

BELIZE



THE BELIZE RED CROSS SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



Belize Red Cross Volunteers prepared for assessments and distributions in COVID-19 response

Belize Red Cross Organization Chart



INTRODUCTION:

It is needless to say that the year 2020 was a huge learning curve for everyone. There are sad and unfortunate stories to tell, and these have been heard worldwide and every day since March, 2020, at least in Belize when COVID-19 arrived on March 22nd, 2020. This report will focus on projects and programs that were short lived during 2020 and on impacts of the pandemic on Belize, but will also highlight the positive side where so many lessons were learned and new approaches, processes, systems and tools were born.

The year 2020 marked the final year of the Belize Red Cross Society's 5-year National Strategic Development Plan, 2016-2020. January-March 2020 in the Belize Red Cross (BRC) continued from the year 2019 as normal, with the implementation of 3 main projects at the Headquarters. The 3 months would have prepared volunteers, staff and communities for increased engagement in interventions brought to the communities with the aim of strengthening knowledge, skills and partnerships. What no one was prepared for was a new emergency, the global pandemic of COVID-19, which halted progress in most areas of the country and of the Belize Red Cross Society, at the same time, shifting focus on what the National Society does best, i.e., taking care of and serving the most vulnerable people.

After the first positive COVID-19 case on the island of San Pedro, Prime Minister Honorable Dean, Barrow, declared a State of Emergency for the island of San Pedro, Ambergris Caye. Residents were placed under mandatory quarantine. Only essential workers were allowed to be on the streets. Unauthorized vessels would be banned from leaving or arriving on the island, and at the same time the Ministry of Health commenced a mapping exercise to trace everyone that may have been in contact with the first case who tested positive for the Covid-19.

Schools were closed countrywide on March 20th, before the first case was identified in Belize, with the plan to resume classes by April 20th. The situation changed when other positive cases were identified and other protection measures were instituted, e.g., restrictions of public gathering and closed borders. All international flights were also grounded with effect from March 23rd, allowing only cargo flights and ships to arrive.

On March 30th, a state of emergency was declared countrywide and curfew from 8p.m. to 5a.m. daily was imposed, at first to address the increase in gang violence, and shortly after, to mitigate the spread of the virus. Other restrictions, including mandatory and self-quarantines were implemented in March.

While actions were taken to safeguard the Belizean population, the public was continuously and strongly advised to take preventative measures to reduce the risk of transmission. The Government continuously encouraged the washing of hands regularly and maintaining physical distance.

The National Society's response was almost like a knee jerk, spontaneous and quick to serve, to alleviate suffering countrywide. With financial support from generous donors within the business community and the technical and financial support from the IFRC, Belize Red Cross was able to contribute their fair share of the responsibility in providing much needed relief to families that were being impacted by the fast developing viral spread of the virus in Belize.

The year 2020 will also be remembered by the Belize Red Cross as a challenging year, one from which the National Society has grown exponentially, having to face several challenges that were presented all in the same timeline, e.g., COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of all the NS's income generation programs, e.g., First Aid & CPR training, Home Care Givers courses, and Snack Shop sales. These created a strong negative impact on the economic situation of the national society.

Highlights of 2020

This reporting period saw the end of the “*ZIKA Prevention*” Project in Belize, which started in May, 2018 and was scheduled to end in August, 2020. Staff and Volunteers proudly prepared to execute their last project activity, a community fair to celebrate all they had been achieved throughout the life of the project, when the government imposed a state of emergency and countrywide lockdown due to the spread of COVID-19 in Belize. Plans were paused and ultimately, activity was cancelled. On the positive side, at least 9 communities in the north of Belize had gained knowledge and experience in the need for proper hygiene and measures to take to reduce the spread of communicable diseases, just in time to fight against the COVID-19 virus.

