72	1	1	2	2	0	0	9	15	18	4	1	8	1	1	4	3	2	4
JUN	26	5	41	0	5	1	5	1	3	4	12	9	3	2	5	2	3	3	1	1	0
JUL	51	50	52	0	0	0	13	5	1	11	31	9	0	0	0	2	2	9	0	2	1
AUG	70	63	104	0	3	2	8	6	6	14	33	16	9	3	6	5	5	4	0	0	0
SEP	11	11	42	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	16	4	1	1	3	0	3	1	0	0	3
OCT	25	35	36	3	2	0	9	5	2	7	13	5	4	0	0	2	0	5	0	3	2
NOV	39	25	43	0	2	0	0	3	2	13	15	13	10	2	10	1	0	0	0	0	2
DEC	43	24	73	1	2	4	2	2	1	1	17	3	6	2	11	2	6	7	0	0	0
TOTAL	434	337	750	7	24	23	53	30	23	92	199	100	48	15	72	28	31	52	6	16	16
YR TOTAL	1521			54			106			391			135			111			38		

Table 9. above shows the total number of applications processed by the RMU by location for the period January – December 2020.

RMU processed 2,356 applications in 2021, an eighteen percent increase from the total number of applications processed through the unit in 2020 (1,996). The central office continues to be the largest repository of applications by contributing sixty five percent of applications, followed by the Belize City Office with seventeen percent and the San Pedro Office with six percent of applications received.

Figure 12 below shows the total number of applications processed by the RMU by location for the period January – December 2021. This chart is inclusive of Nationality by Registration Section 10/11, Nationality by Descent and Nationality Document Replacements.

Staff of the RMU is responsible to keep track of all files and only those assigned to that unit, are permitted to remove files from storage at any time. Files are actioned into movement in at least three circumstances:

- A document has been received by the department by an applicant(s) and must be attached to its pertinent file; the file is then passed to an authorized officer for action.
- A file has a 'bring-up' date and is necessary for that file to be passed to an authorized officer on the appropriate date

- An authorized officer requests the file in person or through any other appropriate means.

Figure 12. Total number of applications processed by the RMU by location for the period January – December 2021.

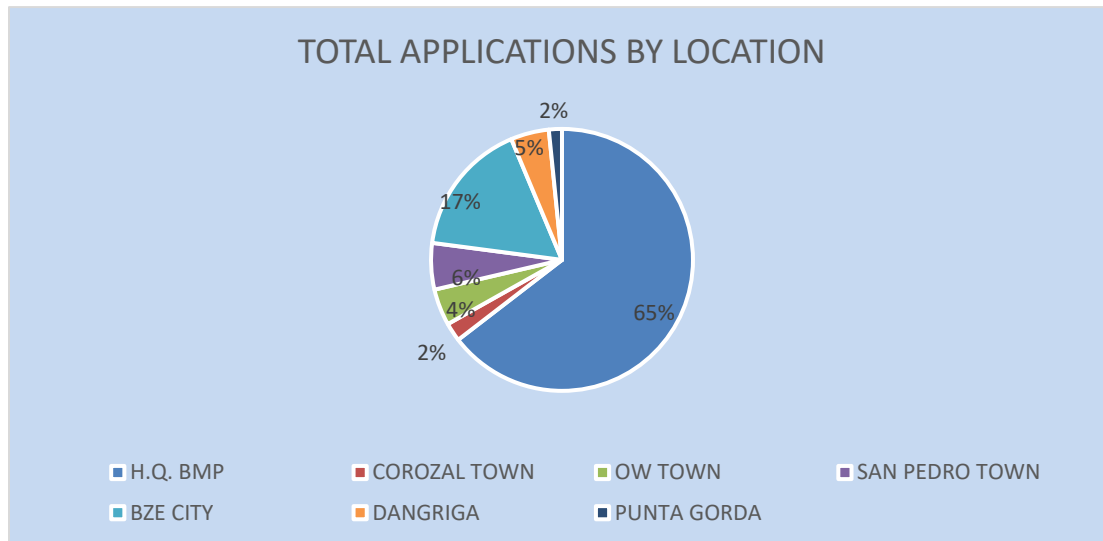


Table 10. Files Transited for the period January – December 2021.

APP TYPE	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
Nationality Sec 10/11 & Desc.	263	269	232	212	302	294	231	338	177	180	229	135	2,862
Residence	206	273	174	216	270	239	300	225	174	192	206	145	2,620
TOTAL	469	542	406	428	572	533	531	563	351	372	435	280	5482

Per Table 10, the movement of files remained consistent; however, transit of files decreased in the last quarter of the year. The downward trend of file transit is reflective of the lesser volume of applications received during this period.

The RMU is the first point of reference once verifying the accuracy and authenticity of any Residence or Nationality issued within Belize. The process of verification serves both internal and external clients of the department. This report focuses on the Verification of Nationality Documents. The RMU experienced a fifty five percent (2897) increase in volume of nationality document verifications in 2021 when compared to 2020 (1864). The passport unit continues to lead with request for verifications.

Table 11. Nationality Documents Verified Internally and Externally

MONTH	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL			TOTALS
	Passport Unit	SSB	Elec & Bound	V. Stats	
JANUARY	154	56	5	0	215
FEBRUARY	143	31	0	0	174
MARCH	218	31	0	0	249
APRIL	135	0	0	0	135
MAY	222	53	1	0	276
JUNE	190	46	12	1	249
JULY	199	30	3	0	232
AUGUST	404	65	0	0	469
SEPTEMBER	167	37	0	0	204
OCTOBER	210	0	0	0	210
NOVEMBER	254	29	0	0	283
DECEMBER	200	0	1	0	201
TOTALS	2496	378	22	1	2897
	2496	401			2897

Table 11. shows the total number of Nationality Documents verified by the RMU for both internal and external clients during the period January – December 2021.

NPD has increasingly embraced the integration of information technology in and around its daily functions. The department hosts a large portion of its historical migrant data in manual ledgers dating as far back as the 1980's. The RMU entered phase II of its Record Digitization Project on March 1st, 2021, wherein nine choir ledgers were digitized. From those ledgers, 33,543 individual records were verified and now form a part of the department's digital data.

Figure 13. Files Reviewed and Verified under Record Digitization Project

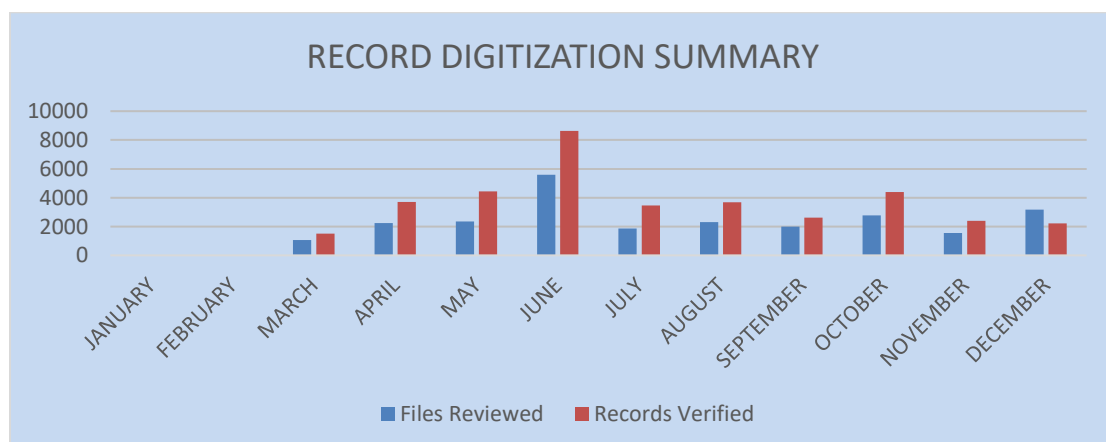


Figure 13. above table shows the total number of files that have been reviewed and verified under the Record Digitization Project during the period March – December 2021. Phase II of the project will commence in March 2022 upon contract renewal and include both Nationality and Residence.

