National Land Use Policy for Belize

Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Multi-country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems Project
Phase 1 (CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase 1)

Updated National Land Use Policy
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NOTATION FOR READING

This is the ***1st draft of the National Land Use Policy 2025-2035***

It is ***a Working Document.***

For notation, there were 10 thematic areas in the NLUP(2019). These were:

1) Land tenure
2) Land administration
3) Land tax and rent
4) Productive and sustainable use of land
5) Rural Land Uses/Agricultural Development and Production
6) Urban Land Uses/Urban Planning
7) Land Use and Land Cover
8) Land Degradation
9) Climate Change
10) Land Use Planning

These thematic areas were either combined as a whole or in parts, added to or remained in name but expanded in scope and substance or new thematic areas were introduced with the following forming the thematic areas for the policy statements for the updated NLUP.

1) Land Cover and Land Use Classification
2) Ecosystem for Sustainable Land Management
3) National Estate Management
4) Human Settlements, Urbanisation and Spatial Organisation
5) Land Degradation and Sustainable Soil Management
6) Agriculture and Land Productivity
7) Biodiversity, Natural Assets and Green Infrastructure
8) Integrated Coastal Zone Management
9) Knowledge Building and Sharing, Public Outreach and Engagement
10) Governance for Land Use Planning

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INTRODUCTION

1. The National Land Use Policy Framework hereafter referred to as the " policy framework", sets out the Government of Belize's policies and strategic actions regarding the sustainable use, management and development of all land in Belize.

2. It recognizes that a plan-led approach is the most effective way to secure the sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize, and therefore provides the framework for a planning system within which:

    a. a National Land Use Plan is to be prepared, implemented, modified, amended, revoked and replaced to:

        1. give effect to the technical and spatial requirements of Plan Belize, Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026 and to the sectoral policies that give expression to Plan Belize, and to Belize's global commitments; and

        2. together with Plan Belize, to serve as the highest tier of development planning, and as such, will focus on solutions to issues and challenges at a national scale.

    b. Regional or Local development plans are to be prepared, implemented, modified, amended, enforced, replaced and or revoked to:

        1. give effect to the policy framework and the National Land Use Plan at either a regional or local level; and as such

        2. will focus on solutions to issues and challenges at the regional and or local level.

    c. Policy directives and technical guidance notes are to be issued from time to time from the Ministry with responsibility for land use planning.

3. The policy framework also recognises that land use planning is one component of sustainable land management, which encompasses the ecological, economic, socio-cultural and governance dimensions of sustainable development. It is within this context, that it positions land use planning.

4. This policy framework should be read as a whole, including all footnotes, glossary and annexes.

5. The policy framework is structured as follows:

    a. Guiding Principles

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b. Vision

c. Mission

d. Goal

e. Objectives

f. Policy statements and strategic actions on the following thematic areas:

1. Land Cover and Land Use Classification
2. Ecosystem for Sustainable Land Management
3. National Estate Management
4. Human Settlements, Urbanisation and Spatial Organisation
5. Land Degradation and Sustainable Soil Management
6. Agriculture and Land Productivity
7. Biodiversity and Natural Assets
8. Integrated Coastal Zone Management
9. Knowledge Building and Sharing, Public Outreach and Engagement
10. Governance for Sustainable Land Management

g. Acronyms

h. Glossary

i. Annexes

6. This policy framework shall come into effect on the date it is affirmed by the National Assembly or the date it is set to come into effect upon affirmation by the National Assembly.

7. This policy framework shall have effect for the tenure stated within its contents.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

8. The principles set out below informed the formulation of the policy framework and are expected to drive and guide its implementation.

    a. ***Shared Responsibility*** – All persons and organisations owning, occupying and developing land have a duty to use that land with due regard for the wider interests of both present and future society as a whole and those managing and stewarding land have a duty to share data, knowledge and skills to enable better land use decision-making.

    b. ***Multifunctionality*** – Land ought to be considered for multiple benefits to support economic growth and livelihoods, while also providing for socio-cultural and environmental benefits reflective of traditional knowledge, heritage and way of life.

    c. ***Gender Equality, Equity and Inclusivity*** – How land is used is defined by the needs of all persons of varying characteristics and is to respond to their geographic location and respective lived experiences.

    d. ***Strategic and Granular*** – Implementation at multiple scales and levels, from the national landscape level of ecosystem services to allow for strategic decision-making at the national level while ensuring their applicability at smaller scales at the settlement, community and land ownership level, where global and national goals are realized.

    e. ***Subsidiarity*** – Decision-making authority is best placed where responsibility for outcomes will occur, in the closest appropriate proximity to where the actions will be taken that will produce the outcomes, and where the impact can be monitored and reported on. This principle also holds that nothing should be done by a larger and more complex organization which can be done as well by a smaller and simpler organization.

    f. ***Flexibility and Agility*** – The ability to cope with unforeseen events, to provide room for quick and seamless response and for learning and thought leadership.

    g. ***Sustainable Development –*** Decision-making that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is the ethos of this principle. It requires consideration of the long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities by promoting social justice and equality of opportunity and protecting the natural and cultural environment.

    h. ***Climate Resilience***[i] – Decision-making that reduces risk to disasters and climatic events, advances low carbon emissions and promotes nature based solutions (NbS) that leverages nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, optimise infrastructure and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future, while ensuring that action in

one area does not have adverse effects elsewhere and opportunities are harnessed to accelerate progress towards a safer and fairer society.

i. ***Accountability and Transparency*** – Providing for certainty, integrity and legitimacy to land use decision making enabling the reduction of conflict between public and private interests and traditional users and the state.

j. ***Innovation and technology*** – Decision-making that integrates state-of-the-art data science, technology and innovation to support sustainable land management practice to leapfrog operations to increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, and build knowledge and awareness to foster informed citizen participation at levels of land use governance.

VISION

9. The vision of the policy framework is as follows:

A prosperous Belize in harmony with our natural resources

MISSION

10. The mission of the policy framework is as follows.

Fostering national development and improving the quality of life for all Belizeans through responsible management of our natural resources

GOAL

11. The overarching goal of the policy framework is as follows:

to enable the sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

12. The Strategic Objectives of the policy framework are as follows:

(1) To foster awareness of a shared responsibility between the public and private sector, including civil society and the citizens of Belize, in the sustainable use, management and development of all land in Belize;

(2) To establish the guiding principles for the sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize in furtherance of national development priorities, goals and objectives while meeting the global commitments and the needs and aspirations of the people of Belize at the local level;

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(3) To establish the administrative, technical and operational planning instruments and the competencies of the institutions in charge of their formulation, approval and application;

(4) To establish the criteria for the definition of the different land cover and land use modalities and classes, according to the potential and limitations of the land in Belize;

(5) To improve the quality of the social, economic, physical, electronic and digital, and natural environment as a whole within which patterns of human settlement are situated and resettlement activities are carried out in Belize;

(6) To enable the orderly, efficient and equitable planning, allocation and development of the natural resources of Belize.

(7) To provide for the orderly subdivision of land for residential as well as non-residential purposes in order to facilitate timely and efficient provision of social, economic, physical and electronic and digital, and green infrastructure and the delivery of public goods and public services.

(8) To protect, conserve and enhance the biodiversity and cultural heritage and assets of the country as they find expression in the natural and the built environment;

(9) To secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about communities and buildings and of others who may be affected by the spatial layout of communities and buildings or matters connected with communities and buildings; and

(10) To provide for planning processes that are fair, open, accessible, timely, participatory and more efficient, and for accountability by public authorities whose function it is to regulate the use and development of land in Belize in the interest of safeguarding the rights of both public and private sector.

POLICY STATEMENTS, SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

General

13. The policy statements contained in this policy framework should be taken into account as material consideration in decision-making at all levels of government.

14. The strategic actions for each policy statement contained in this policy framework should inform decision-making at all levels of government.

Policy Statement Thematic Area 1 – Land Cover and Land Use Classification

15. **Policy Statement 1**

The Government of Belize commits to a harmonized and standardised yet agile land cover and land use classification system that encompasses land activities (existing, proposed and potential) in the continuum of urban, peri-urban and rural and coastal-marine areas to bring about a more efficient and effective sustainable land management (SLM) regime, to regulate the use and development of land and to support coordinating and reporting mechanisms of the SLM regime.

16. Rationale for Policy Statement 1

Land cover and land use information is the foundation for SLM practice. The assignment of land cover and land use categories in Belize is either fixed, varying and residing in multiple legislation, or fixed by global reporting requirements and differing from legislative requirements, or is flexible and in-situ, depending on the operational protocols of a government or a non-government organization. Consequently land cover and land use categories vary across ministries and departments of central government, of local government and of non-state organizations engaged in land management activities.

This results in a diverse and often irreconcilable land cover and land use landscape which presents challenges for the aggregation of land use activities to inform decision-making processes for regulating the use and development of land and for describing, monitoring, predicting and reporting on land cover and land use changes. This is further complicated by contemporary and emerging types of land use activities which have to be accounted for. This has implications for the efficiency and effectiveness of a SLM regime, for land use planning and for regulating the use and development of land in Belize.

17. Linkages of Policy Statement 1 to the Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links to objectives 12 (4), (5), (6), (7) and (9)

18. Specific Objective 1.1 and Action

***Objective*:**

to strengthen decision-making processes in land use planning at multiple scales and at different levels, and in different sectors through the harmonization and standardisation of land use modalities, land use classes and land use activities.

***Action 1.1* :**

Establish a multi-tiered land cover and land use classification system that:

a. Classifies at the first tier (level 1) the modality of land to reflect the geographic space of the land cover and land use activity within the configuration of the built and natural environment. This classification is aggregated and more general and representative of broad land use modalities, and is comprised of:

1. Urban:-[ii] cities and towns having this classification and other settlements declared as urban by the Minister for having characteristics displaying diverse productive, residential, recreational and service activities within a space that presents a continuous network of blocks and roads, with water, energy and waste and rainwater drainage infrastructures, or which may have them through connection with pre-existing facilities in the urban fabric;
2. Peri-urban:-[iii] a transition or interaction zone where urban and rural activities are juxtaposed, and landscape features are subject to rapid modifications, induced by anthropogenic activity;
3. Rural:- all areas which are neither classified as urban or peri-urban;
4. Urban coastal-marine:-[iv] urban land located in the geographic area 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the mean high-water mark on its landward side and by the outer limit of the territorial sea on its seaward side, including all coastal waters. (EEZ??-CZMA)
5. Rural coastal-marine:-rural land located in the geographic area 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the mean high-water mark on its landward side and by the outer limit of the territorial sea on its seaward side, including all coastal waters. (EEZ??-CZMA)
6. Peri-urban coastal-marine:-peri-urban land located in the geographic area 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) from the mean high-water mark on its landward side and by the outer limit of the territorial sea (EEZ) on its seaward side, including all coastal waters. (EEZ??-CZMA)

b. At the second tier (level 2), disaggregate the modality into land use classes that are more detailed and occurring within Level 1 modalities.

1. Residential-When the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is for individual or collective housing;
2. Commercial-When the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is related to the purchase and sale of goods and services;
3. Institutional-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is related to education, health, culture, government and justice;
4. Recreation and Leisure-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is dedicated to the use and enjoyment of natural and cultural attractions or engaging in sports activities
5. Industrial-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land corresponds to the production or transformation of goods or raw material that does not alter the quality of life of individuals or the ecological functions of the area, including agro-industrial activity;
6. Agricultural-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is agriculture or livestock;

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7. Forestry-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is forestry development, alone or associated with agroforestry or for protection or conservation purposes;
8. Mining-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is the extraction or obtaining of metallic or non-metallic mineral raw materials, both at ground and subsoil level;
9. National significance-when the predominant activity that takes place on a piece of land is the production of services of national and international coverage of communications, seaports and airports, infrastructure, dams and reservoirs, sanitary landfills, energy production from renewable or non-renewable resources or for the conservation of watersheds or wetlands, or some other use as may be determined;
10. Protected areas-when a piece of land has been declared as a natural unit that has very precise and specialized objectives, characteristics, and type of management, and for which the scope and regulation of have been statutorily or non-statutorily established;
11. Mixed-when two or more of the previously mentioned types of land use activities take place on a piece of land; and
12. Non-developable-when land, due to specific conditions, be it environmental, cultural, technological or of purely collective interest is causing injury and damage or may present serious risk of injury to property or is likely to constitute a danger to human life, health or safety or is causing substantial degradation of the land or surrounding areas or may present a serious risk of substantial degradation of the land or surrounding areas

c. At the third tier (level 3) and subsequent tiers, further disaggregate the types of land use classes defined in b. into land use activities as is necessary and relevant to tailor the activities to the existing and potential land use and development capability of the respective geographic space or configuration.