Two urban communities from Belize City benefited in January, 2020 from one final activity of the “*Capacity Building Initiatives in Disaster Preparedness and Response in Caribbean National Societies*” project, Phase II. This activity was a disaster response simulation with Community Disaster Response Teams testing their knowledge and skills gained and the tools and methodologies learned. The simulations had the active participation of the City Emergency Management Organization (CEMO) and the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) as well as, other actors in disaster response, e.g., National Fire Service, Police Department, ambulance services, and Belize Search and Rescue Team (BSART).

The “*Community Resilience Building in the Caribbean*” project continued into March 2020 until the countrywide lockdown forced the national society to retreat into working remotely from home, while working with the Government for recognition as essential services and to continue working with the vulnerable communities and to implement their COVID-19 response plan. Training of Community Disaster Response Teams in 7 communities (2 in Belize City and 5 in the Cayo District) continued from 2019 but experienced several postponements due to the COVID situation and the availability of community members. Work had commenced with the communities to identify possible micro-projects to address gaps found in the VCA process, one micro-project being the installation of an early warning system to monitor rising river levels. Other achievements of the project include the development of the Belize Red Cross Society’s Gender Strategy, Community Support Plan, and a Collaboration Framework with NEMO. This project’s timeline ends March 2022.

The Belize Red Cross became involved in the preparations for response to the COVID-19 virus since March 6th, 2020 through attendance and participation in meetings led by the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, PAHO and the Diplomatic Corps, where the facts about the Novel Coronavirus were imparted. Belize Red Cross participated in several meetings to discuss strategy, plans, response mechanisms, prevention and control systems, response and treatments led by the relevant key partners.

A BRC COVID-19 Management Committee was established to manage the NS’ COVID-19 Relief Operations, particularly a countrywide Food Distribution Program.

The **Committee** was comprised of:

- 2 Coordinators, 1 Staff member and 1 Volunteer (Member of the BRC’s Disaster Management Committee)
- Program Finance Officer
- Logistics Officer

The Distribution Team was comprised of 4 Support Officers for logistics and distribution and approximately 100 Volunteers countrywide.

Volunteers actively involved in ensuring that the most vulnerable and remote communities learned about the COVID-19 virus, widely disseminated information on how to reduce the spread of the virus and to protect oneself. Volunteers received special training from the Ministry of Health and they quickly led the Belize Red Cross COVID-19 Relief Operations countrywide. The opportunities increased for development and further strengthening of relationships among the National Society, Partners, inclusive of Government Departments and Agencies, and stakeholders through sharing of resources and imparting of knowledge.

Hurricane Eta made landfall on Nicaragua's shores as a strong Category 4 hurricane on November 4, 2020, causing destruction and excessive rain, affecting several Central American countries including Belize. Belize received approximately 20 inches of rainfall, resulting in severe flooding in the western district, Cayo, and Central District, Belize, including Belize City. In total, more than 40 communities, approximately 60,000 people, were affected in Belize. The floods caused damage to residential property, utilities, farms, and road infrastructure and further added to the vulnerabilities due to COVID-19, which already had a huge effect on the tourism industry, leaving many families with limited or no income. Shortly after Hurricane Eta made landfall, Hurricane Iota made landfall again in Nicaragua, bringing additional rain to Belize and exacerbated the floods in many areas.

The year 2020 ended with the National Society in the middle of yet another response operation, providing much needed relief to persons affected by the floods caused by Hurricanes Eta and Iota.

Final progress report on the National Strategic Action Plan, 2016-2020

Focus of the plan remained on the following pillars and development areas:

- **Pillars:**
 - ❖ Organizational development
 - ❖ Health and Social Welfare
 - ❖ Disasters and Crisis

- **Development areas:**
 - ❖ Strengthening government partnerships
 - ❖ Strengthening existing civil society partnerships and building new partnerships
 - ❖ Governance and Leadership
 - ❖ Compliance

Goal 1: Enhance the capacity of HQ and ensure NS services and programs to effectively meet the need of the vulnerable people of Belize.