The unit's focus on digitization has reduced lengthy search times experienced during the processes associated with the acceptance, issuance and replacement of Residence and Nationality documents. Records are now quickly accessible and allow for timely response to queries that often arise.

Passport Unit

Table 12. Passport Production for the period January – December 2021.

PASSPORT TYPE	PASSPORT NUMBER	SPECIMEN GENERATE D	SPOILED	# PASSPORTS PRINTED	# PASSPORTS FOR DELIVERY	SPOILAGE RATE
DIPLOMATIC	B0001701-B0001796	0	0	95	95	0%
OFFICIAL	C0002501-C0002528	0	1	28	27	4%
ORDINARY	P0391001 -P0414500	0	462	23,500	23,038	2%
TEMPORARY	T0001871-T0002225, T0002251-T0002262	0	6	367	361	2%
TOTAL		0	469	23,990	<u>23,521</u>	2%

For the year 2020, the department produced a combined total of 14,033 passports. Compared to the combined total of 23,990 passports produced in 2021, the Passport Unit experienced a seventy one percent increase. With the gradual relaxation of Covid 19 restrictions, the department experienced a dramatic increase in passport submissions domestically and in the diaspora. Foreign missions progressively re-opened to the Belizean public throughout 2021 after being completely closed for majority of 2020.

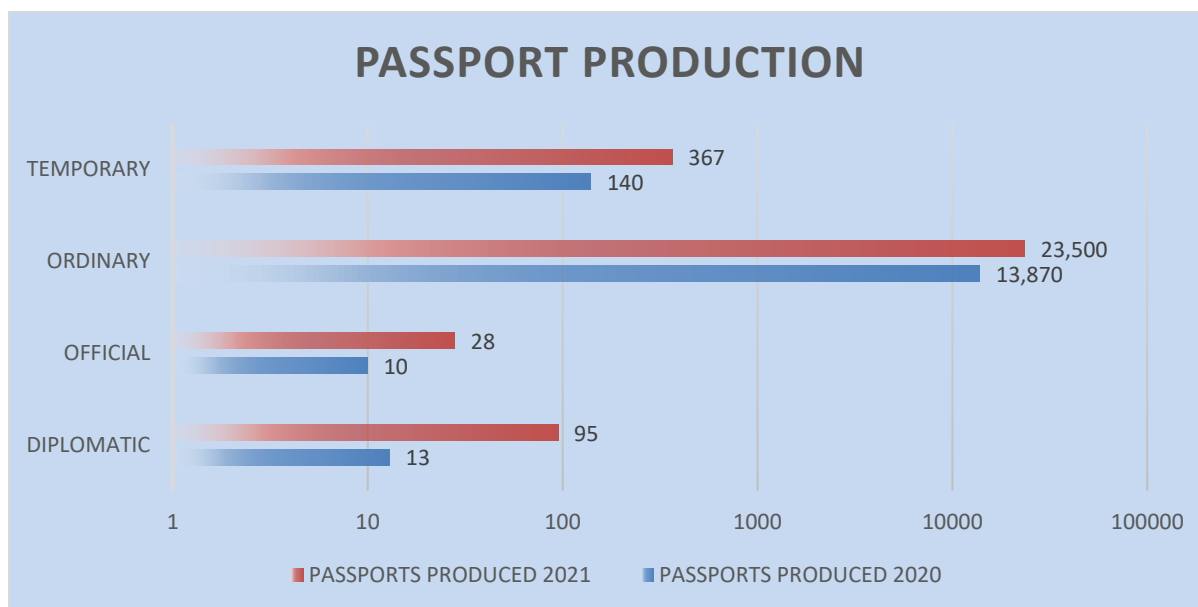
Production increased in every passport category. Ordinary passports production measured a significant increase of sixty nine percent or 9,630 more passports when compared to 2020. The two Passport Mobile hubs held throughout the year had a direct impact on the increasing number

of passports produced with 996 produced for Belizeans who attended The Bolivia Mobile Passport Hub and 142 passports produced for those Belizean nationals in Peru.

Notable is the increases in the production of Official and Diplomatic Passports which can be directly attributed to the change in government and appointment of officials. The production of Official passports increased more than six hundred percent from 13 in 2020 to 95 in 2021 and Diplomatic passports increased by one hundred eighty percent from 10 in 2020 to 28 in 2021. Lastly, the requests and production for Temporary passports rose in 2021 as COVID restrictions limited travel both to/from Belize and the diaspora. The Passport Unit produced 367 Temporary passports in 2021, 227 more than what was produced in 2020 which is a one hundred forty percent increase.

Considering that some passports were spoilt due to mechanical or human error, 23,521 passports were valid for delivery to applicants, making the department's overall margin of error for the year 2021, two percent.

Figure 14. Comparison of Passport Production 2020 and 2021



Nationality Unit

The Nationality Unit experienced a general increase as it relates to the overall output of applications for Belize Citizenship. The unit processed 1529 applications relating to the first issuance and replacement of Nationality through Registration Section 10/11, Nationality through decent and Child Additions. This represents a sixty five percent increase from the 932 applications processed in the year prior. The spike in applications is largely seen in the number of Nationality

through Registration and Descent replacement submissions that increased seventy five percent and fifty five percent respectively.

The following can be noted in respect to those mentioned above:

1. Eight swearing-In ceremonies were held for a total of 414 persons now registered as Belizean citizens, just over a seven percent decline when compared to the 449 new Belizean citizens through registration for 2020. This figure reported is not limited to applications submitted during the period of January – December 2021 but also include applications submitted in previous years that have now become eligible for vetting, recommendation, and subsequent approval in 2021. The figure mentioned is also exclusive of the 15 approved child additions and 556 approved applications of nationality through descent, making a combined total of 1,020 newly registered Belizean citizens for the year 2021, an eleven percent increase from 2020.
2. Ten separate publications of Gazetted BNA Application through Section 10 and 11 totalling 470 persons made eligible for Nationality Scrutinizing Committee review.
3. Files Vetted under Section 10 and 11 by the Nationality Scrutinizing Committee amounted to a total of 527 files (Section 10 =236, Section 11=291), a twenty percent increase from 2020's figure of 438. Of those forwarded to the Nationality Scrutinizing Committee, 433 were recommended and passed on for ministerial approval, 49 were not recommended and 17 were deferred. The Nationality Unit also saw the re-submission of 13 applications that were applications initially unsuccessful and re-submission of 15 applications that were initially deferred.
4. The Nationality Unit received 22 applications for renunciation of Belizean Citizenship for the year 2021. Six of those applicants were born Belizeans and the remaining eleven were nationals who received citizenship through the registration process.

Table 13 below shows the total amount of Nationality applications (Section 10 &11; Child additions; Descent First Issue; and Nationality Certificate Replacements) processed/approved over the period January – December 2021.

The total amount of Belize Border Crossing Cards printed from applications received from Immigration Northern Border, 1,666 and Belmopan Headquarters 16. Grand total of 1,682 cards printed for the year 2021. Likewise, 474 QRP cards printed.

Table 13. Nationality Approvals 2021

MONTH	2021			
	SECTION 10/11	CHILD ADDITION	DESCENTS	TOTALS
January	23	1	19	43
February	64	0	53	117
March	29	2	70	101
April	55	2	48	105
May	108	0	31	139
June	67	0	65	132
July	98	1	27	126
August	95	1	122	218
September	85	1	71	157
October	40	0	73	113
November	98	4	72	174
December	54	3	47	104
TOTALS	816	15	698	1,529

The total certificates printed 1,552, these certificates are a combination of Descent and Registration applications (first issue and Replacement). Thirty-two certificates were spoilt. These spoilt certificates do not necessarily reflect from 1,552 printed certificates, reason why some of these spoilt were issued previous years before and return to the office due to error on the certificate for example wrong date of birth etc.