19. Specific Objective 1.2 and Actions

Objective:

To increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of organisations and individuals in SLM practice through:

- Integration of data science, technology and innovation to support SLM practice; and

- leapfrogging operations of the MNRPM, while protecting the environment and responding to what matters to policy and decision makers of SLM and the people of Belize at multiple scales and at different levels.

Action 1.2.1:

Develop the NSDI at the MNRPM to become a shared spatial data platform to perform spatially explicit modelling and comparison of land cover and land use inventory over time at multiple scales and different levels, and in different sectors, to inform decision-making at different levels and sectors of government, and in the non-government sector having regard to:

a. the existing NSDI inventory (hardware, software);

b. a set of defined objectives and priorities;

c. a governance system for geospatial data standards and quality assurance, data-sharing agreements and data reporting procedures across multiple institutions operating at different levels and scales;

d. the stocktaking, harvesting and integration of data sets from both government and non-government sources and the defining of a national foundational dataset.

Action 1.2.2:

Develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy and action plan to develop and sustain the capacity of the NSDI for optimal functionality having regard to the NSDI requirements of the specific objectives and actions of all policy statements in this policy framework and to options for, but not limited to:

a. non-governmental source of funding

b. partnerships for sustained data harvesting, use, analysis and reporting

c. monetising data

d. copyrighting data

Policy Statement Thematic Area 2 – Ecosystem for Sustainable Land Management

20. Policy Statement on an Ecosystem for Sustainable Land Management

The Government of Belize commits to a SLM ecosystem whereby:

- the development plan is the basis of the planning system and sets the context in which development is to take place;

- the development plan is underpinned by a land use plan to guide the use and development of land in Belize at multiple scales and at different levels and which acts

as a necessary tool to coordinate current and future societal land needs while striking a balance between the often conflicting interests of diverse land users and stewards; and

- barriers to the optimal functionality of the SLM ecosystem as a whole within which interdependent factors other than LUP operate will be addressed, those factors being land tenure, land tax and land rent, the role of fiscal instruments in driving land use changes and the quantity and quality of professionals in SLM practice.

21. Rationale for Policy Statement 2

Belize is at a critical juncture in addressing land management issues. Competition for land is intensifying as a consequence of increasing demand for land to enhance food security and to expand agriculture for export markets, to provide for renewable energy and emerging carbon markets and biofuels, while at the same time, accommodating urbanization, resource extraction and ecosystem services.

This is further exacerbated by:

- Belize's status as a small developing state and its vulnerability to increasingly frequent disasters brought on by climate variability;
- a weak, centralised and archaic governance system with constrained capacity and inadequate tools to proactively navigate and manage contemporary, emerging, and often complex land development issues;
- an aged, complex, siloed and fragmented policy and legal framework plagued with conflicts and duplication of authority or the absence of authority for SLM and for regulating the use and development of land;
- inadequate information on land parcels and land occupation, complex and occasionally uncoordinated managerial processes, outdated and missing cadastral information;
- insecure land tenure and land valuation processes that do not effectively represent the market value of the land; and
- a paucity of professionals trained in disciplines to support SLM.

This has manifested in:

- Uncoordinated, haphazard and unplanned or poorly planned urban and rural development defined by inefficient urban sprawl, incontiguous infrastructure and inefficient coordination in the provision of infrastructure;

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- Development without physical and social infrastructure constraining investment, compromising social interaction and accessibility to livelihood opportunities;

- Development characterized by incompatible and conflicting land uses compromising the quality of life of the citizenry;

- Development on slopes (<20 per cent) and floodplains increasing soil erosion and disaster risk to critical infrastructure, lives, livelihoods and assets;

- Degradation of sensitive environments and loss of biodiversity by mega public and private sector projects compromising ecosystem services;

- Conversion of high grade agricultural land to other uses;

- the under-utilisation and/or abandonment of land, especially in the agricultural sector, due to insecure tenure, inappropriate siting (unsuitable soils), and inaccessibility;

- the under-utilisation and/or abandonment of land in the urban areas due to land tenure conflicts despite having accessibility to physical, electronic and digital and social infrastructure and public goods and services;

- Land use conflicts and disparities and inconsistent methods in property valuation for rental of national estate for urban and rural areas, land tax for rural areas and property tax for cities and towns;

- Lack of trust in public authorities with responsibility for SLM; and

- Limited public participation and engagement in land use planning decisions;

Failure to manage this process may erode progress made towards meeting sustainable development targets such as reducing poverty, eradicating hunger, enhancing health and well-being; and making cities and human settlements safe, sustainable, resilient and inclusive.[v]

This demands a response and an approach that involves strengthening the ecosystem for SLM as a whole to enable both public and private land users to maximise the economic and socio-cultural and environmental benefits of land, the contemporary and emerging innovations and digital technologies, while maintaining or enhancing the ecological support functions of its resources, namely, soil, water and animals.

22. Linkages of Policy Statement 2 to the Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links to objectives 12 (1) (2) (3) (6) (7) (8) (9) and (10)

23. Specific Objective 2.1 and Actions-Land Use Planning and SLM

Objective:

to provide the technical and spatial framework for the optimal use of land in Belize while delivering on national development goals and priorities and global commitments.

Action 2.1.1

Prepare development and land use plans at all levels of decision-making for application at multiple scales through multi-sectoral coordination and effective stakeholder engagement and participation. These plans shall be the legal instruments for use by the state for defining, adopting, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies, goals, objectives, priorities, and processes for enabling the sustainable use and management of land and for regulating the use and development of land for the whole or parts of the country. The legal instruments are the National Land Use Plan and the Local Development Plan.

a. National Development Plan- Plan Belize and the National Land Use Plan (NLUP)

   The NLUP gives expression to the technical and spatial requirements of Plan Belize. It shall be the primary legal instrument that set out the goals, objectives, and priority actions of the Government of Belize for the sustainable use, management, and development of land in Belize and which provides for vertical and horizontal integration and coherence of sector policies and local development plans. The NLUP shall:

   (i) be consistent with the National Land Use Policy and other national and sectoral development policies, strategies and plans of the government;

   (ii) comprehensively draw together and link the spatial and technical requirements and functions of sectoral policies, strategies and plans adopted by individual ministries and statutory agencies of government;

   (iii) provide the policy framework within which regional and local level development planning can be undertaken;

   (iv) have regard to challenges and opportunities created by demographic changes and movement and land development activities;

   (v) facilitate the continuity and connectivity of green infrastructure in urban, peri-urban, rural and coastal marine areas, of the natural, diverse and distinct characterisation of the landforms and landscapes of Belize, and of ecological corridors that connect different habitats of the biophysical environment

   (vi) provide for the sustainability of biodiversity and of watersheds and the use of water for domestic, productive and ecosystem services;

(vii) provide for the efficient and effective delivery of public goods and services between districts and settlements and within districts and within settlements in Belize and for continuity and connectivity to international services;

(viii) provide for the rational allocation of land for competing uses and interest and the multiple benefits of land to support economic growth and livelihoods, while also providing social and environmental benefits;

(ix) contribute to building the resilience of people, communities and livelihoods in the face of altered climate;

(x) enable a low carbon emission development pathway for Belize;

(xi) take into consideration the aptitudes and attributes of Belize for new development opportunities;

(xii) integrate the levels of disaster risk reduction to natural and human-induced hazards affecting the population and the built and natural environment;

(xiii) maintain the integrity of the cultural landscape, significant historical and archeological monuments and sites, and the form and character of urban and rural settlements that identifies the Belizean way of life;

(xiv) provide for the differentiated needs of all persons of varying characteristics, geographic location and lived experiences;

(xv) integrate people's participation in the planning processes; and

(xvi) have regard to the governance system and the multiple scales and levels of decision making, administrative authority and where the actions for sustainable land management and regulating the use and development of land will occur.

(xvii) Include the following contents in two parts:

Part I shall include–

(a) the problems the NLUP is to solve;

(b) goals and objectives of the NLUP and their linkages to Plan Belize;

(c) information on existing and projected population and economic growth policies, trends and patterns that is indicative of where there will be growth in employment and housing opportunities and investment in physical and electronic and digital communications infrastructure;

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(d) land suitability analysis for varying types of development;

(e) climate resilient and disaster risk reduction analysis and strategies;

(f) a transportation system and hierarchy that prioritises decarbonisation, the reduction of travel time and the use of private vehicles and that provides for a network of roads based on their existing and future functions and capacities for national and international connectivity;

(g) a hierarchy and network of urban and rural settlements to provide the focus for the provision, consolidation and growth of housing, economic opportunities and social interaction based on existing and projected population size, functionality of settlements and role in national development (See PS3); and

(h) the required measures to resource the plan and to build governance capacity to give effect to the NLUP.

Part II shall include a land use and zoning plan consisting of such provisions as are necessary for designating the use of land for Belize as a whole and generally for carrying out any of the objects for which the plan is made, and in particular shall define:

(a) the sites to accommodate the national road network hierarchy, public transportation and facilities, communications and digital technologies infrastructure, water transmission and distribution, energy generation, transmission and distribution and the performance standards which should apply to any development to be carried out;

(b) the sites to identify the hierarchy network of urban and rural settlements and the performance standards which should apply to any designation within the hierarchy; (*See PS4-Urbanisation, Human Settlements and Spatial Organisation)*

(c) the assignment of land use modality according to PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System-Level 1 and the associated development performance standards for:

i. Urban land modality

ii. Rural land modality

iii. Peri-urban land modality

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iv. Urban-coastal marine land modality

v. Rural-coastal marine land modality

vi. Peri-urban-coastal marine land modality

(d) The assignment of any land use class according to PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System-Level 2 and the associated development performance standards as may be necessary to give effect to the objects of the plan.

(e) The general rule of decision-making which will set the threshold for what developments are to be made, referred to or notified to the Minister responsible for the planning system and which are to be dealt with at the local level.

b. Local Development Plan

The Local Development Plan (LDP) shall be the primary legal instrument for guiding and regulating the use and development of land in urban areas (cities, towns and any area designated to be an urban area for the purpose of preparing the LDP) and for an area or areas or parts of areas of a district or districts declared for the purpose of preparing a LDP or a regional development plan (RDP), which may include a part or parts of a village, town or city, or the whole village, town or city, due to special circumstances or critical concern or necessity or in the interest of and in furtherance of national or regional policy.