To be better able to face and cope with the new emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic in Belize, Staff and Volunteers were trained by the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) on the virus and prevention measures, giving them the tools and materials necessary to mobilize and to educate, inform and provide facts to community members on the highly infectious virus. This was done by impressing the need for proper hygiene, adherence to protective measures, e.g., mask wearing and use of PPEs and proper hand washing and sanitizing.



Staff and Volunteers participated in dissemination of information through distribution and posting of infographics, posters, flyers within the communities, and through Social Media.



Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) training was provided to San Pedro Town, the island where the first COVID case appeared, followed by fast spread of the virus. Through the ZIKA and CARSII projects, this training was also provided to several communities in Belize in 2019, which proved to be useful during the COVID-19 pandemic. Proper handwashing was also demonstrated in public places especially to frontline personnel, and on talk shows on the media.



The National Society's Governing Board elected in office on October 13th, 2019, received Skills Training designed to Improve Organizational Effectiveness through a virtual training on October 31st, 2020. The Facilitator was President of the Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross.

Objectives of the training were:

1. To provide a deeper understanding of the role of the Red Cross, its collective identity, functions
2. To share the differences on the roles and functions of Governance and Management
3. To understand gaps that may exist in the organization through an Organizational Diagnosis on 5 core areas

The main subjects covered were:

- a. Understanding the Red Cross Movement
- b. Humanitarian Diplomacy
- c. Good Governance
- d. Ethical Dilemmas

Way forward:

- Coaching opportunities to further support and motivate the board
- Skills and competency framework for the board to for succession planning
- Humanitarian Diplomacy/Advocacy training for the board on the Auxiliary role of the Red Cross

A disaster response simulation was conducted with three communities in Belize City, resulting in the



certification of three CDRTs totaling 27 persons (6M/21F). The purpose of the simulation exercise was to focus primarily on the Role and responsibility of the CDRT in community disaster preparedness



planning and response, to test community emergency plans. Ninety-three (93) other community members participated with ages ranging from 7-59 years, reaching in total, 120 persons through this activity (29M/91F). This was the first of its kind for the BRC in an urban setting and the partnership with the City Emergency Management Organization (CEMO), responsible for the city during emergency response, was strategic and invaluable.



In a lessons-learned session (*Photo right*) conducted after, two main factors were highlighted, e.g., the different approach required in an urban setting as opposed to a rural setting and the need to engage more actors. The Belize Institute of Search and Rescue Training (BISSART), Belize Coast Guard, Police Department, Ministry of Education, the Fire Department, Traffic Department, NEMO and CEMO were actors engaged in the simulation. BRC Staff and Volunteers monitored and guided the simulation with the help from CEMO, a process from which they also benefited.



Goal 2: To secure sustainable resources for delivery of services and programs by the National Society to address the needs of the vulnerable people of Belize.



The year 2020 had a promising start for the First Aid & CPR program, the National Society's main income generation program. During January-March and October-December 2020 total number of persons certified in Basic First Aid & CPR was 653 (279M/374F). The CRB



project accounted for 189 persons (120 F 69M) and the Home Care Givers Program accounted for 59 (2M/57F). Arrival of COVID-19 caused total closure of the program from April 2020 to October 2020 and several committed trainings were cancelled.

The National Society's Home Care Givers Course held 2 of 3 yearly courses in 2020. In February, 37 persons (2M/35F) and in June 22 females were certified in the program. This course has also been undergoing a process to update its curriculum with the support of professional medical personnel. The October course was deferred until 2021 due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in Belize within the last quarter of the year and the limitations on number of persons who may gather in one room at any given time.