Residence Unit

The Residence Unit experienced a slight increase in the processing of residence applications this year. The unit processed eight percent more, or 103 more residence permits in comparison to the 1262 issued during 2020. The unit, with the assistance of the Information Technology Office was able to completely transition to the electronic data capture of applicant biometrics to produce a more secure residence card. The number of manual processes involved in the residence processed lessened as electronic binding of residence application ease the need for physical transit of files and lessen search periods and customer wait time.

For the third consecutive year however, the submissions of Temporary residence applications trended upward as there is growing interest reflected in the number of applications received increasing in 2021 from 8 to 27.

Table 14. Permanent (PR) and Temporary (TR) Residence Information for 2021

CATEGORY	# RECEIVED	# REVIEWED	APPROVED	ISSUED (individually)
PR applications	1017	1082	1082	1059
PR Transfers	344	-	277	277
TR applications	27	25	25	25
TR Renewals	4	-	4	4
TOTAL	1392	1107	1388	1365

Table 14 above shows the total amount of residence applications (including residence transfers) that were received and processed by the department over the period January – December 2021.

Major Accomplishments

- The production of passports remained ahead of schedule for both foreign missions and domestic applications, enabling timely service delivery.
- A contract was signed with the Canadian Bank Note for procurement of an Electronic Passport System and a Belize Electronic Passport. The Electronic Passport Book Design is near completion and consultation has begun on the system.
- The Department successfully executed two Mobile Passport Clinics, one in Bolivia and the other in Peru. A Team comprised of Administration, IT and NPD Personnel departed to Bolivia on July 31st, 2021, and for Peru on November 26th, 2021, to process applications for renewal of passports for Belizean nationals living in those respective countries. This initiative /assisted Belizean Mennonite communities in that South American region to renew their passports.
- The Nationality and Passports Department through the Immigration Information System (IIS), an internally developed electronic application platform, commenced in June 2021 the acceptance and production of Permanent Residence applications electronically.
- The Immigration Information System (IIS) was deployed to district offices in October 2021, providing for the nationwide acceptance of Permanent Residence and Digital Border Crossing Cards applications

- In-house training was held in June 2021 for NPD personnel and BMIS officers to familiarize with the acceptance of Permanent Residence among other services provided.
- The Department through its Permanent Residence and Nationality Unit heads held community awareness sessions in the Cayo District.
- Cabinet approved submission from the Department for the execution of Amnesty 2022.

REVENUE

The Nationality and Passports Department experienced an increase in revenue in 2021 considering low revenue and challenges brought forward from the previous year. With its revenue deriving from three of its four units, namely Passport Unit, Nationality Unit, and Permanent Residence Unit, the department generated BZD \$4,628,930. This figure is a stark sixty seven percent increase when compared to the BZD\$2,765,872 generated in 2020. The Residence Unit produced sixty three percent of the department's revenue, the majority earner of the year. The Residence Unit's revenue was a thirty eight percent increase over the BZD\$ \$2,111,050 reported in 2020. The Passport unit had the largest rate of increase in revenue with its revenue of BZD\$ 1,506,440 which more than two hundred percent more than the BZD\$472,771 generated in 2020. The Nationality Unit was the lowest contributor, being responsible for four percent of overall revenue. Revenue generated by the unit, however, is still a twelve percent increased figure from what was generated in 2020.

Table 15. Revenue by Unit during 2021

SERVICE	TOTAL REVENUE, BZ\$	%
Nationality 1st Issuance/Repl.	204,140	4
Passport Production	1,506,440	33
Permanent/Temporary Residence	2,918,350	63
TOTAL REVENUE	4,628,930	100

Table 15. above shows the total Revenue collected by the department from its services over the period January – December 2021.

Department 3 - Refugee Department

INTRODUCTION

This information serves to offer key information on the refugee and asylum system implemented as part of the migration management process in Belize.

This report sets out information and statistical details regarding registration, status determination and confirmation of persons in Belize applying for refugee status. It also provides departmental goals for 2022. In addition, this report contextualizes the efforts undertaken with other government agencies, stakeholders, and partners, national, regional, and international, in our shared responsibility of managing forced migration.

Throughout this report, statistics and information include those for current and prior years. Data in this report derived from RDRS data sources, may differ from those reported in earlier publications; these differences reflect typical adjustments to administrative data files over time and case management efforts. The data in this report are taken from a single point in time; however, it is expected that they will change slightly over time as files move along in the process and additional information becomes available.

Belize Pledges/Commitments because of the First Global Refugee Forum (Geneva, December 16 – 18, 2019), include:

- To invite suitable bilateral offers for technical assistance in asylum system support including livelihoods, education & psycho-social support
- To deepen the multi-stakeholder MIRPS quantification exercise, considering relevant results as inputs to the updating process of the National Development Plan
- To display protection information advising on the right to seek asylum in Belize at border entry points
- To create a better understanding of the current migration phenomenon, generating a more positive and welcoming attitude towards forcibly displaced persons
- To convene a new cycle of National Consultations on Protection and Solutions in 2020 with participation from the whole of society

COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK (MIRPS – Spanish Acronym) - 2021

MIRPS Pro-temporé Presidency 2021 - Guatemala

Guatemala represented the countries of the MIRPS by holding the 2021 Pro-temporé Presidency (PPT). Guatemala recognized that it assumed the Presidency at a crucial time for the region and the rest of the world as most were still dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasingly severe impact of climate change and natural disasters. These situations exacerbated the vulnerability of the populations in the region, creating higher levels of instability in communities affected by violence and contributing to increased levels of displacement in MIRPS countries.

The IV MIRPS Annual Report documents the significant progress MIRPS States made in 2021 through the implementation of national action plans and related commitments in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama.

The 2021 Guatemalan PPT of the MIRPS was characterized for its work in the global positioning and consolidation for coordinated responses to common challenges. They opened spaces for the exchange of useful experiences and lessons learned between the MIRPS countries and fostered the generation of integral solutions based on the principle of responsibility and burden-sharing.

The Government of Honduras holds the 2022 Pro-Tempore Presidency of MIRPS.

REGIONAL CONTEXT (Source – IV MIRPS Annual Report)

By the end of the year, more than one million people had been displaced in and from countries in Central America and Mexico. Social conflict, gender-based violence, climate change and the impact of COVID-19 were emerging factors that aggravated underlying vulnerabilities and accelerated mobility. Natural disasters, floods and droughts disproportionately affected people living in poverty and insecure environments.

Figure 15. Regional Data on Internally Displaced People, Asylum-seekers, and Refugees