The LDP or the RDP shall:

(i) be consistent with the provisions of the National Land Use Plan and other national and sectoral development policies, strategies and plans of the government;

(ii) comprehensively draw together and link the spatial and technical requirements and functions of sectoral policies, strategies and plans adopted by individual ministries and statutory agencies of government at the regional or local level;

(iii) have regard to challenges and opportunities created by demographic changes and movement and land development activities at the regional or local level;

(iv) facilitate the continuity and connectivity of physical, electronic and digital infrastructure for communications and the efficient and effective delivery of public goods and services at the regional or local level for continuity and connectivity into national road hierarchy and network;

(v) facilitate the continuity and connectivity of green infrastructure and of the natural, diverse and distinct characterisation of the landforms and landscapes at the regional or local level to the rest of Belize;

(vi) provide for ecological corridors that connect different habitats of the biophysical environment, the sustainability of biodiversity and of watersheds and the use of water for domestic, productive and ecosystem services that are occurring at the regional or local level;

(vii) provide for the rational allocation of land for competing uses and interest and the multiple benefits of land to support economic growth and livelihoods, while also providing social and environmental benefits;

(viii) contribute to building the resilience of people, communities and livelihoods in the face of altered climate;

(ix) contribute to a low carbon emission development pathway for Belize;

(x) take into consideration the aptitudes and attributes of the area for new development opportunities;

(xi) integrate the levels of disaster risk reduction to natural and human-induced hazards affecting the population and the built and natural environment;

(xii) maintain the integrity of the cultural landscape, significant historical and archeological monuments and sites, and the form and character of the area that identifies the Belizean heritage and way of life;

(xiii) provide for the differentiated needs of all persons of varying characteristics, geographic localities and lived experiences;

(xiv) integrate people's participation in the planning processes; and

(xv) have regard to the governance system and the multiple scales and levels of decision making and administrative authority; and

(xvi) Include the following contents in two parts:

Part I shall consist of :-

(a) a written statement of the principal aims and objectives of the LDP or RDP with respect to the sustainable use, management and development of land in the planning area;

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(b) a situational analysis and gap assessment report on:-

i. the principal purposes for which land is used and the patterns and trends in land cover and land use change;

ii. disaggregated housing and population data, characteristics of informal settlements, population emigration and immigration patterns and trends, and the demand for land over time;

iii. the infrastructure for communications and digital technologies, the road network and stormwater drainage, road side facilities, transport system and movement of all types of traffic, water and wastewater, sewerage systems, solid waste and energy of the area so far as they may be expected to affect that area, of any neighboring areas;

iv. baseline greenhouse gas emission analysis and projection;

v. the differentiated needs of all persons of varying characteristics, geographic location and lived experiences;

vi. climate resilience and disaster risk reduction strategies and plans;

vii. the provision of public services and social infrastructure and utilities in the area and the demand for land for these needs over time; and

viii. any other matters which may affect the development and other use of land in the area or which the Minister may direct.

(c) a written statement with reasoned justification of the policies, proposals and programmes for the future use and development of land in the area having regard to:-

i. the situational and gap assessment report of the area under subsection (b) preceding;

ii. the likely social, economic, environmental and technological considerations of the policies and proposals;

iii. the National Land Use Plan;

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iv. the relationship between the policies and proposals in the LDP and other previously approved development plans which may affect the area;

v. the financial and other resources which are likely to be available or which must be mobilised for carrying out the proposals of the LDP or RDP;

vi. the time table for public consultation and adoption of the LDP or RDP.

(d) such maps, plans, drawings, diagrams, illustrations or other graphic representations or descriptive or explanatory matter in respect of the general policies of the LDP or RDP;

(e) recommendations for the sequencing or phasing of development within the area covered by the LDP or RDP;

(f) matters which may pertain to particular conditions to be addressed with a greater degree of detail;

(g) the quantity and forms of housing required and estimated to be required in the future by various socio-economic groups, or by that part of the population living or expected to live in the area described in the LDP or RDP;

(h) a transport hierarchy and transportation and traffic assessment and management strategy and plan that prioritises walking and cycling, public transport and low-emission vehicles, and which reduces travel time within the area of the LDP or RDP;

(i) a utilities management strategy for the efficient and effective collaboration in the delivery of utility services; and

(j) an environmental impact statement incorporating a systematic environmental appraisal of policies and proposals having environmental implications as an appendix to the LDP or RDP.

Part II of a LDP or RDP shall consist of a land use and zoning plan consisting of such provisions as are necessary for regulating the use and development of land in the area to which the plan applies and generally for carrying out any of the objects for which the plan is made, and in particular shall define or designate:-

(a) the sites and planning guidelines of proposed roads and municipal facilities to accommodate the delivery of water, communications and digital

technologies, sewerage systems, solid waste management and energy transmission and distribution and the performance standards which should apply to any development to be carried out;

(b) the sites and planning guidelines for the provision of green and social infrastructure and public and community facilities and services having regard to design principles that provide for inclusivity and accessibility, community safety, environmental sustainability, movement and site and context analysis.

(c) the assignment of land use classes according to PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System-Level 2 and subsequent levels as may be required and the associated development performance standards for:

i. Residential land use class

ii. Commercial land use class

iii. Institutional land use class

iv. Recreation and Leisure

v. Industrial and manufacturing land use class

vi. Agricultural land use class

vii. Forestry land use class

viii. Mining land use

ix. National significance land use class

x. Protected areas land use class

xi. Mixed use land use class

xii. Non-developable land use class

(d) special planning guidelines for:

i. advertisements

ii. subdivision of land

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iii. preservation of buildings and sites of historic and architectural interest

iv. construction of piers, jetties, wharves and kraals

v. preservation of trees, plants and sites of amenity

vi. for engineering operations

Action 2.1.2:

Develop a set of planning procedures and processes that are applicable at multiple scales and different levels to formulate, adopt, implement, modify, amend, enforce, revoke and or replace a NLUP, RDP or RDP to guide the sustainable management of land and to regulate the use and development of land and for an appeal process for those aggrieved by the decisions of the processes. *(See PS10-Governance for Land Use Planning)*

24. Specific Objective 2.2 and Actions – Land Tenure System and SLM

Objective:

to reduce land tenure conflicts, the timeline for issuance of land documents and the liability to the Government of Belize while enhancing trust and confidence in the sanctity of the land tenure system.

Action 2.2.1

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan for:

a. incentivizing the voluntary re-registration (first title) of lands that currently fall outside a compulsory land registration area;

b. requiring the declaration for compulsory registration of new state and non-state sub-divisions exceeding 100 parcels;

c. phasing to completion, the compulsory registration of all lands in Belize; and

d. strenghtening the systematisation of the processes of registering conditions, encumbrances and restrictive covenants resulting from the subdivision permitting procedures of the Land Utilisation Act.

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Action 2.2.2

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to modernize the practice of surveying in Belize as is necessary to:

a. to improve the accuracy of surveys; and

b. to leap frog the production of maps and the compulsory registration of land.

Action 2.2.3

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from the Lands Registry and Land Title Unit of the MNRPM into the NSDI to facilitate:

a. modelling, predicting and reporting on land tenure interests and property transactions;

b. a shared platform for state and non-state stakeholders on SLM to access and update information on land tenure.

25. Specific Objective 2.3 and Actions – Land Valuation for SLM

Objective:

to strengthen the land valuation processes and applications to reduce land speculation and to enhance the integrity of land valuation processes while increasing the collection of revenue at national and local levels.

Action 2.3.1:

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to establish the criteria and processes for the valuation of land to improve and inform the assessment of property tax, land tax and the rental of national estate. This strategy shall have regard to:

In rural and coastal rural areas:

a. Environmental and ecosystem services including considerations for green and blue carbon and other land use modalities within a carbon market regime;

b. Geographic location according to Level 1-Land Use Modality of PS1-Land Use Cover and Land Use Classification;

c. Land use category assignment according to Level 2 of PS1-Land Use Cover and Classification System;

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d. Historical sale price of land in surrounding areas;

e. Natural and scenic features which may enhance the value of land; and

f. Nearby features which may be major highways, infrastructure, settlements, airports, riverine and coastal waterfronts tend to have higher values than those further away.

In urban, peri-urban, coastal-urban and coastal peri-urban areas:

a. The historical sales price which looks at the different values the property was sold for over a number of years to observe trends to define a reasonable starting point to a valuation;

b. The quality of the neighbourhood which may include zoning provisions, low crime rates, the quality of the school system and green and leisure spaces to name a few;

c. The housing market which is influenced by supply and demand, as housing is an investment and an economic asset, and the state of the economy, unemployment and interest rates and availability all may play a role in the property value;

d. The nearby features which may be major highways, waterfronts and commercial centers for shopping, historical districts etc. tend to have higher values than those further away;

e. The size and appeal when considering the price per square foot, the layout of the house and yard, upgrades and other amenities as garage, pools etc.; and

f. The age and condition of buildings may determine the need for upgrades or maintenance.

Action 2.3.2.

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen the collaboration between national and local government to harmonize and make consistent the terminologies, land cover and land use classification, and the processes and applications in the valuation of land.

Action 2.3.3

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from the land valuation unit of the MNRPM and local government into the NSDI to facilitate:

a. modelling, predicting and reporting on property values and arrears of property and land tax and rent of national estate;

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b. a shared platform for national and local government to access and update information on property values; and

c. a shared platform for non-government stakeholders to access reports on property valuation processes, applications, patterns and trends.

26. Specific Objective 2.4 and Actions – Fiscal Instruments in Land Use Planning

Objective:

to incentivize the use of land and steer it toward the goals and objectives of the NLUP and Plan

Action 2.4.1

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen collaboration between sectors and levels of government to increase the use of non-spatial fiscal instruments to incentivize the use of land to steer it in a manner that aligns with the goals and objectives of the National Land Use Policy, National Land Use Plan and Local Development Plans. These non-spatial instruments should include but are not limited to:

- Insurance facilities
- Custom duties and tariffs
- Development incentives

27. Specific Objective 2.5 and Actions – Professionals in Development Practice

Objective:

to increase the number of professionals engaged in SLM and to assure professional standards and ethics in the practice of it.

Action 2.5.1

Formulate and implement a strategy and action plan to improve technical capacity for SLM by increasing the number of specialists (planners, surveyors, land valuators and geographic information analysts, planning law etc.) and technicians required to leapfrog its operations at all levels of government and in non-state sectors.

Action 2.5.2

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Strengthen existing legislation which regulates professions engaged in SLM and pass new legislation to institute mechanisms to assure professional standard and ethics in professional practice.

Action 2.5.3

Partner with educational institutions to develop professional and technical programmes to train and certify SLM practitioners.

Policy Statement 3: National Estate Management

28. Policy Statement 3

The Government of Belize commits to improving the mechanisms for managing national estate to address the inherent challenges surrounding the sustainable use and management of land in Belize.

29. Rationale for Policy Statement 3

National estate are all lands owned by the state. These include lands of varying classification:

- Leased lands for a term of years for which a person as a lessee holds a leasehold interest in land which translates into a legal interest in state land;
- Land for which a person have a license to occupy and is considered a licensee and having no legal interest in the land;
- Land which comprises the 66 feet reserve;
- Land under water (waterways, lagoons and the sea);
- Lands designated for public or community use which are within private subdivisions;
- Lands designated for public or community use which are within public subdivisions;
- Public road reserves including buffers, easements and any other public right of way;
- Lands declared as reserves under the National Lands Act;
- Lands declared as reserves under the Forest Act;
- Land declared as protected areas under National Protected System Act;
- Land containing ancient monuments and antiquities and declared as archeological reserve;
- Land which are occupied by public sector organizations; and

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- All other land not owned by any person

There are a number of issues surrounding the management of national estate:

- knowledge of quantum, geographic location and land use of national estate *(See PS2-Rational for Policy Statement);*
- monitoring and documenting new national estate formation;
- questioning of necessity and/or processes for land acquisition for public purposes and the cost of acquisition;
- squatting on national estate (informal settlements);
- the archaic approach to the valuation of national estate; *(See PS2-Specific Objective 2.3 and Action – Land and Property Tax and Land Rent System for SLM*
- the high level of arrears of rent and absence of a policy to arrest it;
- the abandonment of leased lands and outdated or no information on the compliance with lease conditions;
- the use of national estate for farming and livestock rearing, construction of piers, jetties and wharves, disposal of waste materials, construction of buildings for the sale of goods, sand mining and other uses without permission;
- the survey of national estate unsuitable for settlement (flood plains, steep slopes etc.) and the distribution, leasing and sale of said lands;
- the designation of national estate for public and community purposes in public sub-divisions with no structure for its management subsequent to the issuance of leases or sale of national estate; and
- the subdivision and alienation of national estate contrary to the provisions the Land Utilisation Act and the Environmental Protection Act.