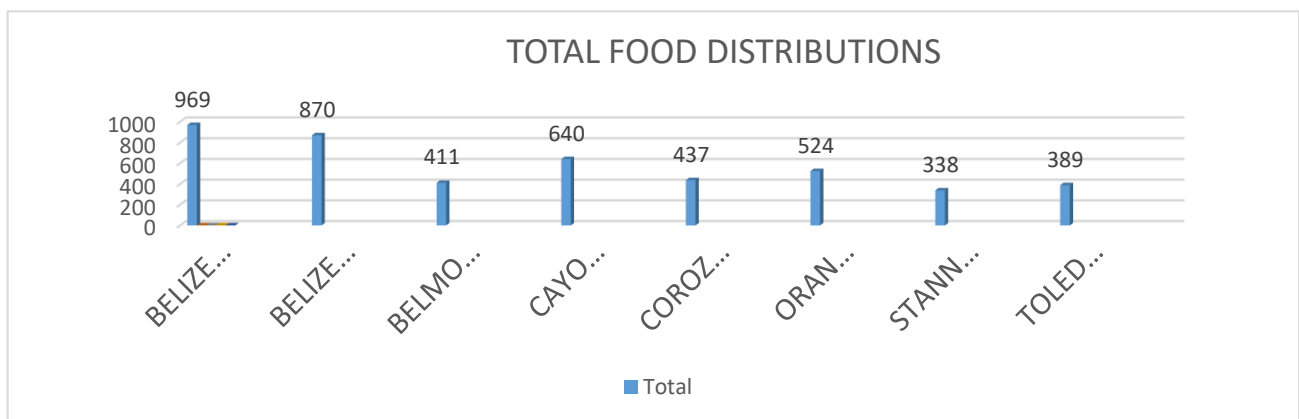


The National Society developed a Response and a Contingency plan for the COVID-19 pandemic, with the overall objective to contribute to the country's National Relief Plan of Action for COVID-19 and sought the financial support to implement same. Training of Belize Red Cross Staff and Volunteers and subsequently, the communities, on the virus and precautionary and preventative measures was among the first activities to kick off the National Society's response.



On April 6th, 2020, the Belize Red Cross Society submitted a proposal to the Belize Bank Ltd. requesting support towards a Food Relief Program to initially target 2,640 families (13,200 persons), older persons, persons living with disabilities and migrants, three of the most vulnerable populations normally being left behind. Persons who lost employment due to the pandemic were also targeted. As a result, the National Society received the sum of BZ\$500,000.00, a very generous contribution from the Lord Ashcroft COVID-19 Relief Fund. The target was exceeded by 73%, and the total number of families reached through this donation was 4,578 (22,890 persons).

(Distribution of Relief Items to affected communities)





The original response plan also included printing and distribution of 10,000 posters and 1,500 flyers with educational information on the virus and on preventative measures throughout all 6 districts of Belize. This initiative was financially supported by the ICRC and information provided by the IFRC. Approximately 173,785 persons were reached indirectly through risk communication and education.



The BRC’s COVID-19 relief program served to complement Government’s relief assistance programs, i.e., a food pantry and Cash Transfer program, for which persons were required to apply and often had to wait for months before receiving any assistance due to the bureaucracies in place. By December 2020, BRC assisted **13,208 families (66,040 persons)**. The IFRC provided financial support and technical guidance through weekly virtual



meetings. Additionally, their contributions covered a great part of the Food Relief program, the hygiene and sanitation and education component of the response plan. A “back-to-school” initiative provided school supplies and masks for 1,200 primary school students. *(Photo below)*, PPEs and Hygiene and sanitation materials for the National Society Staff and Volunteers and Ministry of



Health’s medical frontline personnel, security forces (police and military), public servants, sanitation, and social workers.





Donations of COVID-19 hygiene kits donated to Ministry of Health



Other Movement Partners, i.e., ICRC and the Canadian Red Cross Society provided financial support towards procurement and distribution of 7,604 hygiene kits. ICRC additionally supported the BRC's partnership with the Belize City Council to relocate 22 homeless persons to a safe shelter providing them with mattresses, blankets, and hygiene kits (*photo left*). Other donors, e.g., PAHO, donated 19,000 Surgical masks, 280 face shields and 11,000 gloves, Nestle International donated food supplies through their local suppliers in country, and several local businesses and organizations made financial and in-kind contributions.