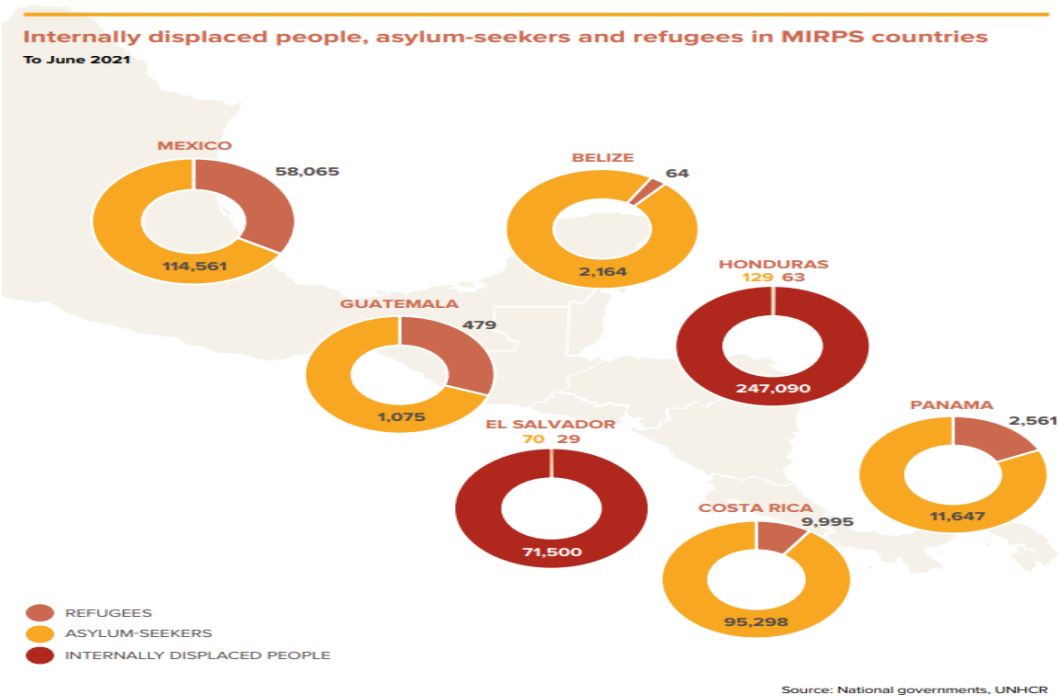
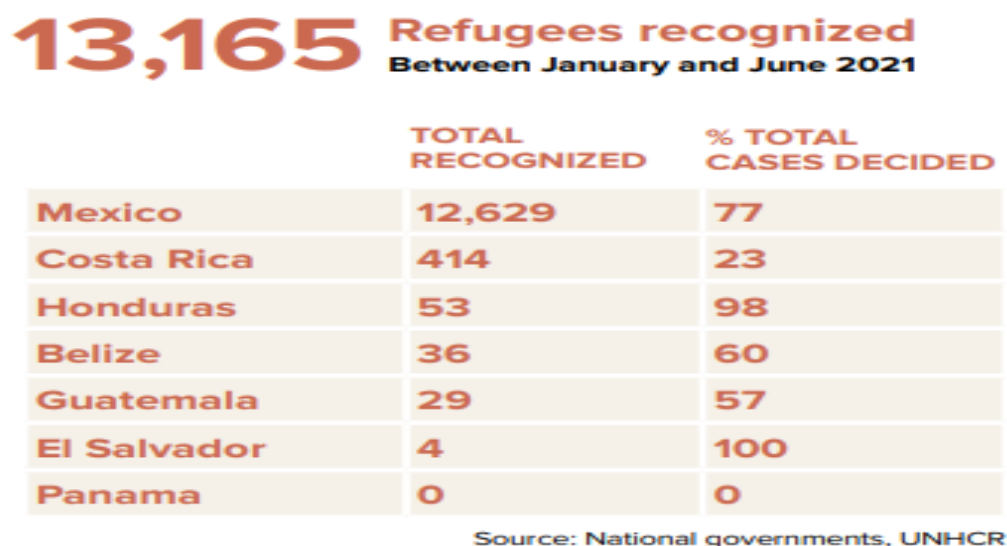


Figure 16. Regionally Recognized Refugees



An increase in the cross-border movement of people was observed because of the gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions. This presented a challenge for receiving and transit countries which had strengthened their capacities to respond to this trend.

At the beginning of 2021, there were 1.06 million people on the move in and from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala and 121,000 people had fled Nicaragua. Additionally, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama had received 262,107 Venezuelan refugees by the end of 2020. While Mexico remained an important transit country for people moving north, it increasingly became a destination country, processing 51,200 new asylum applications during the first half of the year, particularly from Haitian nationals. Registration helped to mitigate protection and exploitation risks and supported access to basic services and the labour market for these populations. Overall, the number of asylum seekers and refugees in Central America rose by 70% since the year before the adoption of MIRPS, increasing from 41,851 to 296,863 in 2021.

Figure 17. Regional Quantity of Refugees and Asylum-seekers

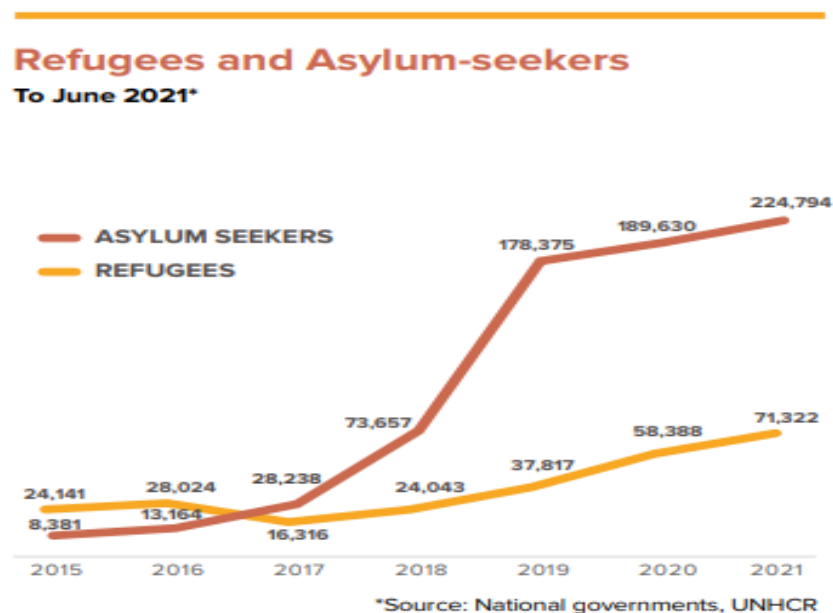
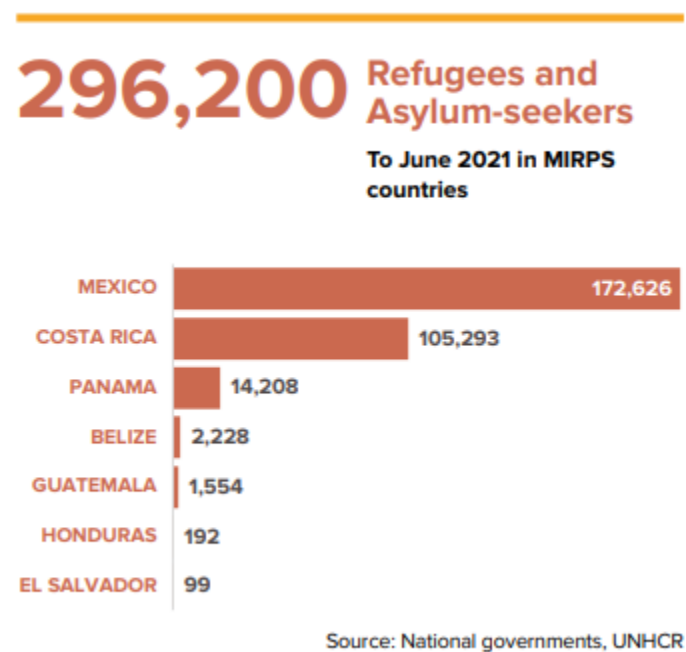


Figure 18. Regional Data on Refugees and Asylum-seekers



The region has shown the increase and complexity of mixed and successive movements of people that has further deepened the needs and challenges of human mobility. Among those moving north from Central America, a large proportion reported that they left their homes after suffering

violence and persecution, forced recruitment, sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, cases of domestic abuse exacerbated by lockdowns imposed during the pandemic, and violence against LGBTIQ+ people.

While these drivers have continued, forcing increasing numbers of people to flee, MIRPS States have prioritized actions to improve access to protection. Efforts to strengthen governments' response has also resulted in close collaboration with civil society to strengthen mechanisms for the identification and referral of persons in need of protection. Noteworthy also has been the important role of national human rights institutions and those that tackle gender-based violence.

It was also identified that it is necessary to provide education and health services, protection alternatives and solutions that involve the expansion of sustainable local integration programmes that aim to support the socio-economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Additionally, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras faced a high number of deportees being returned to their home countries. This demonstrates the prevailing circular nature of human mobility in the region and the limited capacity of these MIRPS States to provide comprehensive and sustainable reintegration.

In concluding the MIRPS IV Annual Report the PPT noted:

“While proactive steps were taken at the end of 2020 to consider expanding labour and social protection programmes, initial coordination actions, pre-planning and financial costing did not generate substantive dialogue with international partners. As a result, there is a significant need for scaled international development cooperation and funding to support investments in at-risk communities that mitigate the drivers of displacement and facilitate the inclusion and re-integration of displaced persons, providing a more comprehensive response to the migration cycle. MIRPS States have continued to explore opportunities to align the MIRPS with each country's humanitarian response plans and broader regional development and integration initiatives, including the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Comprehensive Development Plan. This will ensure that the situation of forced displacement in these countries sufficiently informs planned responses.