Other issues which the MNRPM has to address:

- abandonment of privately owned lands and/or the non-payment of property tax; and
- the designation of lands in private subdivisions for public and community purposes for which no structure for its management post the registration of the survey;

30. Linkages to Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links to strategic objectives 12 (1) (2) (3) (6) (7) (8) (9) and (10)

31. Specific Objective 3.1 and Actions

Objective:

to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of national estate

Action 3.1

Conduct a stock take of national estate in urban, peri-urban, rural, coastal-marine urban, coastal marine peri-urban and coastal marine rural to establish a data base of the quantum, geographic location and key attributes of national estate

Action 3.2 :

Conduct a comprehensive review of the current protocols and practices in the movement of an application for a license or to lease or purchase national estate land from start to completion of the process to identify gaps, deficiencies and barriers for the efficient and effective management of national estate having regard to:

a. the required review and recommendations of the units/departments of the MNRPM critical to SLM; and

b. ensuring compliance with SLM practices, the NLUP, LDPs and development orders for inclusion as a condition of the lease or sale prior to submission to the Minister for final approval, with such approval voidable if the application is in non-compliance of the protocol.

Action 3.3

Formulate and implement a national estate management policy, strategy and action plan that responds to and addresses:

a. the gaps in data on the quantum, categories and types of uses of national estate;

b. the gaps, deficiencies and barriers to integrating SLM in national estate management;

c. the criteria and requirements to process lease applications having regard to the applicant being a lessee or previous lessee of national estate;

d. the conditions of the lease inclusive of the requirements to develop land and what that entails and to comply with SLM practices, the NLUP and LDP and development orders;

e. the management of leased lands (conditions lease is subject to and reporting mechanisms to track the application of occupation and compliance with the conditions of the lease and SLM practices);

f. the valuation of national estate for maximum return to the state having regard to the use of subsidy where the circumstances may require the same;

g. the transfer of land allocated for public and community purposes in private subdivisions to national or local government;

h. the management of land allocated for public and community purposes in public subdivisions by national or local government;

i. inadequate or non-existent strategies to manage informal settlements on public lands;

j. the transfer of abandoned private lands owing taxes to national estate;

k. the requirement for the acquisition of land for public purposes identified and recommended in the NLUP and LDPs;

l. non-compliance by the MNRP with the Environmental Protection Act and the Land Utilization Act; and

m. the barriers to a shared responsibility with local government and non-state organisations to co-manage national estate within the jurisdiction of local governments and non-state organisations sphere of management or influence.

Action 3.4

Develop an operation protocol to set out the steps and the prerequisites for each step that must be fulfilled for an application for the lease, license or sale of national estate to be submitted for approval, as well as the individuals and units/departments in charge of reviewing and making recommendations as to whether it ought to be approved with or without conditions or refused.

Action 3.5

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets on the attributes of national estate into the NSDI to facilitate:

a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on quantum, uses, gender of lessee or licensee, rate of conversion from lease to title and size of parcels, transfer of leases and compliance of conditions of leases of national estate; and

b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on national estate

Policy Statement 4: Human Settlements, Urbanisation and Spatial Organisation

32. Policy Statement 4

The Government of Belize commits to developing strong, vibrant, safe, resilient and sustainable urban and rural settlements.

33. Rationale for Policy Statement 4

According to the census, in 2022, 42.2 percent of households live in urban areas and 57.8 percent in rural areas. This compares to 45.2 percent and 54.8 percent of households living in urban and rural areas respectively in 2010.

Beyond traditional practice and an administrative designation via the use of a statutory instrument, which simply defines the legal boundaries within which a local government has jurisdiction, there is no criteria for distinguishing urban from rural settlements, or cities from towns and villages in Belize.[vi] Consequently, varying legislation provides for the Minister to declare a town to be a village or a village to be a town for the purpose of the Act. As for villages, the only criteria is that at least two hundred persons who would be qualified to vote for village councils live in the area. Furthermore, only 6 or 2.9 per cent of 202 villages and communities have legal boundaries.[vii]

A more in-depth examination of the populations of settlements in 2010 classified as rural, revealed 3.6 per cent had populations that are either in excess of 3000 persons[1] or had surpassed that of towns. The challenges of this trajectory are:

- Recognizing continued urbanisation in cities and towns without the concurrent rise of unplanned secondary and intermediate settlements (villages), without consideration for their populations exceeding that of towns and functionality within national development planning; the capacity of local governments to manage this demographic shift; the demand for land and land use conflicts and changes which can manifest in increasing poverty, conflict, inequality, vulnerability to natural hazards and communicable diseases and increasing informality (squatter settlements, road side vendors etc.) in varying components of urban and rural life.

- Defining “urban”, “urban areas” and “urbanized” and “rural” unearths a challenge, have implications to measuring urbanisation, quantifying of urban populations, and consequently, the spatial reach of governance and the planning for land needs for the

[1] SIB, 2010, p. 55 For census purposes in Belize, municipalities (cities and towns) are considered urban, and all other settlements are considered rural..

delivery of public goods and services, as well as to monitoring demographic shifts trends and patterns and land cover land use changes, and for reporting on national and global development goals and targets.

- Defining "urbanized" in the delimitation of geographic boundaries of either cities and towns and aligning them with an administrative designation, may not always coincide with what is actually an urbanized area, as an urbanized area may also include areas outside that boundary or sub-urban areas, or the amalgamation of villages or land used for agriculture or in natural state.

- Energy efficiency and the cost implications to financing and maintaining critical social and physical infrastructure (roads and drainage, water and wastewater, health and education facilities etc.) in consideration of inefficient urban sprawl and urban informalism (squatter settlements and roadside vendors)

- The highly complex nature of urban environments which consists of a broad spectrum of infrastructure systems (water and energy supply, sanitation and drainage, transport and telecommunication), services (including health care and emergency services), the built environment, and ecosystem services, all interdependent and interacting temporally and spatially, with other social, economic, and environmental stressors, exacerbating climate and urban risks at the individual, household and community levels

34. Linkages to Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links to strategic objectives 12 (1) (2) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) and (10)

35. Specific Objective and Action 4.1

Objective:

to plan for and manage urbanisation and demographic shifts in Belize, having regard to:

- the functionality of settlements based on their position in a hierarchy (city, town, village and community); and

- the criteria for such a position based on their threshold population and sphere of influence in the delivery of public goods and services for realizing national and local development goals and meeting global targets;

Action 4.1.1:

Conduct a strategic assessment of settlements in Belize to inform the establishment of a hierarchy and network of settlements and the trigger for the amalgamation of cities, towns and villages based on a set of criteria to include but not limited to:

a. Existing and projected population

b. Geographic location and relationship with other centers

c. Level of connectivity of blocks and roads, with water, energy, waste and rainwater drainage and green infrastructures

d. Level of central government offices and service delivery

e. Level of local government office and service delivery

f. Level of integration into the national transportation network

g. Level and types of economic activity and markets

h. Level of public transportation within the settlement

i. Proximity of major public and private sector projects

j. Risk level to diseases, natural hazards and climatic events

k. Availability of vacant or unproductive land for re-development and re-generation

Action: 4.1.2

Using the findings of the strategic assessment of settlements, formulate and adopt a national spatial strategy for Belize which shall have regard to:

a. the ranking of settlements in a hierarchy according to their population size, functionality and role in national development as either a city, town or village (large, intermediate and small);

b. the definition of either an urban or rural settlement;

c. the criteria to trigger the amalgamation of settlements;

d. the criteria for the transition of settlements along the hierarchy;

e. measures to contain urban growth to minimise amalgamation of settlements;

f. promoting the expansion or re-generation of existing settlements away from the coasts and flood plains to reduce exposure to natural hazards and climatic events;

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g. discouraging the development of new settlements, and encouraging the same only:

(i) as an alternative where such development would offer significant environmental, social, cultural and economic advantages over the further expansion or regeneration of existing settlements;

(ii) where such development would be self-contained and not dormitory towns for overspill from larger urban area; and

(iii) where such and away from the coast or flood plains and

h. the spatial delineation of villages for legal jurisdiction for development planning, operational management and to regulate the use and development of land;

i. purposefully directing major public and private sector projects to settlements away from the coast and flood plains to reduce exposure to natural hazards and climatic events;

j. the planning guidelines for the delivery of public goods and services according to the position in the hierarchy having regard to:

(i) the provision and location of community, recreation and leisure and sporting facilities;

(ii) the provision and location of education and health facilities;

(iii) the provision and location of commercial and retail centers and hubs;

(iv) the provision and location of faith-based institutions;

(v) the provision and location of emergency response facilities;

(vi) the provision and location of government and social facilities;

(vii) the provision and location of physical, electronic and digital communications infrastructure; and

(viii) the interdependency of infrastructure systems, services, the built environment, and ecosystem services.

36. Specific Objective 4.2 and Action

Objective:

to enable the sustainable growth and development of urban and rural settlements

Action: 4.2.1

Place a legislative duty on local government to prepare or cause to prepare a local development plan to guide the growth and development of cities, towns and villages according to the provisions of the NLUP and development orders. *(See PS2-Ecosystem for SLM, 2.1-Land use planning)*

Action: 4.2.2

Provide a legislative power to a local authority (See definition of local authority) to adopt the LDP or RDP and for it to be the legal instrument and justification for:

a. the granting of permission to develop land with or without conditions and planning obligations or to refuse an application;

b. to develop land by itself or in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and the private sector to deliver on the goals, objectives, and priorities of the RDP or LDP; and

c. for powers to prescribe all matters relating to the preparation, adoption, enforcement, modification, replacement, revocation or repeal of the RDP or LDP.

37. Specific Objective 4.3 and Action

Objective:

to build the capacity of local governance to engage in SLM practices

Action: 4.3.1

Conduct a capacity assessment of a local authority (city, town and village councils based on position in hierarchy and any organisation appointed for such purpose) to engage in sustainable urban resilience and land management. The assessment should have regard to:

a. Urban Governance and the processes and structures that allow for participating in the decision-making process and for influencing public policies and strategies for improved urban planning, management, and development. This element of the assessment should focus on the relationship between citizens and the local government, and speak to adequate and efficient legal, policies, administrative and operational frameworks. Urban governance is the “software” that enables urban “hardware” to function.

b. Urban Planning and Environment which includes all aspects related to planning and design of the urban space, the quality of the natural environment (air, water, soil), public/green spaces and the quality of the natural environment (air, water, soil), public/green spaces and climate change.

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c. Resilient Infrastructure and Basic Services entails ensuring equal access to infrastructure and basic services is crucial to meet vital needs of the population and to allow a city, town, or village to function and develop properly. This assessment refers to the urban "hardware" mentioned in the Urban Governance and includes, among others: streets and roads, bridges, drainage, water and electricity supply, sanitation and solid waste management, hospitals, schools, etc.

d. Urban Economy and Society, which refers to the processes, mechanisms and activities that will allow a citiy, town, and village to becoming drivers of socio-economic development in a country or region, by creating jobs, increasing households' income, generating investments, reducing social tensions and crime, increasing equality and inclusion, promoting social mix, and enhancing security and safety, among other aspects.

e. Urban Disaster Risk Management which refers to the ability of the local government and communities, in terms of capacity, knowledge, processes and systems in place, to prevent, anticipate, respond to, and recover rapidly from the impacts of natural or human induced threats.

Action: 4.3.2

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to build the capacity of the local authority for SLM based on the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the capacity assessment.

Action: 4.3.3

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from local government into the NSDI to facilitate:

a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on urban and regional land management issues; and

b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on urban land management issues

Policy Statement 5: Land Degradation and Sustainable Soil Management

38. Policy Statement 5

The Government of Belize commits to reducing soil degradation and to achieving Belize's land degradation neutrality (LDN) target of "No net loss for all territorial lands in all land cover classes, compared to the 2000-2015 baseline by 2030 through sustainable land management practices and techniques.

39. Rationale for Policy Statement 5

Land degradation in Belize leads to the decline in:

- the productive capacity of the soil as a result of soil erosion and changes in the hydrological, biological, chemical and physical properties of the soil;
- the quantity and/or quality of the natural biomass and decrease in the vegetative ground cover;
- the quantity and/or quality of both surface and ground water resources which can lead to drought conditions; and
- the changing of the natural discharge patterns of waterways.