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COVID relief distributions in different districts of Belize



Total COVID-19 relief funds raised by December 2020 was BZ\$1,133,630 against a budget target of BZ\$1,341,149. Total expenditure to December 2020 was BZ\$842,691. Belize Red Cross continues to be extremely grateful for all the support received during the pandemic year of 2020, without which the National Society would have been unable to mobilize and provide the services they are mandated to provide according to their Mission and according to their auxiliary role. Ten (10) Staff and 110 Volunteers representing seven branches and the headquarters supported the response.



Three Hurricanes threatened Belize in 2020. The first was Hurricane Nana in early September, which made landfall in the southern district of Belize, Stann Creek. Hurricane Eta and Hurricane Iota in November, causing significant damage in Central America, made landfall on the neighboring country, Nicaragua. Hurricane Nana brought a great deal of rain to Belize, saturating the soil of Belize and giving rise to flood damages and losses only to be increased by Hurricane Eta and Iota. The other two Hurricanes increased these damages and losses, flooding areas that were not previously flooded by Nana. Through local financial and in-kind donations and a DREF from the IFRC, Belize Red Cross was able to reach 1,496 vulnerable and affected households. 734 of

these (3,670 people) were served with relief items and/or debit cards funded by the DREF. At least 886 families (3,375 persons) received other NFIs, including shelter kits. The overall operational objective was to provide disaster relief to 1,000 families (5,000 people) within the affected areas of Cayo and Belize Districts who had been heavily affected and/or displaced due to the floods. The DREF operation and its operational strategy considered the risks related to the COVID-19 pandemic and was aligned with the IFRC global emergency appeal that supports National Societies to deliver assistance and support to communities affected or at risk of being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the flood response, measures were taken to limit the risk of COVID-19. Staff and volunteers were provided with PPE's (masks, face shields and hand sanitizer), and social distancing was observed, always during trainings and field work. During distributions beneficiaries were also requested to wear a face mask and had their hand sanitized before entering the distribution area, maintaining social distancing.



Two IFRC Delegates (CTP and CEA) were deployed to Belize to support this response. Additional support was received from PAHO who donated hygiene and cleaning items for people in shelters

as well as in the affected communities and PPEs for Staff, Volunteers, and frontline personnel. UNICEF scaled up its partnership with the Belize Red Cross and provided 230 family hygiene/nutrition kits that were delivered to 430 affected families with children in the Cayo District. Further support was received from



USAID with 92 mattresses and 90 cleaning kits distributed to a total of 460 affected persons also in the Cayo District, the district most affected by the floods. An IFRC Communications Delegate was also deployed to Belize during the response. The communications system for the Belize Red Cross expanded under her guidance into establishing the Belize Red Cross Instagram account and conducting live streaming interviews of Volunteers *(Left)* working in the response.

USAID distribution of mattresses



Staff, Volunteers and IFRC Cash and CEA Delegates training for CTP (right)



(Distribution-IFRC shelter kits)



(Distribution of USAID cleaning kits)



Goal 3: increased efficiency and transparency in financial management of the NS

In April 2020, the National Society initiated a complete and intense review and updating of its accounts, accounting system and procedures. The review was conducted by a finance team under the supervision of the Treasurer of the Board. The objective of this exercise was to update the Quick Books accounts, make necessary adjustments recommended by auditors, rectify erroneous data input, and to generally update systems and procedures, improve financial management for better accountability and transparency. This process is still ongoing to date. The financial audits for years 2017 and 2018 were conducted. The review addressed specific areas highlighted by the audit and has prepared the National Society for the 2019 audit yet to be conducted, pending identification of funds.

With Finance Assistants identified for every project, clear procurement guidelines, and proper recording, the accounting, and reporting has improved.