The scale of the forced displacement crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic and climate change, and the projection of a potential increase in the number of displaced people seeking safety and protection, require the expansion of an ambitious humanitarian and development agenda to address the underlying causes of displacement, provide safer protection alternatives for those fleeing and restore a sense in communities overwhelmed by violence. In the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees, international burden sharing is essential to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the MIRPS National Action Plans in the seven participating States. In addition, resettlement and complementary pathways should be expanded, including family reunification, education and labour mobility schemes.”

Figure 19. Global Data on Displaced Persons

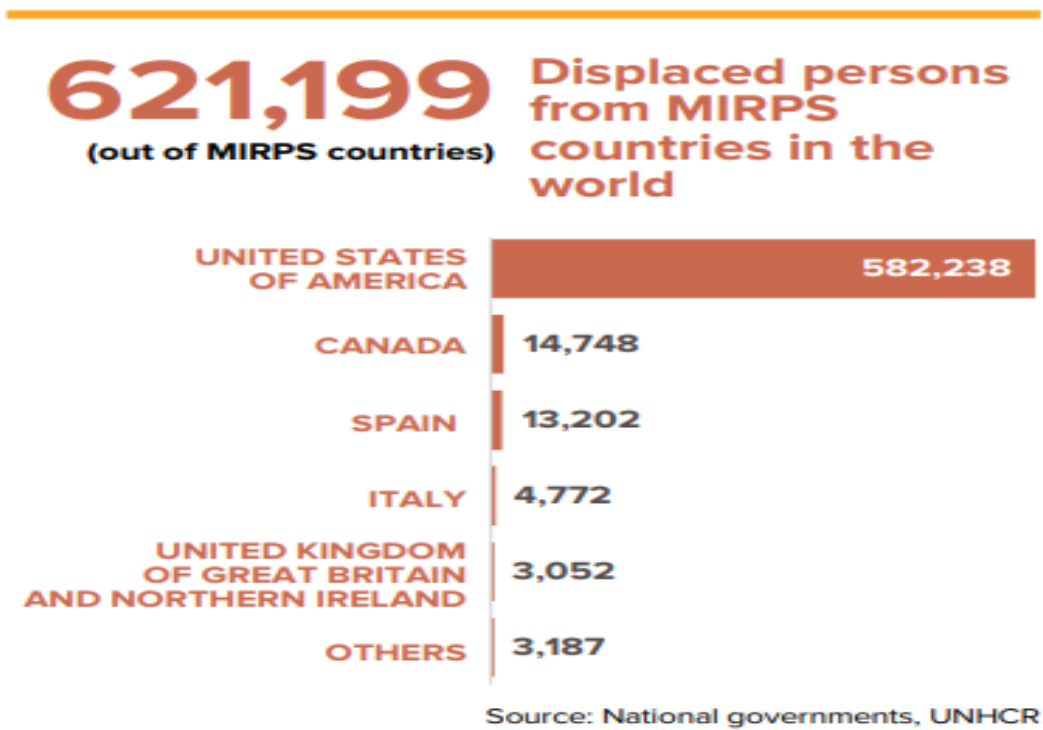
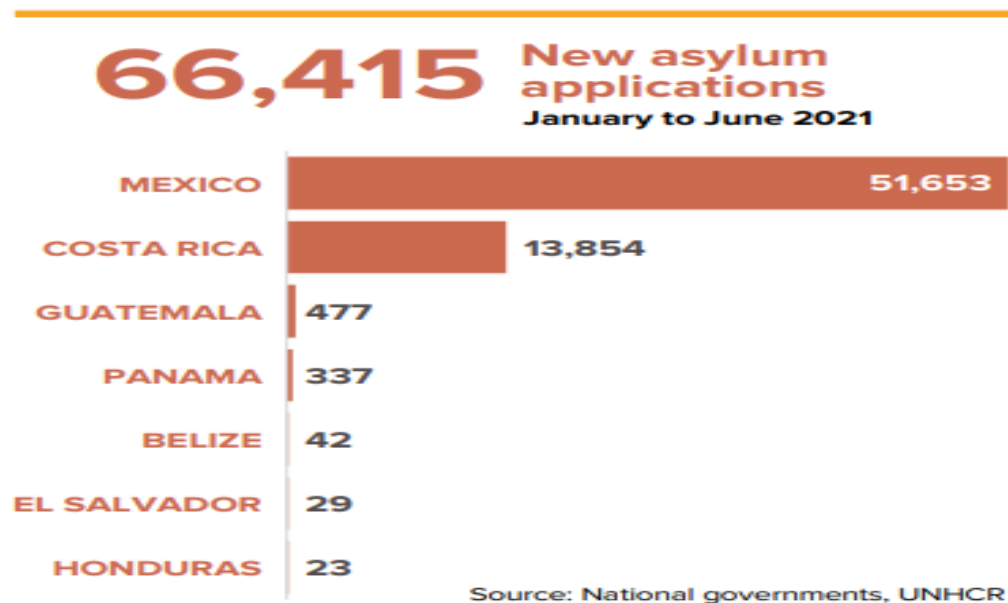


Figure 20. Regional Data on New Asylum Applications



Refer Asylum seekers to UNHCR for assistance during the process

As per the Refugee Act Chapter 165, the Refugees Office shall endeavour to ensure the provision of adequate facilities and services for the care of refugees within Belize. However, UNHCR-Belize currently assists with this mandate.

Issuing of Special Work Permits to Asylum Seekers that were approved Refugee Status, but never confirmed

In March 2020 the Cabinet approved that the recommended Asylum Seekers pending confirmation of Refugee status be regularized in reference to legally working. These individuals were issued special permits to work in the agro-industries.

Protection

In the second year of the coronavirus pandemic, there have been limitations in the implementation of several national commitments. Although several attempts were made, including hybrid in-person and virtual event formats, the training events as a follow-up to the development of Standard Operating Procedures for Identification and referral of refugees, were almost permanently placed on hold. Furthermore, as the Covid-19 infections remained at increased levels, stringent protection measures were put into effect, highlighting constitutional government's obligations to safeguard the national public health situation. The Covid-related special measures as well as the new regime in relation to the court-mandated deactivation of the 14-day time limitation for asylum claim registration resulted in proposed alterations and/ or addendums to the 2020 SOPs.

Government has fully embraced the opportunity to strengthen the technical-institutional capacities to achieve that its asylum system is efficient and fair. Apart from ongoing efforts to increase specific skills and techniques of the current staff contingent of the Refugees Department, a larger-scope 2-year project is envisioned to provide technical assistance, human resources, and operational capacity to improve the national asylum system and the underpinning domestic legislative and policy framework.

Jobs and Livelihoods

While strengthening the asylum system continued to be the principal concern, strengthening access to livelihoods and training opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers remained a priority to enable greater self-sufficiency and local integration, while individuals await the outcome on their asylum request, Inter-ministerial collaboration at the political level resulted in May 2021, in an initiative of issuing temporary work permits for recommended (but not confirmed) registered asylum-seekers in the primary agriculture sectors. Meanwhile, planning

remained with a focus on the delivery of support initiatives for livelihood security with the national small business development institutions and civil society organizations. As standard procedure, this included English language training, referrals to formal technical vocational training and/or basic business training options as well as access to modest business seed capital.

Social Protection

Belize continued to provide low-cost basic healthcare to refugees and asylum seekers, who also benefitted from the health care response to the pandemic, including vaccination, on an equal basis with nationals. Primary education remained tuition free for all children, regardless of their migratory status. Access to secondary education remains in need of continued attention as the earlier enrolment bottlenecks were aggravated by Covid-19 related movement restrictions and the closure of schools, forcing many to convert to online education modalities, requiring, for nationals and refugees alike, major investments in ICT systems and infrastructure. In the context of the pandemic, it remains a national priority to institute measures to keep those, who are already enrolled, in school and to open avenues of learning for those who have dropped out or are at risk of doing so. Lastly, progress was made with providing access for asylum-seekers to government's Institutes for Technical Vocational Education and Training- ITVET, one of government's key instruments for the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and also the most preferred post-primary education pathways of asylum-seekers. Further investments were made in this sector to ensure that services are responsive to labour market needs and support the development of key sectors within the economy.