Land degradation can also lead to variations in climate conditions which can increase crop failure. A number of factors directly drive land degradation in Belize. These include but are not limited to:

- Improper management of soil and of the annual, perennial, (shrubs) and tree crops;
- Deforestation and removal of natural vegetation;
- Urban expansion and infrastructure development to provide land housing and other population land needs;
- Overgrazing of land by livestock farming ;
- Disturbance of the water cycle, that is, over-abstraction of the water;
- Natural hazards, climate change and extreme event like forest fires;
- Industrial activities including illegal and unsustainable quarrying activities and mining in rivers;
- Diseases such as pine bark beetle causing conversion from forest to grassland;
- Conversion of forests and wetlands to aquaculture, also resulting in water degradation because of fresh and saltwater abstraction; and
- Use of chemicals and pesticides in the clearing of land or treatment of diseases leading to soil and water contamination.

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This is compounded by first, a weak policy' legislative and institutional collaboration for SLM and the lack of policies for mining and mineral exploration and exploitation, rehabilitation and other extractive activities; and second, the failure to appoint the National Integrated Water Resource Authority, which has a legislative mandate to ensure the orderly and coordinated development and use of Belize's water resources, to conserve and protect such resources for the benefit of present and future generations of Belizeans, and to provide the Belizean public with a safe, adequate and reliable supply of water.

Data on three indicators (land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon) for measuring land degradation suggest that a total of 4,788 km2 or 21.66 per cent of land in Belize are degraded. The most significantly degraded areas include portions of the Cayo, Belize, Orange Walk and Corozal Districts, the latter two primarily as a result of the expansion of agricultural activities.

40. Linkages to Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links to strategic objectives 12 (2), (6) and (8)

41. Specific Objective and Action 5.1

Objective :

to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality in Belize with a focus on the Belize River watershed region and Orange Walk and Corozal Districts

Action 5.1.1:

Develop a strategy and action plan to strengthen inter-ministerial and sectoral and collaboration within the MNRPM and with key ministries and agencies having responsibility for matters with implications to land degradation and soil management to provide technical guidance, to monitor and report on progress towards achieving LDN targets, having regard to:

a. Departments within the MNRPM responsibility for hydrological services and integrated water resource management, land use planning and national estate management for:

   (i) the identification and designation of areas to apply strategies to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation practices; and

   (ii) for the integration of SLM practices into agreements for sale, leases and licenses of national estate, the approval of sub-divisions and the preparation of the NLUP and the preparation and enforcement of LDPs.

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b. Ministry with responsibility for Agriculture for implementing sustainable agricultural practices to help to preserve soil fertility, improve water filtration, minimise erosion, and maintain ecosystem balance.

c. Ministry with responsibility for Biodiversity, Forestry and Protected areas for implementing management strategies for key wetlands and watershed areas, for reforestation and landscape restoration and for increasing forest cover to prevent soil erosion, enhance water retention and quality, and promote biodiversity.

d. Ministry with responsibility for Climate Change and Sustainable Development for integration of SLM in the Nationally Determined Contributions and other related policies. strategies and plans.

e. Ministry with responsibility for Coastal Zone for strengthening the integration of SLM in the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan

f. Ministry with responsibility for Local Government and city, town and village councils for the integration of SLM practices into LDPs.

Action 5.1.2:

Appoint the National Integrated Water Resource Authority to institute legality of the current practice of the issuance of licenses and permits by the National Hydrological Service, the adoption of the National Water Resources Master Plan, the declaration of water control areas, the protection of ground water and gathering grounds and responding to transboundary watershed management.

42. Specific Objective and Action 5.2

Objective:

to minimise land degradation in the management of mineral exploration, extraction and exploitation

Action:

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan for the exploration, extraction and exploitation of minerals having regard to:

a. the identification and designation of mining reserves and zones for incorporation in the NLUP and LDPs; and

b. the restoration and rehabilitation of mined areas for productive use

43. Specific Objective and Action 5.3

Objective:

to strengthen the capacity for monitoring, predicting and reporting on land degradation indicators having regard to multiple stakeholders and scales, and different levels of data uptake and SLM applications

Action 5.3.1:

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to build the capacity of the institutional and individual capacity to engage in monitoring, predicting and reporting on land degradation activities

Action 5.3.2

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from state and non-state stakeholders into the NSDI to facilitate:

d. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on land degradation issues and indicators; and

e. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on land degradation issues

Policy Statement 6: Agriculture and Land Productivity

44. Policy Statement

The Government of Belize commits to balancing the tension between the demand for food production and the compromising of land viability, the encroachment and conversion of productive lands and the sustainability imperatives such as climate action and biodiversity protection.

45. Rationale for Policy Statement 6

Agriculture is a vital component of the national economy directly contributing 7.8% to the GDP and is critically important to attain food security and sovereignty. A substantial percentage of Belize's population live in rural areas, producing valuable harvests and drawing their livelihoods from agriculture. Notwithstanding, there are key land use challenges in the agricultural sector are:

- security of tenure, particularly for the small farmer;

- subdivision of high grade agricultural land for urban expansion and other non-agricultural uses;
- unsustainable agricultural practices contributing to declining land productivity, soil erosion and disruption of ecosystem services;
- uncontrolled expansion of agriculture activity contributing to forest cover and biodiversity loss and the destruction and disruption of ecosystems services;
- use of unsuitable land for agricultural purposes increasing exposure to disaster risk;
- illegal occupation of land for agricultural activities by both by Belizeans and illegal immigrants;
- lack of updated soil capability data to assess and classify land according to their level of productivity value;
- limited quantum of women in agriculture;
- the market value of land is set by its developmental value and land use policies are not market based, thus constraining the state to manage the conversion of farm land into other more profitable uses; and
- the appetite for applying more smart and efficient agricultural practice to reduce the need for more land.

46. Linkages to Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links to strategic objectives 12 (2) (4) and (6)

47. Specific Objective and Action 6.1

Objective

Strengthen the protection and retention of valuable agriculture land

Action: 6.1.1

Conduct periodic updating and production of soil capability maps to identify and classify land according to level of productivity value (grade)

Action: 6.1.2

Formulate an agriculture land zoning classification and planning guidelines for inclusion in the NLUP and LDPs having regard to SLM practices and PS1-Land Cover and Land Use Classification System.

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Action 6.1.3

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan which aims at reducing the conversion of good agricultural land to other uses.

48. Specific Objective and Action 6.2

Objective:

to reduce land degradation and improve land productivity

Action 6.2.1

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to update the agricultural policy with the aim of enabling sustainable agricultural practices having regard to:

a. enhancing land and water management systems for agricultural production systems;

b. implementing soil and water conservation measures for agricultural production systems;

c. advancing climate smart agricultural practices to increase productivity and enhance resilience while reducing GHG emissions; and

d. the role of women in advancing sustainable agricultural practices

Action 6.2.2

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to improve coordination with the MNRPM to:

a. address barriers to accessing land documentation for farmers;

b. periodically update the tenure interest and attributes of land in agriculture;

c. reduce the illegal occupation and use of national estate for agricultural purposes;

d. support measures for increased women participation in agriculture; and

e. to mainstream zoning classification and planning guidelines for SLM into the subdivision, distribution and lease or sale of national estate for agriculture, into the NLUP and the LDPs.

Action 6.2.3

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Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from state and non-state stakeholders into the NSDI to facilitate:

a. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on agriculture development activities; and

b. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on agriculture development issues

Policy Statement 7: Integrated Coastal Zone Management

49. Policy Statement 7

The Government of Belize commits to arresting unplanned and uncontrolled development in the coastal zone of Belize by strengthening the use of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan as the primary tool to sustainably manage and regulate the use and development of land in the coastal zone of Belize.

50. Rationale for Policy Statement 7

The coastal zone is a vital resource base for Belize that supports a broad range of activities that contribute significantly to the economic growth and environmental, social and cultural fabric of our country. Over 40% of the Belizean population live and work in the coastal zone. In addition, the coastal zone supports infrastructure and assets critical to national development including the airports, roads, ports and public buildings to name a few. The coastal zone is under increasing pressures from an intensified pace of development associated with tourism and recreation, population growth and expansion, utility supply, dredging and mineral extraction, land clearance, pollution, waste disposal, fisheries and aquaculture.

These pressures are exacerbated by natural hazards and increasing frequency of extreme climatic events, global warming and rising sea levels, and the vulnerability of sensitive ecological systems to climate change. Factoring into this scenario is:

- CZMAI is the lead agency for the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan (Marine Spatial Plan), a commitment under the Blue Loan and Conservation Funding Agreement Project which also contains provisions for the expansion of Biodiversity Protection Zones up to 30 per cent of Belize's ocean and of its geographic sphere of influence beyond territorial boundaries to include the Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ);

- There are new and emerging types of development activities associated with the blue economy sector to consider; and

- about 75-80 percent of all coastal land in Belize has been purchased for the development of tourism and residential areas, posing a serious threat to mangroves,

coastal wetlands, and other coastal ecosystems, which are already threatened by the expansion of coastal settlements and aquaculture activities.

There exists an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) with a mandate to support the allocation, sustainable use and planned development of Belize's coastal resources through increased knowledge, and building alliances for the benefit of all Belizeans and the global community. However, the plan has several deficiencies which compromises its capacity to deliver on its mandate. These include:

- The law governing the management of the coastal zone of Belize provides a power and a duty to prepare a CZMP, states what the plan is to include and the processes for its adoption, but provides no power to the Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA) the institution with the mandate for the administration of the plan, to enforce the muti-sectoral actions contained in the plan. Rather the CZMA relies on the authority of other ministries and statutory agencies to lead the implementation of the majority provisions of the plan as it relates to their respective legal mandate.

- The CZMA has developed coastal zone management guidelines for nine (9) coastal planning regions as a component of the CZMP to provide support for planned development and resource management along the coastline and offshore areas of the entire country. However, the CZMA has no power to enforce the guidelines.

- The implementation of the plan is to be monitored by the CZMA and the governmental and non-governmental agencies consulted during plan preparation, but the process for accomplishing this is unclear, considering the CZMA lacks the authority (legislatively or by agreement with government and non-government organizations) to ensure compliance with the plan.

- There is an informal relationship for consultation between CZMI and government agencies regulating development activities, however there is uncertainty as to the extent of the acceptance and application of the advice

51. Linkages to General Objectives

This policy statement links to objectives 12 (2), (3), (4), (6), (7) and (10)

52. Specific Objective 7.1 and Actions

Objective:

To strengthen the multi-sectoral partnership with the aim of implementing the CZMP

Action 7.1.1

Develop and implement a cabinet endorsed memorandum of agreement which:

a. identifies and assigns roles to implementing partners of the CZMP for actions relating to implementation and compliance with the plan;

b. identifies and sets out a plan of action for resource mobilization and capacity to fully implement the plan; and

c. provides for monitoring and evaluation of the MOA and periodic reports to the cabinet and people of Belize on progress towards delivering on the goals and objectives of the plan, bottlenecks encountered and recommendations to address same.

Action 7.1.2

Develop and implement strategy and action plan to integrate data sets from state and non-state stakeholders into the NSDI to facilitate:

f. tracking, modelling, predicting and reporting on coastal zone management issues and targets contained in the CZMP; and

g. a shared platform for national and local government and non-government stakeholders to access and update information on coastal zone management issues

53. Specific Objective 7.2 and Action

Objective:

To strengthen the legal capacity of the CZMA to implement and enforce the provisions of the CZM guidelines

Action:

Declare the CZMA to be a local authority under planning legislation with a power to adopt the CZMP as a LDP for rural-coastal marine classification and for the CZMP development guidelines to be a legal instrument for:

a. the granting of permission to develop land with or without conditions and planning obligations or to refuse an application; and

b. for powers to prescribe all matters relating to the preparation, adoption, enforcement, modification, replacement, revocation or repeal of the LDP.