Goal 4: To Develop an effective Communications Plan at national level

The National Society's Communication strategy, in the process of being updated to integrate pandemics, and Collaboration Agreements established with partners are aligned with the National Society's new 5-Year National Strategic Plan, 2021-2025. The area of communications, a cross-cutting issue, at all levels of the organization is key, and there is always room for improvement. Since conducting the BOCA exercise in 2019 and previously through the OCAC conducted in 2013, and presently with the COVID pandemic forcing more virtual communications, the National Society has made efforts to ensure communication remains fluid and accessible to all, especially Branches and to ensure more effectiveness and transparency, serving to improve accountability and relationships and increase productivity. Use of social media with established chat groups for Governance, Management, and Branch Leadership has made communication much quicker, more relevant responses timelier.

Goal 5: Development of Monitoring and Evaluation Program

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered innovative ways for the Belize Red Cross to conduct Monitoring and Evaluation as physical activities were not allowed for most of 2020. Through the support of the CRB project, a Geo Polling App that allows for surveys to be administered to targeted populations or specific geographical areas in Belize was introduced to gather data through surveys. Satisfaction surveys were also applied by WhatsApp. On a continuous basis monitoring takes place in the field and during every workshop or training.

Goal 6: Community resilience

The Year 2020 highlighted the need for increased resilience and long term sustainability at both the community and National Society levels. With over 66,000 persons unemployed in Belize by December 2020, livelihood needs emerged quickly. It was evident that most persons were forced into dependency on the Government's relief programs as well as desperately required the Belize Red Cross relief assistance. People were required to apply for Government's pantry and cash transfer programs, 81,052 persons applied but only 44,552 were approved. At the same time new entrepreneurial ideas also emerged across the country. As businesses were forced to close their doors due to the pandemic, people presented their own creative ideas as a means to earn much needed income. Some examples are plant nurseries, body and care products, sewing of masks, home made COVID prevention drinks, pastries, sanitizing agencies, to name a few. There is need, however, to assist people with registration of their new businesses, business management, basic bookkeeping, and marketing of their products using the most economic means.

Three of the seven project communities of the "***Community Resilience Building in the Caribbean***" project (CRB) were severely affected by the floods caused by Hurricane Eta and Iota. Inaccessible roads impeded outreach by the Belize Red Cross as well as the community members from mobilizing for about 2 weeks, delaying the project activities that had only just recommenced after the pause due to COVID-19.

Project activities were planned for implementation, but the communities' priority was to meet their immediate needs, finding food, cleaning their homes, and replacing damaged household items. Additionally, planned sessions were affected by government national elections, conducted on November 11th, 2020. The elections posed an opportunity for most community members to find employment, therefore, distracting them from the project activities, as well as, trying to collaborate with government partners was impossible during campaigning. The elections saw an opposition party (Peoples United Party – PUP) of 13 year being victorious.

Despite challenges, the CRB project team were able to complete several activities. By December 2020, the project reached 1,127 direct beneficiaries (520M/607F) and the following were accomplished:

- Development of Community Emergency Plans in 7 communities
- Commencement of CDRT training in: Disaster Preparedness, Shelter Management, PSS, Communication, Climate Change, Livelihoods, Community Early Warning System (EWS), and First Aid
- Identification of Micro-projects through the e-VCA findings
- Development of the Belize Red Cross Gender Strategy
- Training for Staff and Volunteers in Gender
- Development of a Collaboration Framework with NEMO

(CDRT training in Fire Fighting)