Strategic Partners

Due to Belize's small state characteristic, the governance system for national development is based on centralized planning, decision-making and delivery of public goods and services. To that extent, local government entities are operating with limited authority and resources for operating within the normative and operational domains of the state. In the delivery of services, a limited number are outsourced to the private sector or civil society. The whole-of-society concept is foremost at work in the planning phases through consultations. Government's strategic partners in the implementation of the MIRPS National Action Plan are: (i) Private Sector (i.e. pilot project temporary work permits); (ii) Civil Society Organizations, including the Belize Network of NGOs BNN; (iii) the UN System, especially in the normative and operational planning of development cooperation; (iv) the International Financing Institutions, providing financing avenues for development priorities; and (v) the international community for targeted enabling financing avenues and political dialogue.

Further to development cooperation with strategic UN partners, the Refugees Department (RD) submitted in August 2021, a proposal for UNHCR support for technical assistance, human

resources and operational capacity to improve the asylum process in Belize. Persistent technical and financial challenges experienced due to a stagnant asylum system prior to November 2020, impacted not only the volume of applications processed and case management waiting time, but also the systems for registering and processing claims which resulted in the need to seek the relevant expertise and assistance via international partners/donors.

The BZD1.1M proposal incorporates improvements to the rudimentary digital system – the Refugees Database and Registration System (RDRS), currently used by the RD and which was not designed to meet the increasing and changing needs at the RD.

The current RDRS also does not facilitate connectivity between the RD and its partners in the refugee status recognition process. These limitations directly affect the quality of service (longer waiting time, duplication of procedures due to lack of adequate and timely information) and communication gaps between agencies. It also is difficult to generate statistical data for decision-making processes. In response UNHCR has agreed to provide technical and financial support to improve the RDRS by incorporating technology at all stages of the asylum claim procedure.

Support was also given for additional temporary technical staff which will enable the RD to reduce the number of asylum claims that are yet to be formalized and/or are awaiting eligibility interviews.

Major Achievements

The current government administration in Belize inherited in November 2020 a stagnant asylum system and generated, within the first 100 days after installation, plans to revitalize critical components of that system, while putting in temporary measures to control the spread of the coronavirus. Government continued to abide by a 2020 court ruling related to deactivating the time limitation for registering asylum claims and prepared to embark, with the technical support from Canada and UNHCR, on an effort to systematically reduce the backlog of asylum cases over the next 2 years and strengthening the refugee status determination process from start to finish.

All persons, remaining in the national territory, including documented and undocumented asylum seekers, have been included in the national vaccination programme that has been gaining momentum since its start in the last week of March 2021. By the end of September, almost 50% of the population had received at least one dose of the vaccine. The proportion of refugees and asylum seekers with at least one dose of the vaccine, is estimated to reflect at least the national figure of 50%.

Furthermore, Government has made a first step in making changes to the existing policy of the immigration authorities in view of asylum-seekers' access to national labour markets. Anticipating soon improved time frames for the processing of asylum claims, which on its turn

will reduce the pressures on the provision of temporary humanitarian assistance, the Government of Belize has enabled that adult asylum-seekers, who have been enrolled in the asylum procedure and who have been recommended by the Refugee Eligibility Committee for recognition as refugee, be employed in the banana, citrus and sugar cane industries.

5. Lessons Learnt

Department 1: Border Management and Immigration Services

MIDAS continues to be unreliable for the following reasons:

- 1) The statistical as well as personal data with respect to the registration of travelers that have extracted remains inaccurate. Data extracted for the same period differs significantly from one date to another. This has been reported on many occasions to no end.
- 2) The Attorney General Ministry, Interpol, as well as the Financial Intelligence Unit continue to request migratory movement of individuals that may be under investigation. The fact that research done by the Investigation Unit at times are lacking, we must resort to requesting this research directly from the IT Unit, yet we have found that even in so doing, the results remain questionable.
- 3) This is concerning because we are utilizing the same database in the same building and the data differs depending on who is conducting the search.
- 4) There are continuing reports of system failure, countrywide.
- 5) The airport continues to report on the matter of persons being registered on MIDAS with two days past the actual registration date.
- 6) There had been other glitches never corrected from the inception of MIDAS. Hence, we may need a new border management system, moving forward.

The matter of vehicles to transport staff to and from work remains a significant issue. If we are to expect staff to be on time to work, we must provide the necessary tool for them to fulfil their obligation.

There needs to be a rehabilitation of the accommodation for Immigration Officers in the Jalacte area and BAHA outpost.

Department 2: Nationality and Passport Department

- The Department of Nationality and Passports was created in May of 2018, as a department with functional responsibilities. Even though efforts were made to place personnel at the district stations to perform these functions, the staffing has been

inadequate. This staffing deficiency permeates throughout the entire Department and will be more evident when the passport system is completed, and applications returned to the District Offices.

- Service delivery was impacted because of COVID-19 infections or had to be mandatorily quarantined after being in close contact with an infected person. These occurrences further affected the staffing capacity of the Department.
- The Department has as its primary functions, the provision of Digital Border Crossing Cards, acceptance, and processing of Permanent and Temporary Residence, Nationality, and Passports applications. Some functions are done overseas by our foreign missions, and within our borders we have offices from north to south. The District Offices have only one Nationality and Passport staff to perform these functions except Belize City; therefore, these efforts must be supplemented by the Border Management and Immigration Services Department (BMIS). With the redirecting of efforts by BMIS to focus on their primary functions we must begin to take on our responsibilities fully and seek ways in which to provide the adequate staffing to do so.
- The services provided by the Department are primarily done in-house. This pandemic has taught us that there must be a meaningful effort to move toward online submissions either in part or overall with a view to reduce face-to-face contact and to best alleviate the demand for paper storage operations. The NPD must begin to be innovative and do as much of their processes online as a clear indication of what the future dictates.

Department 3 - Refugee Department

- **Digitalization of Files**

With the increase in cases being brought up for RSD interview, the need for a simplified, yet confidential case management flow has been highlighted. Currently, asylum seeker case files, must be kept in both a physical and digital version, in which parallel updates must be logged. The case management flow accessible in the current *Refugees Department Registration System (RDRS)* software utilized by the Refugees Department, lacks the modules needed for a comprehensive case management.

The Refugee Department Registration System is a rudimentary database. Both Registration and RSD use a master *Excel* sheet and a manual registry book to manually create new file numbers. There is duplication of information and data entry because the Registration

Officer fills in different Word and *Excel* documents with the same information. Additionally, Eligibility Clerks utilize these files for the preparation of RSD interviews, which allows files to be in possession of varying persons and raises data protection concerns

- **Differentiated RSD Procedures-Case Processing Modalities**

The current process at the Refugees Department, does not provide for the identification and prioritization of cases. Files are processed utilizing the first come first serve process, as there is no formal differentiated case processing modalities. RSD interviews are currently being conducted for asylum claims lodged in 2019, indicative of a two-year or so backlog. The RD has, since its re-establishment in 2016, operated with ONE (1) Eligibility Officer. This, coupled with the need to formulate common profiles of asylum seekers from the four main nationalities seeking asylum in Belize, has greatly contributed to the current case backlog.

- **Country of Origin Information**

Currently, challenges in accessing to updated country of origin information and technical training and knowledge on its use, remain as major hurdles in the accurate preparation of the legal analysis of the RSD assessment. The lack of access and the need for the development of the technical expertise potentially contribute to a lengthy credibility assessment during RSD interviews.