Policy Statement 8: Biodiversity, Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure Assets

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54. Policy Statement 8

The Government of Belize recognizes Belize's biodiversity, ecological networks and green infrastructure as its natural wealth and commits to safeguarding it's integrity and the ecosystem services and socio-cultural and economic benefits they provide for the people of Belize.

55. Rationale for Policy Statement 8

Together, Belize's biodiversity, ecological networks and green infrastructure is it's natural wealth, comprising a variety of animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms working together in the rural, peri-urban, urban and coastal marine environments to provide valuable goods and services to the Belizean population, with implications to the global population. These include ecosystem services inclusive of water supply and filtration, food and energy, provision of natural resources (fishery and timber and non-timber forest products) protection from tropical systems and floods, carbon sequestration and carbon markets, and habitat for wildlife to name a few.

It is of significant socio-cultural and economic value, and plays a critical role in conserving and protecting land and sea resources with intrinsic qualities and value, archaeological sites, the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, a world heritage site and the headwaters of fourteen watersheds — the majority of Belize's River systems, providing water security for people across 55% of the total land mass of Belize. Belize can account for a total of 118 globally threatened species (9 critically endangered, 32 endangered and 77 Vulnerable) and a further 62 near threatened / of least concern according to IUNC standards. Belize is also recognized for meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) to conserve 17% of its terrestrial and 10% of its marine areas and under the Bonn Challenge, has committed to restore 130,000 hectares of prioritized forest and agricultural landscapes by 2030.

Notwithstanding, data indicates Belize has lost approximately 3,020 square kilometers (1,170 square miles) or a 17 percent of its forest cover between 2001 and 2023, with some of the most noticeable changes occurring in Belize River Valley watershed and Corozal and Orange Walk Districts primarily due to the expansion of farming and indiscriminate clearing of large parcels of forests. Data also point to how protected areas which cover 22.6 per cent of the country are effective at heading off deforestation.

Threats to the integrity and sustainability of the functions of Belize's biodiversity are many and include but are not limited to:

- rapid, unplanned and unregulated development in urban, peri-urban, rural and in coastal areas resulting in deforestation, forest fragmentation and mangrove clearance;

- the spread and introduction of invasive species, as well as the loss and fragmentation of habitat primarily associated with the expansion of the agricultural and tourism sectors;

- rising marine and coastal pollution from land base sources, such as sedimentation, soil erosion, sewage and agro-chemicals, and that linked to ships with improper disposal methods for solid waste leading to the degradation of mangroves and coral reefs;

- unsustainable extraction of non-timber forest products, with severity more along rivers;

- increasing transboundary illegal incursions by immigrants into Belize forests and Protected Areas for farming, hunting, and harvesting non-timber forest products leading to loss of ecosystem services: the protection of water quality in adjacent watersheds, and reduction of nutrient flows that are damaging to the reefs;

- unsustainable land use practices including but not limited to overfishing and illegal fishing, hunting, logging, and wildlife trade;

- unsustainable tourism practices including but not limited to exceeding limits of guide to visitor ratios, and illegal wildlife interaction; and

- the adverse effects of climate change including increased flooding, warmer temperatures, sea-level rise, and more extreme weather events.

While there is a National Environmental Policy and Strategy (NEPS) and an action plan and a National Biodiversity Strategy and Plan (NBSAP) and other policies, strategies and plans, the latter articulating measures for conserving Belize's biodiversity, for the sustainable use of the components of it, and for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of the genetic resources residing in it, there are several barriers to achieving its goals, objectives, and targets. These include but are not limited to:

- aged, siloed, and fragmented policy and legislative landscape within the Ministry responsible for biodiversity;

- While the NBSAP contains a monitoring and evaluation system, the NEPS, as the overarching environmental policy for Belize, does not;

- Mobility of portfolio assignments which fragments responsibility for biological diversity;

- weak inter-sectoral coordination between the Ministry and other ministries with portfolios having legal mandates with implications to delivering on the goals, objectives and targets of the NBSAP and other related policies;

- the accuracy of spatial boundaries of protected areas which have implications to encroachment and ultimately dereservation;

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- weak data management systems which compromise the collection, analysis and sharing of data and the use of evidenced based information for decision making;

- the inherent weakness in the current use of the Environmental Impact Assessment process as a defacto development permission granting tool, a function for which its architecture was not designed; and

- the discounting of urban biodiversity, blue and green infrastructure as a critical component of the interconnectivity of biodiversity enhancement and conservation.

56. Linkages to Strategic Objectives

This policy statement links to strategic objectives 12 (1), (2) and (8)

57. Specific Objective 8.1 and Actions

Objective:

Strengthen the policy framework for efficient and effective environmental management

Action 8.1.1

Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the NEPS having regard to:

a. reporting on progress towards achieving its goal of a green, clean, resilient and strong Belize

b. If off track, identifying the barriers to achieving its goal as contained in the action plan;

c. the lessons learned and recommendations for change.

Action 8.1.2

Review and update the NEPS having regard to:

a. the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the NEPS;
b. a necessity to position the NEPS as the overarching policy of the Ministry with responsibility for environment, with all other policies a subset and critical components of it;

c. to strategies to harmonise and strengthen inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral policies, strategies and plans within the Ministry and between ministries;

d. the emergence of new threats and opportunities to environmental management as a whole;

e. recognition in case law of a gap in the laws of Belize that needs to be plugged to make clear that the approval of EIA is not planning permission to develop land.

f. The institution of a monitoring and evaluation system;

g. resource requirements for implementing the policy.

58. Specific Objective 8.2 and Actions

Objective:

To advance biodiversity enhancement and conservation, improve ecological resilience and increase green infrastructure assets

Action: 8.2.1

Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the NBSAP having regard to the key performance questions contained in its Monitoring and Evaluation System:

a. Is the achievement of the Plan's purpose of establishing a protected areas system on track?

b. What are the challenges and obstacle to progress in executing strategic action and achieving stated objectives?

c. Has the enabling environment for the protected areas been improved?

d. Is the structure of the protected areas network more comprehensive and consolidated?

e. Has the management effectiveness of protected areas been improved?

f. What is the level of engagement of key stakeholders and partners in the implementation of the system plan?

Action 8.2.2

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen collaboration with local government to expand the remit of biodiversity conservation, ecological corridors and green infrastructure having regard to:

a. the identification of new areas within urban environments that should be safeguarded and designated as ecological networks having significant importance for climate resilience and habitat protection

b. the recognition of green infrastructure assets such as public rights of way, road buffers, recreation and leisure spaces, all of which can all make a cumulative contribution towards wider national scale ecological connectivity.

c. The use of integrative and innovative nature based-solutions to address the climate emergency as well as securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being instead of the hard engineering solutions to protect coastal communities.

Policy Statement 9 : Knowledge Building and Sharing, Public Engagement and Outreach

59. Policy Statement

The Government of Belize recognises that SLM will only be possible if all stakeholders not only develop awareness of the challenges confronting SLM practices, but are also willing to generate, share and build knowledge together and put their knowledge into action. The Government of Belize therefor commits to facilitating an enabling environment for knowledge building, sharing, application and dissemination in SLM practice.

60. Rationale for Policy Statement

SLM is an integrative, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral process involving many diverse stakeholders from public and private sector, academia, media and civil society operating as organisations, informal groups and as individuals, at varying levels and types of governance systems, with different interests in multiple spaces and platforms.

This is made even more complex considering new land use drivers like climate change, migration and demographic shifts, technology and innovation, and energy mixes, which if poorly managed, can not only invoke social and political conflicts, but can also accelerate land degradation, strain ecosystems and essential infrastructure services, increase the levels of air and water pollution and disproportionally impact lives and livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalized populations, all of which can compromise development gains.

This complexity is compounded by the interdependency of the broad spectrum of infrastructure systems, social and emergency services, the built and natural environment, and ecosystem services, all interacting temporally and spatially, with other social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities within spaces at varying resolutions and landforms.

SLM will only be possible if all stakeholders not only develop awareness of the challenges confronting SLM practices, but are also willing to generate, share and build knowledge together and put their knowledge into action.

61. Linkages to General Objectives

This policy statement links to objectives 12 (1), (9) and (10)

62. Specific Objective and Actions 9.1

Objective:

to enhance knowledge and awareness of all stakeholders in SLM of the role of SLM in addressing quality of life issues for all Belizeans

Action 9.1.1

Conduct a stock take with the aim of compiling a Stakeholder Register with the attributes (area of expertise, geographic practice, level of decision making, state or non-state etc.) of SLM practitioners.

Action 9.1.2

Formulate and implement a comprehensive public education, engagement and outreach strategy and plan to enhance stakeholder's awareness, engagement and buy-in to an SLM fraternity having regard to:

a. the policies, laws and plans that guide and govern the operations of SLM practice;

b. the interrelationship and interdependencies between and within departments and units of the MNRPM and between the MNRPM and other ministries of government and non-government stakeholders as it relates to SLM;

c. the value, importance and relevance of SLM in meeting national and local development goals, needs and aspiration, global commitments and in addressing societal problems connected to land;

d. the role of each stakeholder in SLM;

e. encouraging the citizens' participation in the land use planning processes to ensure the process is robust and participatory and that it reflects their needs;

f. land tenure and property rights as distinguished from SLM and land use, with a special focus on women, youth, and other vulnerable groups; and

g. the requirement for scalable communications materials and models

63. Specific Objective 9.2 and Actions

Objective:

To enhance collaboration on SLM practice among SLM stakeholders

Action 9.2.1

Develop and implement a strategy and action plan to strengthen interdisciplinary knowledge and exchange between stakeholders in SLM practice having regard to the diversity of stakeholders and best practices to support SLM.

Action 9.2.2

Create a knowledge exchange platform where resources, case studies and tools can be easily accessible by SLM practitioners and where the general public and SLM practitioners can interact.

64. Specific Objective 9.3 and Actions

Objective

Strengthen the capacity of SLM practitioners to support more informed SLM decision making

Action 9.3.1

Develop a strategy and action plan to equip SLM practitioners with knowledge and skills set for sustained SLM practice, having regard to:

a. the latest research, trends, innovations, data and best practices in SLM;

b. the diverse perspectives, skills set and expertise in and required for SLM practice;

c. the need for continued professional learning and field interaction;

d. peer review sessions and case study documentation in SLM practice;

e. promoting the development and adoption of innovation and technology in SLM practice;

f. the creation and dissemination of local research papers, reports and articles on SLM practice in Belize

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Policy Statement 10: Governance for Land Use Planning within the SLM Ecosystem

65. Policy Statement 10

The Government of Belize commits to adopting a governance system for planning consisting of a set of legal instruments for use by the state for facilitating the sustainable use and management of land and for regulating the use and development of land for the whole or parts of the country. The legal instruments shall consist of:

a. The National Land Use Policy Framework

b. The National Land Use Plan

c. Local Development Plan

66. Rationale for Policy Statement 10

There exists a plethora of policies and legislation for regulating land use and development activities across multiple institutions residing in different ministries. This has created a very complex, confusing, and onerous governance ecosystem for land use planning and regulating the use and development of land in Belize. In addition, there are several gaps that need to be addressed. These include at the:

National Level, the absence of:

- land use planning as a constitutional assignment of the business of government;
- spatial strategy in Plan Belize to give effect to its spatial and technical requirements; and
- the role of human settlements in meeting global and national development targets.

Sector Level, policies are:

- aged, fragmented and siloed; notwithstanding, most policies are characterized by clear goals and objectives, provides for cross sectoral linkages and recognizes the integration of a NLUP and climate resilience as integral to policy success (the most recent ones) and to facilitate sustainable land management (SLM);
- ambiguous as to validity, that is whether adopted or if it is the policy of the current government;
- characterised by weak cross sectoral collaboration (between and within ministries) and vertical integration, compromising the application of SLM principles at the local level.

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- absence for several key sectors which have implications to a NLUP;

- limited or contain no consideration of gender and the differentiated needs and contributions of vulnerable groupings in the policies; and

- minimally monitored, evaluated or are progress towards objectives and targets reported on.