Projects:
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

1. Retrofitting of community centers/hurricane centers.
2. Plant nurseries, e.g., fruit trees.
3. Maya Nut Trees

This reporting period saw the end of Phase I of **“The Capacity Building Initiatives for disaster preparedness and response in Caribbean National Societies”** project, during which CDRTs from 3 Belize City neighborhoods received training on 14 modules of the CDRT curriculum. In Phase II Government agencies were sensitized on IDRL with the support of the IFRC and a Volunteer of the Barbados Red Cross. Partnership with CEMO and NEMO were further strengthened as MOUs were signed and the trained and certified CDRTs were presented to CEMO to enhance the city response system. In January 2020 a disaster preparedness simulation, focusing on a Search and Rescue scenario to test the Community Disaster Plans was conducted with the support of several key partners, including, CEMO, NEMO, Belize Search and Rescue Team (BSART), the National Fire Service, Police Department, and the National Coast Guards. CDRTs were certified after the simulation and each CDRT received equipment for use in disaster response within their community. Unfortunately, COVID-19 caused the suspension of other planned activities under Phase II of this project.

BELIZE
STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

- Training and equipping of Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRTs)
- Enhancing partnership with Government (NEMO)
- Facilitate forum for sensitization on IDRL

The Belize Red Cross, faced with great financial challenges since 100% of its income generation programs were closed for over 12 months, continued to focus on the ongoing responses to the Hurricane Eta and Iota, and COVID-19. The National Society survived by the limited and modest program support provided through the response operation and a more modest monthly Government subvention, without losing a single staff member. Project activities were paused for 2 months from April to May 2020, resuming the engagement of communities in June, 2020 with the continuation of Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRT) training and the formation and training of Community Support Teams in 7 CRB project communities. Participation was affected by the restriction of only 10 persons allowed to gather in one room. Nevertheless activities continued. All seven communities developed their Disaster Preparedness Plans, 2

Belize Red Cross developed a Contingency Plan for its COVID-19 response, an Aspirational Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction and disaster response, an Operational Plan for COVID-19 and its 5-year National Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

Goal 7: Volunteer and Youth Development

The Year 2020 itself has been a great learning curve for Volunteers worldwide. Specifically, the Belize Red Cross Volunteers, received training in the COVID-19 virus, prevention, and protection measures by the Ministry of Health and Wellness for their further dissemination at household level, and were equipped with IEC materials to distribute to affected vulnerable households. They also learned about PPEs, their proper use and purpose. Their participation in the National Society responses to COVID-19 and to the floods caused by Hurricane Eta and Iota, provided a great opportunity to test their knowledge and skills in real life scenarios and, most importantly, in a hands-on manner. They received training for CTP in preparedness of the Cash Transfer Program implemented for the response floods. Assessments and surveys were conducted through the use and application of ODK and KOBOS software on phones.



Youth Volunteers were encouraged to work with Staff in preparation of COVID-19 hygiene kits where they learned about hygiene and sanitation practices necessary to stay safe during the pandemic and during their services to the vulnerable people. They fully contributed to the successful distributions of relief countrywide as well in both responses. (*San Pedro Branch youth Volunteers left*)

The Belize Red Cross continuously promotes access to the IFRC E-Learning Platform where there are several courses that our Volunteers may benefit from and have been following-up to ensure that our young Volunteers especially, are taking advantage of the opportunities.

Adult and youth Volunteers have had the wonderful experience of conducting training, meetings, and gatherings by virtual means. They have learned to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams as well as have made maximum use of Social Media Apps, e.g., Face Book, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp to communicate among themselves and with the National Society and to show the world the great work they do.

In the San Pedro Branch, Youth Volunteers have assumed the leadership roll in organizing quarterly blood drives to assist the Ministry of Health's National Blood Bank with much needed life saving blood. There has been a shortage of blood donors over the last 12 months which may be attributed to the fear and skepticism of donating blood during the COVID-19 pandemic. The branch ensures that their drives are conducted with the full support of the Ministry of Health and the Blood Bank and that all COVID protocols are adhered to.

During 2020, ninety-seven (97) persons donated blood (63M/34F).

Goal 8: Operational Development

(San Ignacio Branch)



(Orange Walk Branch)



(Corozal Branch)



Since taking up office in July 2019, the Governing Board focused on learning as much about the Red Cross Movement and the Belize Red Cross as they could in the shortest time possible. The International Federation organized and facilitated a Leadership training for the members. Thereafter the Board held virtual meetings with each branch to update them on the Board’s activities since election, including the activities of the National Society in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to strengthen relationships among the Branches, Board and Management, and to facilitate improved and more fluid communication.