- **Legislative Review**

The Refugees Act of Belize, when written in the 1990's, was rather progressive for the region. In the current protection environment, the increase in mixed migration flows, irregular or secondary movement of persons, the need to develop the technical capacity and structure of the Refugee Eligibility Committee, the Government has sought to conduct a comprehensive review of the Refugees Act. Technical legal expertise is therefore being procured for the envisaged review, as well as for the relevant processes to be undertaken.

- **Standard Operating Procedures- Asylum Process**

The Refugees Department is currently in need of developing standard operating procedures that clearly outline and detail processes and policies that guide each stage of the asylum process.

- ***Specify population of concern, numbers of asylum applications and backlog.***

According to the Refugees Act of Belize, the RSD process from registration to determination, should take 3 months. However, the current backlog of cases pending RSD interview is approximately just over 2,000 persons, representing an estimated 1,010 cases.

In addition, The Government of Belize announced in December 2021, a proposal for a comprehensive Amnesty exercise scheduled for 2022-2023. The proposed Amnesty is aimed at providing asylum seekers and irregular migrants an alternative pathway to Permanent Residence, irrespective of their current asylum or migratory status. With a phased approach, the Amnesty Exercise will entail a four-month registration period during which applications will be received at designated Registration Offices throughout the country and a vetting period which is estimated to take 5-6 months. Approximately, 6 to 7,00 asylum seekers qualify to apply for the Amnesty process and potentially receive permanent residence. This would allow for the uninhibited access to work, secondary education and all other rights and social safety needs afforded for persons whose access to a Complimentary pathway would not be forthcoming.

6. Future Priorities and Plans

Department 1: Department of Border Management and Immigration Services

- Five additional booths equipped with computers and passport readers were negotiated and donated by the Belize Airport Concessionary Company (BACC). This was done to increase efficiency in the processing of passengers during the high season. Two went to the Departure Terminal 2 and three for the Arrival Hall.
- Meetings were held with the IOM to iron out the way forward as it relates to programs to be implemented, as well as the Migration Policy.
- The Human Rights Commission was informed of an allegation made that needs to be retracted. They continue to intervene on behalf of migrants who are in violation of the Immigration Act and upon release later make good their way up to the Belize/USA border.
- Belizean nationals exit and did not return.
- Creation of a Long Stay Work Visitor Program – Our existing Immigration Legislation was amended to allow for persons to work from Belize remotely for a period of up to 180 days per calendar year. Target populations includes digital nomads, freelancers, self-employed professionals, and winter visitors from the United States of America, Canada, United

Kingdom, and European Union countries, only. The CEO was called before the House Committee for insight.

- A Migrant Worker Entry Protocols were established on January 12, 2021, to allow for and to facilitate the entry of migrant workers particularly within the agroindustry sector (i.e.; the banana, citrus and sugar industries) as the department saw the need to support the agricultural industry which is an important foreign exchange income earner for Belize.
- Protocols have been established to allow for the movement across the northern border for investors and patrons of the Corozal Free Zone declared open on February 1, 2021, and casinos which reopened their doors on April 15, 2021.
- Tourist protocols have been established to allow for the entry at the northern border for tourists. Soft opening declared May 31, 2021.
- The Skilled Persons Regulation has been completed, reviewed and is now in the final stages.
- DBMIS partook in a bilateral meeting with the United States in December.
- Immigration continues to work with the National Intelligence Committee (NIC), Joint Intelligence Operation (JIOC), Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee (ATIPS) and Operations, NAMLAC, the Attorney General Ministry, on matters of the Mutual Legal Agreement, BTB, the Civil Aviation Committee, among other agencies.
- On the international level, the DBMIS continues to engage with the RCM, OCAM and CBP on matters of migration.

Department 2: Nationality and Passport Department

- Staffing deficiencies must be addressed to fill gaps at service delivery counters and at the production units to improve efficiency and customer experience especially in times of high demand.
- Structural deficiencies must be addressed at the middle management level of the Department.
- Staffing deficiencies must be addressed at the District Offices levels to meet the legal functional mandate of the Department.
- A fee for applications should be levied on permanent and temporary residence applicants, as well as nationality through sections 10 and 11.
- A fee for should be established for renunciation of Belizean citizenship.
- A policy or amendment should be made to govern transition from temporary residence to permanent residence.
- A policy or legislative amendment to govern transition from qualified retirement program holder to permanent residence status.

- Administrative support in maintaining and uplifting staff morale by caring for their needs and recognizing their above standard performance.

Department 3: Refugee Department

Two major focus and priority areas

MIRPS National Action Plan Protection and Solutions- NAPPS

Belize continues to be a country of destination, predominantly for forcefully displaced persons seeking refuge from widespread violence and rights violations, perpetrated by organized criminal groups in the north of Central America. Although less so than in 2020, the pandemic continues to negatively impact the tourism and agriculture sectors and the vulnerability of various population groups including asylum seekers and refugees. To address the situation, Belize has made progress in the implementation of its commitments to provide protection and solutions for the forcibly displaced. However, the support of the international community in the areas of protection, education and livelihoods continue to be critical to respond to the needs of the thousands of people seeking refuge in the country.

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

As one of seven countries which adopted the MIRPS in 2017, Belize is expanding its operational capacity to respond to forced displacement in the region through the adoption and implementation of several commitments in its National Action Plan resulting from the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019.

Figure 21. Belize's Areas of Focus



Optimize departmental coordination, ensuring that asylum-seekers access all social services to which they are entitled and promoting peaceful and inclusive communities.

Support comprehensive knowledge, skills and livelihood-based integration opportunities, e.g.; expanding demand-driven technical and vocational training options in key economic sectors

associated with climate change, benefiting refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and Belizean youth

Collaboration with international community in relation to improved opportunities for refugee integration

Table 16 RD 2022 – National Action Plan for Protection and Solutions – Proposed

Protection		
No.	Commitment	Proposed Adjustment
1	<i>Capacity building for all relevant Government authorities, delivering Standard Operating Procedures for the identification and referral of persons of concern</i>	Ensure the implementation of Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) to facilitate the comprehensive identification and referral of persons with international protection needs
2	<i>Provision of information to POC in relation to admission to territory and asylum processes</i>	Ensure that persons arriving at official border points, including at the international airport, are provided with essential information on the right to claim asylum and related procedures.
3	<i>Provision of public information campaigns, to sensitize the general population about the reality of refugees in Belize</i>	Promote understanding amongst the general population of the right to asylum, foster a climate of tolerance and mutual coexistence.
4	<i>Improved comprehensive data collection (applications; admissions; rejections) and analysis System</i>	Conduct a review of existing data availability, essential information needs, and potential digital tools and systems to integrate a comprehensive approach to Registration and Identity Management.
5	<i>Continued participation in the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) for strengthening of the asylum process</i>	Strengthen the timeliness, efficiency and quality investigation and adjudication processes of the national asylum system.
6	<i>Mapping and data collection exercises on POC and host communities to create evidence for inclusion in national plans</i>	Ensure the inclusion of up-to-date refugee and asylum seeker population data within national data, national development planning and implementation processes.

Education		
No.	Description	Proposed Adjustment
7	<i>Support to comprehensive knowledge-, skills-, and livelihood-based integration opportunities</i>	<p>Basic education - Ensure equitable access to primary and secondary education for refugees and asylum seekers on an equal basis as nationals</p> <p>Tertiary education - Support investments within the national TVET system, to ensure the delivery of demand-driven courses in key economic sectors associated with climate change, benefiting refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and Belizean youths.</p>

Employment and Livelihoods		
No.	Description	Proposed Adjustment
8	<i>Collaboration with international community in relation to improved opportunities for refugee integration</i>	Provide access to employment opportunities in priority sectors of the economy to respond to the needs of the private sector and <u>labour market</u> .

PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT – UNHCR and RD

A positive response was received from UNHCR in September 2021 to a Proposal submitted requesting its support for technical assistance, human resources and operational capacity to improve the asylum process in Belize. This had a dual perspective to allow for the sustainable improvement of the national asylum system and supporting the RD in the reduction of its current backlog of asylum cases in the refugee status determination process.