Legislative Level, there are:

- significant duplication, overlapping and confusion of legislative authority, areas to which no authority applies, institutions functioning without authority or not exercising their authority, and the discounting of the cumulative impact of siloed and project specific and siloed decision-making;

- This is a consequence of decades of patching up and adding layers and extensions according to the whims of the actors of the system at a point in time, without any consideration of the planning system as a whole. This was recognised case law where it was pointed out that there may be a gap in the laws of Belize that needs to be plugged so as to make it clear that an EIA is not planning permission or approval of a scheduled project.

- lack of knowledge and awareness of the legislation governing land use and development activities within and between institutions at the national and local levels;

- archaic and centralized, thus far removed from local impact compromising a shared understanding of national, regional, and global development objectives and targets and the ability of regional and local decision makers to respond to development challenges at source point in a timely, appropriate and solution-oriented manner.

- various types of permits and licenses across multiple agencies to use and develop land, depending on the type of activity, development or project that is proposed.

- multiple boards and authorities to administrate legislation governing land use and development activities are either not established, or if established, often operate in silos, compromising addressing the defect the legislation they are to administrate, is to cure, notwithstanding many have a commonality in their composition.

- differing interpretation of words and what defines a city, town, or village;

- discretionary powers and not a duty to prepare land use plans or variations thereof contained in different legislation; while in one case there is a duty to prepare a plan but no authority to enforce the plan;

- weak provisions or the absence of provisions for the processes for plan preparation, adoption and enforcement, with the exception for the most part of one legislation.

- minimal considerations for data capture and analysis for gender and vulnerable groupings in application processes for preparing land use plans or variations thereof;

- more focused on restriction and control rather than facilitative of development; and

- there is a narrow meaning of development

67. Linkages of Policy Statement 10 to Objectives

Policy Statement 10 is linked to objectives 12 (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9) and (10)

68. Specific Objective10.1 and Actions

Objective:

to strengthen the role of land use planning as an element of sustainable land management at all levels of governance

Action: 10.1.1

Ascribe constitutional authority to SLM and NLUP as an element of SLM within the assignment of business of government.

Action: 10.1.2

a. Conduct a stock take of all policies < 5 years with direct or indirect implications to a LUP regime; and

b. Mainstream the NLUP vertically and horizontally into Plan Belize, sectoral policies and local development plans to give effect to their technical and spatial requirements./non=spatial

69. Specific Objective and Action 10.2

Objective:

to assign responsibility for the administration of the framework policy to give effect to it and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Action: 10.2.1

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Provide for the administration of the National Land Use Policy Framework to be the constitutional responsibility of the Minister with responsibility for land, who shall:

a. Ensure that a National Use Policy Framework and National Land Use Plan is formulated, adopted, implemented, modified, amended, enforced as far as is reasonably possible and is revoked and or replaced to give effect to the technical and spatial requirements of Plan Belize and associated sectoral policies and global commitments;

b. Be responsible for the framing of comprehensive policies, policy statements and directives with respect to the sustainable use, management, and development of all land in Belize and for the implementation of such policies, policy statements and directives;

c. Be responsible for providing strategic guidance on the sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize to the lower-level governance and higher scale of development impact, which comprises (protected areas, coastal zones, commercial free zones etc.), and (cities, towns and villages-depending on level of settlement hierarchy) and sectoral counterparts (ministries);

d. Establish and sustain mechanisms for adequate oversight and scrutiny of the power and duty of sectoral and local decision-makers to set out strategic policies and to formulate, adopt, implement, modify, amend, enforce and or revoke and replace local and regional development plans in compliance with the policy framework and plan and required legislation enacted to give effect to its provisions; and

e. Establish and sustain mechanisms for the participation of the private sector and civil society in the formulation, adoption, implementation, modification, amendment, revocation, replacement, evaluation and monitoring of legal instruments and processes at all levels of governance.

70. Specific Objective and Action 10.3

Objective:

- to modernize and harmonise planning legislation,
- to eliminate ambiguity and duplication of roles and functions of organization regulating the use and development of land, and
- to institute plan-led development and a presumption in favour of sustainable development

Action 10.3.1

Promulgate a National Planning and Development Act to give effect to the legal requirements of the policy framework and plan. Some key provisions of the Act shall be:

1) The establishment and constitution of a National Planning and Development Board to administer the Act (See Annex 01)

2) The duties, powers and functions of the National Board and the procedures for internal operations. (See Annex 02)

3) The contents of a national land use plan (NLUP) (See Article 20, Specific Objective 1-Land Use Planning)

4) The process for preparation and adoption of a NLUP;(See Annex 03)

5) The establishment of a National Planning and Development Department, the post of a Head of the Department and for his or her duties, functions, and powers to give effect to the provisions of the Act at the direction of the National Board.

6) The establishment of Deputy Heads of Department posts to head the National Spatial Data Infrastructure and Spatial Planning Sections.

7) The National Board to appoint local authorities as Local Planning and Development Boards hereinafter referred to as the Local Board and for their duties, functions, and powers to formulate, adopt, implement, modify, amend, enforce, revoke and or replace local and special development plans subject to the framework policy and plan and direction from the National Board.

8) The local authority" means :-

(i) in respect of Belize City, the Belize City Council constituted under the Belize City Council Act

(ii) in respect of the City of Belmopan, the Belmopan City Council constituted under the Belmopan City Council Act

(iii) in respect of any other town, the Town Council for that town as constituted under the Town Council Act

(iv) in respect of any village, the Village Council for that village constituted under the Village Council Act

(v) in respect of any community, the Community Council for that community constituted under the Village Council Act

(vi) in respect of any area in Belize other than that referred to in (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v), the organization or entity the Minister may declare to be the local authority for the purpose of this Act

9) The National Board to appoint of Special or joint Planning Board for an area or areas or parts of areas of a district or districts, which may include a part or parts of a village, town or city, or the whole village, town or city, due to special circumstances or critical concern or necessity or in the interest of and in furtherance of national or regional policy or any other reason they deem fit, they may by order, subject to the approval of the Minister.

10) The preceding provides for the flexibility for the Minister to appoint government, statutory or non-government organisations to be local authorities for the purpose of the plan. These may include the CZMA for coastal zones, protected area managers for protected areas and special management areas and the board of the commercial free zone to name a few.

11) The National Board shall not constitute a special planning area or a joint planning area if such area or parts of an area if such area or parts of an area are within the boundaries of the jurisdiction of a local authority as defined by the Belize City Council Act, the Belmopan City Council Act, the Town Boundaries Act and the Village Council Act or by the adopted local development plan, whichever area is greater, until the local authority has been informed in writing of the intention and provided with the opportunity to object to the order.

12) The functions and powers of a Local Board. (See Annex 04)

13) The contents of a local or special development plan. (See Article 20, Specific Objective 2.1-Land Use Planning)

14) The process for preparation and adoption of a local development plan (See Annex 05)

15) The power of the National and Local Board to appoint Committees and to co-opt professionals within and outside of the public service in the case of the former and within and outside of municipal and village services in the case of the latter.

16) Default powers of the National Board to prepare or cause to be prepared LDPs in such cases where the local authority has made such a request or have not complied with the time line for preparing or causing to prepare such plan.

17) Planning permission to be required for the carrying out of any development of any land in Belize and any person intending to develop land must apply for planning permission from the material date of the Local Plan.

18) 'development' to mean–

(i) the carrying out of building operations, engineering operations, mining and mineral development and or exploration and or exploitation or other operations in, on, over or under any land; or

(ii) the making of any material change of use of any building or land; or

(iii) the subdivision of any land and 'develop' has a corresponding meaning.

For the following to include:-

'building operations' includes:-

(a) the construction of buildings, structures and erections
(b) the demolition of buildings, structures and erections
(c) the rebuilding of existing buildings, structures and erections
(d) structural alterations of or additions or extensions to buildings; and
(e) other operations normally undertaken by a person carrying on business as a builder

'engineering operations' includes

(a) laying out, building and maintenance of roads, drains, runways, bridges
(b) the preparation of land for carrying out of any development
(c) the clearing of land
(d) the construction of coastal and inland watercourse defence works
(e) the filling in of any cavity, depression or excavation and
(f) the reclamation of land from any water body

'mining and mineral development and or exploration and or exploitation' includes

(a) the carrying out in relation to any mineral, any activity with a view to working, extracting, carrying away, treating or converting that mineral;
(b) the search or exploration for any mineral with a view to carrying out any activity mentioned in paragraph (i) of this definition and to carry out any work necessary for such search and exploration;
(c) the deposit of waste or refuse materials in consequence of or incidental to any activity mentioned in paragraph (i) or (ii) of this definition.
(d) the dredging of water bodies, watercourse or channels

'subdivision' means the division of a parcel of land other than buildings held under one ownership into two or more parts whether such division is by conveyance, transfer, assignment, vesting order, plan of survey, plan of subdivision, or any other instrument for the purpose of sale, gift, partition, succession, lease, mortgage or for any other purpose and such subdivision constitutes development whether or not the use for which the subdivided land is intended constitutes development and 'sub-divide' shall be construed accordingly

'other operations' include any other activity on land not within the definition of (i) to (iii)

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The following operations or uses of land not to be deemed to constitute development:-

(i) the carrying out in accordance with any regulations or orders made under the proposed Act or any other enactment of works for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of any building, other than a building to which the public has access, being works which do not materially affect the external appearance of the building;

(ii) the carrying out by or on behalf of the Ministry responsible for public roads or local authority of any works required for the maintenance or improvement of a road, where the works are carried out within the boundaries of the road;

(iii) the carrying out by statutory undertakers of any works for the purpose of inspecting, repairing or renewing any sewers, mains, pipes, cables or other apparatus, including the breaking open of any road or other land for that purpose;

(a) the use of any buildings or other land within the curtilage of a dwelling

house for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house as such;

(b) the erection of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure, not being adjacent to a highway or sea, not exceeding four feet in height and not constructed of asbestos, plastic, fiber glass or any other hazardous material;

(c) the use of any land for the purposes of agriculture or forestry, including afforestation, and the use for any agricultural purpose, other than for dairy farming and the breeding and keeping of livestock or poultry, including any animal kept for the production of food, wool, skin or fur or for the purpose of its use in farming the land, or of any building occupied together with land so used; and

(d) in the case of buildings or other land which are used for a purpose of any class specified in a Use Class Order made by the Minister under

this section, the use thereof for any other purpose of the same class.

(iv) the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house, provided that:-

(a) the square footage of the enlargement does not exceed one tenth of the square footage of the ground floor of the house at the date of the development or of the house at the commencement of this Act, whichever is larger;

(b) the enlargement is a single storey;

(c) the enlargement is an integral part of the existing house;
(d) the enlargement complies with the requirements of any planning and building regulations for the time being in force; and
(e) written notice of intention to carry out such work is given to the local authority

For the avoidance of doubt the purposes below will constitute development

(i) the use as two or more separate dwelling houses of any building previously used as a single house involves a material change of use of the building and of each part thereof which is so used;

(ii) the deposit of waste materials on land involves a material change of use notwithstanding that the land is comprised in a site already used for that purpose if if either the superficial area thereof or the height of the deposit is thereby extended and exceeds the level of land adjoining the site;

(iii) the intensification of use amounts to a material change of use in so far as it involves an increase in the scale of activities on site which result in off- site impacts the consequence of which is a definable change in the character of the use made of the land and surrounding areas;

(iv) the use of any land, other than land within the boundaries of a road, for the siting of any moveable or temporary building, including but not limited to a chattel building, mobile home, trailer, shipping container, crusade or party tent, vendor's stall or van, whether equipped with wheels or not, for more than 28 days, involves a material change in the use of that land;

(v) the use for the display of an advertisement of any land or the external part of a building or structure which is not ordinarily used for that purpose, involves a material change in the use of that land or part of the building;

(vi) the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under any land used for agriculture or forestry, or the subdivision of any such land, involves development of that land; and the subdivision of land constitutes development whether or not the use for which the subdivided land is intended constitutes development.

19) A power to the National Board and the Minister to grant planning permission by a development order and to request particular applications to be referred to them.