The National Society’s Headquarters in Belize City is in dire need of repairs. Management and Governance are working as a team to accomplish the renovation and so far, has received a contribution from the Baron Bliss Charitable Fund through the Government of Belize for BZ\$200,000 and has secured promise of a similar amount from another Charitable Fund. However, there is need to raise additional funds.

All 7 branches collaborated and coordinated with the Belize Red Cross Headquarters to participate in the National Society’s countrywide response operations for COVID-19 and distributed food packages and hygiene kits to the communities. The



San Ignacio branch and the Belize District Volunteers were also actively involved in the relief



operations for the floods. Additionally, the Corozal Branch procured food items for 42 additional families. The branch plans to establish a local pantry program and they provide nutritious meals once per week to the homeless and shut-ins in Corozal Town.



With the support of international volunteer nurses, the Belmopan and San Ignacio Branches embarked on an initiative to recruit volunteers in the Cayo District to reactivate the Cayo Branch of the Belize Red Cross, which had been inactive for several years. Their joint aim was to target the youth population to participate in a country-wide Health and Safety Awareness program.

Way Forward:

The National Society's 5-Year National Strategic Plan 2021-2025 first draft is in its first draft stage awaiting Board review and approval. The plan is aligned to the IFRC Strategy 2030 and focuses on the following pillars:

1. Organizational Development:

- Identifying and assessing problem areas in a participatory approach and developing a plan of action that includes monitoring and evaluation processes for implementation, recording and reporting. --- -
 - Core areas of needs include:
 - HQ development:
 - i) physical infrastructure
 - ii) human resource structure
 - Branch development: developing the operational capacity of the branches, including training (administrative and finance), basic equipment, networking, and communications (telephone and internet) and developing fundraising plans.
 - Staff and volunteer development: developing a training plan designed to build expertise in the two key areas of focus – Health and Disaster Risk Reduction.

2. Health and Social Welfare:

- Develop a health department to address the coordination and implementation of health programs, including Psychosocial Support (PSS), First Aid, Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST), Homecare Givers training, and feeding programs (Social Assistance). New programs will be introduced such as Community Based Health FA, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), non-communicable and communicable diseases.
 - Core areas of needs are:
 - A National Society Health Policy, aligned to the IFRC's Health Policy and in line with Belize's National Health Policy
 - A comprehensive health strategy that provides guidance on coordination, collaboration and/or implementation of health programs

3. Disasters and Crisis:

- Develop a revised Disaster Management Plan aligned to the commitment made at the InterAmerican Conference in May 2019
 - Core areas of needs are:
 - National response capacity
 - Upgrading the CDRT Disaster Preparedness training
 - Equipping the National Response Mechanism

Acknowledgements:

On behalf of the Governing Board, Management, Staff and Volunteers, the Belize Red Cross Society sincerely thanks the IFRC, ICRC, the Canadian Red Cross, all Donors and Partners for invaluable support, technical guidance, financial assistance, and engagement during the year 2020, despite having to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple and simultaneous disaster events worldwide. Due to their support, the National Society was able to increase the skills and knowledge of its Staff and Volunteers with new approaches to work with communities. Most of all, thanks for the privilege of being able to serve the most vulnerable people of Belize.

On behalf of Management, Staff and Volunteers, with gratitude we recognize the full support and guidance received from the Belize Red Cross Governing Board throughout the most difficult year that the Belize Red Cross has experienced, 2020.

The Director General personally thanks all Staff and Volunteers countrywide for their usual and tireless support throughout the year.

Thanks to the communities for accepting the National Society and allowing our Staff and Volunteers to enter their homes and for engagement and participation in all interventions.

Report prepared and submitted by:

Lily Bowman



Director General