Below is the proposed portfolio of UNHCR support to the RD proposal amounting to USD \$327,565.00. The portfolio proposed a phased implementation with timelines spanning from October 2021 to December 2023. UNHCR's support is however, contingent on the signing of a "PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT" (PPA) specifying the conditions of the agreement/contract before the start of implementation.

At the end of 2021, the PPA had not been signed. RD will therefore pursue this as a priority goal in 2022 addressing timely completion of the projects in the plan.

Table 17. UNHCR Proposed Support Portfolio - Activity and Timeline

Description	Quantity	Years	2021	2022	2023
Personnel					
Eligibility Officer	5	2		X	X
Training		2		X	X
Infrastructure					
Office Space	-	-	X	X	
Transportation					
Van	1	-	X	X	
Furniture					
Office Desks/Chairs	5		X	X	
Equipment					
Laptops with MS-Office	5		X	X	
Ten-printing	1			X	
Software for data system	1		X	X	

7. Staffing and Financial considerations

Department 1: Department of Border Management and Immigration Services

At the end of June 2021, the Phillip Goldson International Airport experienced an outbreak of a variant of the SARS COV2 virus which caused the entire staff to be removed and replaced. Our contingency plan was put in place which saw staff replacement from throughout the country that had experience working at the airport. To date 99.9% of our staff are fully vaccinated. We have not seen or requested information on those that have been boosted.

Eighty (80%) of Staff at the entry level have completed and continue to receive Clerical and Clerical Promotional Training.

Department 2: Nationality and Passport Department

The Department of Nationality and Passports was created in May of 2018, as a department with functional responsibilities. Even though efforts were made to place personnel at the district

stations to perform these functions, the staffing has been inadequate. This staffing deficiency permeates throughout the entire Department and will be more evident when the passport system is completed, and applications returned to the District Offices.

Department 3: Refugee Department

In the latter part of 2021, the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees Department and UNHCR National Office Belize, formulated a project partnership agreement aimed at a comprehensive strengthening of the asylum process. This was first aimed at backlog reduction, but quickly developed into a broader opportunity to strengthen other aspects of the asylum process. The encompassing agreement, which begun a 2-year implementation period in 2022, provides technical and material support through the provision of additional:

- i. Human resources with the temporary hiring of 5 project bound eligibility clerks
- ii. Training for the newly hired clerks, the current Eligibility Officer, and the Refugee Eligibility Committee.
- iii. Software development and improvement to the RDRS
- iv. Biometrics and ten printing capabilities
- v. And through the government, the hiring of a social worker assigned to the Refugees Department and the Re-Designation of RD - First Class Clerks to Refugee Eligibility Officers
- vi. A Legal Officer is an outstanding hire for the Department that must be addressed

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Some people say that illegal immigration benefits the Belizean economy through additional tax revenue, expansion of the low-cost labour pool, and increased money in circulation. They contend that immigrants bring good values, have motivations consistent with the Belizean dream, perform jobs that Belizeans won't take, and that opposition to immigration stems from xenophobia, or fear of strangers, foreigners, or someone who is different from us.

Opponents of illegal immigration say that people who break the law by crossing Belize's border without proper documentation or by overstaying their visas should be deported and not rewarded with a path to citizenship and access to social services. They argue that people in the

country illegally are criminals and social and economic burdens to law-abiding, tax-paying Americans.

The pros and cons have been presented, and the government of Belize have taken the position, not only to have an Amnesty on 2022, but more importantly to set in place the structure to continue managing migration for the socio-economic development and national security of Belize via the development of Belize's first Migration Policy. Over the past year the government of Belize have implemented several programs in terms of the management of migration. These include the following:

Department of Border Management and Immigration Services

1. Migrant Worker Protocol January 2021
2. COVID-19 Visa Extension Amnesty October to December 2021
3. Immigration related operations with the Anti Trafficking in Persons Council
4. Legislation for visa requirements: Venezuela, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic.

Refugee Department

5. Project with UNHCR focused on enhancing the technical capacity of the Refugee Department
6. Issuing of Special Work Permits to Asylum Seekers that were approved for refugee status, but never confirmed

Nationality and Passport Department

7. The Permanent Residence and Nationality Unit heads held two community awareness sessions in the Cayo District, namely, Arenal, and San Ignacio Town.
8. An official participated in an IOM Mobile Clinic.
9. Amnesty 2022

These represent a comprehensive approach to Migration from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration

Annex I. List of professional and technical staff of the Ministry

	Name	Surname	Birthdate	Gender	Post
	Central Administration				
1	Gilroy	Middleton	30.09.1978	M	Chief Executive Officer
2	Louise Hortence	Gillett	22.02.1968	F	Senior Secretary
	Information Technology Unit				
3	Rodolfo	Bol Jr	02.02.1984	M	Information Technology Manager
4	Georgia	Woodye	19.04.1973	F	Systems Administrator I
5	Jesse William	Garcia	13.04.1985	M	Information Technology Technician I
6	Inaldi	Gomez	11.10.1981	F	System Developer I
7	Zane	Garcia	09.09.1986	M	System Administrator II
8	Sulma	Gonzalez	25.03.1983	F	System Developer II
9	Zane	Garcia	09.09.1986	M	System Administrator II
10	Sulma	Gonzalez	25.03.1983	F	System Developer II
	Human Resources				
11	Keysea	Santos	12.09.1994	F	Administrative Officer 111 (Cadet)
12	Seleni	Tuyud	10.10.1983	F	Administrative Officer 111
13	Nerissa	Nicholas	30.11.1988	F	Ag. Admin Assistant
14	Shawsha	Ramirez	02.06.1992	F	Second Class Clerk
15	Kaehla	Jones	13.12.1995	F	Second Class Clerk
16	Karen Louise	Flowers	06.12.1981	F	Office Assistant
17	Edison Allison	Cooper	03.06.1978	M	Office Assistant
18	Stephen	Williams	03.09.1983	M	Driver(Interdiction)
19	Frederick Alexander	Banner Jr.	07.01.1987	M	Driver/Mechanic
20	Sharon Melonie	Arana	09.04.1980	F	Cleaner
21	Dorene Denise	Jackson	26.08.1982	F	Cleaner
22	Jamie	Gillett	02.04.1987	M	Security Guard
23	Lennox	Coleman	16.09.1988	M	Security Guard
24	Augustino Leo	Cukul	22.01.1974	M	Security Guard
25	Aaron	Valerio	01.07.1980	M	Security Guard
	Accounts				
26	Beverly	Hanson		F	Finance Officer III

	Name	Surname	Birthdate	Gender	Post
27	Luisani	Campos	14.02.1987	F	Administrative Assistant 1
28	Shian	Tillett	30.03.1980	F	First Class Clerk
29	Georgia Diana	Cardines	11.04.1973	F	Second Class Clerk
30	Jillian	Gordon			Second Class Clerk
31	Myralee	Ho	10.06.1985	F	First Class Clerk
	Replacement for Ms. Shayla Burns				
	Belize City				
32	Harvey	Sambula	24.11.1978	M	Security Guard
33	Darrel	Grant	28.04.1971	M	Security Guard
34	Romel	Alamilla	18.10.1997	M	Driver
35	Shana	Williams	06.07.1984	F	Cleaner
	Philip Goldson International Airport				
36	Jerome	Lewis	23.08.1990	M	Driver
37	Margaret Louis	Hilton	19.05.1967	F	Cleaner
	San Pedro				
38	Cherry	Pandy	18.05.1972	F	Cleaner
	Dangriga				
39	Zalene Rae	Noralez	23.10.1981	F	Cleaner
	Corozal				
40	Elia Feliciano	Montejo	22.06.1992	F	Cleaner
41	Elber Yanel	Dominguez	25.08.1982	M	Driver/Office Assistant
	Orange Walk				
42	Benita	Ayuso	21.03.1952	F	Cleaner
	Belize Western Border				
43	Amir	Matus	20.12.1973	M	Driver/Mechanic