20) The power of the National Board and Local Board to grant planning permission with or without conditions and planning obligations or to refuse planning permission.

21) The National Board or Local Board not to grant planning permission unless an application for a project listed in Schedule I or II of the Environmental Protection Act application is accompanied by a statement from the Department of Environment stating whether environmental clearance was granted, and if so granted, the terms and conditions of such clearance if any applies or if it does not require environmental assessment.

22) For the National or Local Board as the case may be to use the determination of the Department of Environment assessment of the project or activity as a material consideration in determining the planning application, and the weighting of such consideration shall be determined solely by the Local Board or National Board, as the case may be.

23) Consultation by the applicant before applying for planning permission and for approval in principle

24) Power of National and Local Board as the case may be to decline to determine applications

25) Coordination of referral agencies for utility works

26) The requirement for the transfer of designated public and community spaces before issuance of completion certificate to register subdivision

27) Planning applications for building and building operations, engineering operations and for mining and mineral development, exploration and exploitation to be submitted to either the Local or National Board, as the case may be, prior to application for permits and licenses from the respective permitting agency.

28) Planning conditions and obligations to be attached to planning permission

29) Planning permission to be given for development already carried out

30) Power of National or Local Board as the case may be to revoke or modify planning permission

31) Power of the National or Local Board as the case may be to issue enforcement notice and stop orders for development in breach of planning permission

32) Penalties for contravention of stop orders and enforcement notices

33) Injunctions restraining breaches of planning permission

34) Repayment of expense of restoring land to the condition it was before a breach of planning permission.

35) Compensation where planning permission is revoked or modified by the National or Local Board as the case may be

36) Right of appeal against a planning decision of the Minister or National or Local Board as the case may be

37) The requirement of Central Government and Local Government to be subject to the act once such project falls within the meaning of development for the purposes of the Act

38) Rights of entry for agents of the National or Local Board as the case may be to serve orders, notices and to gather information

39) The making of regulations for special controls including the display of advertisement, the subdivision of land, the preservation of buildings and plants, the construction of piers, wharves and jetties, engineering operations and mining and mineral development and or exploration and or exploitation

40) The NLUP to be revised every five years or such earlier or later times as determined by the Minister, subsequent to it being affirmed in the National Assembly.

41) The Repeal of the Land Utilization Act, the Private Works Construction Act and Part II-Town Planning of the Housing and Town Planning Act

Strategic Action 10.3.2 - Amendment of Relevant Legislation

Conduct a stock take and review of all legislation for which amendments are required to give effect to the objective of this strategic action.

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ACRONYMS

CZMAI	Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute
DOE	Department of Environment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GOB	Government of Belize
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LUA	Land Utilization Authority
MAFSE	Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise
MIDH	Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing
MBECADRR	Ministry of Blue Economy, Civil Aviation and Disaster Risk Reduction
MNRPM	Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining
MRTCDLLG	Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government
MSDCC	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change
NbS	Nature Based Solutions
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLUP	Land Use Policy
NSDI	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
PISLM	Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SH	Stakeholder
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SSM	Sustainable Soil Management
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biodiversity
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Diversification
UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme

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GLOSSARY

Development planning means *"a strategic and participatory process to integrate economic, spatial, social, infrastructural, housing, institutional, fiscal, land reform, transport, environmental, water and other strategies or sectoral plans with a view to the optimal allocation of scarce resources to the various sectors and geographic areas and to supporting the whole of the population in a manner which promotes sustainable growth and equity, with the emphasis on capacity-building in poor and marginalised communities*" [viii]

Land cover refers to the observed (bio)physical cover on the Earth's surface.

Land degradation means *"reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas, of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns such as: soil erosion caused by wind and/or water; deterioration of the physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and long-term loss of natural vegetation*."[ix]

Land use planning means *"a public policy exercise that designates the use of land in order to improve a community's physical, economic, and social efficiencies and well-being and which concerns itself with determining the preferred land use with outcomes being designating of land for specific purposes regulation of the intensity of land use and formulation of legal and administrative instruments which support land use plans."*[x]

Land use policy means "*The legal and policy frameworks of a state or government guiding land acquisition, allocation, utilization, and consumption by different segments of society*."[xi]

Multifunctional landscape means *"landscapes which serve different functions and combine a variety of qualities (i.e., different material, mental, and social processes in nature and society occur simultaneously in any given landscape and interact accordingly); ecological, economic, cultural, historical, and aesthetic functions co-exist in a multi-functional landscape*".[xii]

Peri-urban zone: "*area between an urban settlement and its rural hinterland. Larger peri-urban zones can include towns and villages within an urban agglomeration. Such areas are often fast changing, with complex patterns of land use and landscape, fragmented between local or regional boundaries*.[xiii]

Sustainable Land Management means "*the adoption of land use systems that, through appropriate management practices, enable land users to maximize the economic and social benefits of land, while maintaining or enhancing the ecological support functions of its resources (soil, water, vegetation and animal resources). SLM combines technologies, policies, and activities aimed at integrating socio-economic principles with environmental concerns, so as to simultaneously maintain or enhance production, protect the potential of natural resources and prevent (or halt) soil, vegetation and water degradation, while being economically viable and socially acceptable".*[xiv]

Annex 01 Constitution of National Board

The National Planning and Development Board hereinafter referred to as the National Board shall consist of:

a. Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry responsible for land management and land use planning, who shall be the Chairperson

b. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for economic development or their representative

c. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for the environment or their representative

d. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for coastal zone management or their representative

e. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for disaster risk reduction of their representative

f. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for public roads or their representative

g. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for transport or their representative

h. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for housing or their representative

i. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for forestry or their representative

j. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for agriculture or their representative

k. Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry responsible for local government or their representative

l. The Director of the Central Building Authority or their representative

m. one representative of the National Association of Mayors

n. two representatives of the National Association of Village Councils

o. a representative of the Belize Network of Non-Governmental Organizations

p. a representative from the Association of Protected Areas Managers Organization

q. a representative of the Association of Professional Engineers of Belize

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r. a representative of the Association of Professional Architects of Belize
s. a representative from the Association of Professional Planners of Belize

t. a representative from the Council of Licensed Land Surveyors

u. two representatives of the private sector (BCCI/BBB)

ANNEX 02 – Functions and Duties of the National Board

The principal functions of the National Board are to :-

a. advise the Minister on all matters relating to facilitating the orderly, progressive and sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize;

b. advise the Minister in accordance with Part A of the First Schedule with respect to the framing of development policies, statements and directives referred to in section 5(2) and to ensure consistency and continuity in the implementation of policies adopted by the Minister.

c. prepare or cause to be prepared, keep under review and propose amendments as deemed fit to the National Land Use Plan prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part III of this Act and submit for the approval of the Minister;

d. keep under review all national, sectoral and local development policies, strategies and plans and regional and global agreements having implications to the sustainable use, management and development of land in Belize and prepare and submit summary reports on these matters to the Minister;

e. develop regulations, standards and practices for regulating the use and development of land to give effect to the national land use plan and submit them for the approval of the Minister;

f. ensure compliance of all development in Belize with the requirements of the national land use plan and policy directives of the Minister;

g. facilitate and coordinate the land development approval process and ensuretimely determination of all applications for approvals required for plans requiring expert professional technical review;

h. guide public and private investments in a manner to respond to a reasonable balance between the different administrative districts and settlements and to ensure compliance with the national land use plan;

i. establish mechanisms for the participation of the private sector and non-government organizations in the formulation, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of instruments, processes and legal norms generated for the sustainable use, management and development of land;

j. cooperate and liaise with government ministries, departments, statutory boards, non-governmental organizations and the private sector on all matters that are likely to have an impact on the sustainable use, management and development of land;

k. make recommendations to the Minister with respect to the devolution of functions relating to the planning and development control activities to local authorities;

l. monitor, oversee and coordinate the planning and development control activities of local authorities to ensure consistency with the national land use plan;

m. consider and determine planning applications for permission to develop land in certain circumstances

n. conduct, promote and co-ordinate research in relation to any aspect of the physical, social or economic environment which may be necessary in carrying out its functions;

o. provide information to the public regarding the importance of land use planning as a tool for sustainable land management; and

p. provide decision–makers in various government ministries, local authorities and non-government organizations with the necessary information so as to enable planning to inform policy formulation and programme design in those ministries, local authorities and organizations.

The National Board shall–-

a. monitor and oversee the effectiveness and status of the National Land Use Plan;

b. prepare periodic evaluation and appraisal reports on the National Land Use Policy and National Land Use Plan and submit them to the Minister at least once every five years;

c. make reports and recommendations to the Minister which shall include programmes for development and construction of such infrastructure as may be desirable;

d. submit annually to the Minister, not later than three months before the beginning of each financial year, a list of recommended capital improvements and capacity needs, which in the opinion of the National Planning and Development Board are necessary or desirable for implementing the National Land Use Policy and National Land Use Plan or any element or portion of it;

e. ensure a high degree of service and efficiency to communities and applicants in regulating the use and development of land and establish time frames and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that this is done; and

f. perform such other duties as the Minister may from time to time direct.

Annex 03 - Process for Preparation and Adoption of a National Land Use Plan

a. The National Board shall, within a time specified by the Minister, prepare or cause to be prepared and submit to the Minister, a national land use plan for Belize.

b. The national land use plan shall be the primary policy instrument that sets out the policies, goals, objectives and priority actions of the government of Belize for the use, occupation and development of land in Belize, that provides for sectoral coherence and that gives expression to the technical and spatial framework of national development strategies in force.

c. The National Board shall, in the preparation of the national land use plan, consult with all local authorities, governmental agencies, statutory bodies, non-governmental organizations and private sector entities.

d. The National Board shall, subsequent to the completion of the national land use plan:-

    i. send a copy to all local authorities, governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies, statutory bodies and private sector entities consulted by virtue of d. preceding for their comments or objections specifying the date by which such comments or objections should be made and the place and person to whom such comments and objections should be submitted;
    ii. place copies in public places in every district as may be prescribed by the Minister by regulations for their comments or objections, specifying the date by which the objections and comments are to be made and the place and person to whom such comments and objections should be submitted;
    iii. submit the national land use plan, modified or amended to include the comments or objections submitted by those consulted in (a) to the Minister, accompanied by a statement which details the comments and objections submitted to them, by whom the objections and comments were submitted and an identification of those comments and objections which were included in the national land use plan or excluded from it, and the reasoning for such exclusion.

e. Upon submission of the national land use plan to the Minister, he or she shall:-

    i. approve, with or without modifications, the national land use plan;
    ii. reject all or any part of the national land use plan;
    iii. return the national land use plan to the national board with directions to modify or amend it and resubmit it to them with such modifications or amendments
    iv. If the Minister shall deem it fit to approve the national land use plan, he or she shall table it in the National Assembly as a policy document to be utilized by the Government of Belize as far as is reasonable, in formulating its national and local development and sectoral policies and plans.

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f. Copies of the approved national land use plan shall be sent to all persons, agencies or places referred to in d. preceding within a reasonable time after the Minister has tabled it in the National Assembly and shall be subject to negative resolution.

g. The national land use plan shall be used as a planning guidance by local authorities in preparing their development plan.

Annex 04 – The Functions and Powers of the Local Board

The principal functions of the Local Board are to :-

a. consider all matters relating to enabling the orderly, progressive and sustainable use, management and development of land in the planning area of its jurisdiction;

b. prepare or cause to be prepared, keep under review and amend as deemed fit the local development plan f(LDP) or the planning area of its jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions of the NLUPP.

c. guide public and private investments in a manner to respond to balanced development in the planning area of its jurisdiction and to ensure compliance of the development plan with the NLUPP;

d. establish mechanisms for the participation of the private sector and non-government organizations in the formulation, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of instruments, processes and legal norms generated for the sustainable use, management and development of land in the planning area of its jurisdiction;

e. cooperate and liaise with government ministries, departments, statutory boards, non-governmental organizations and the private sector on all matters that are likely to have an impact on the sustainable use, management and development of land in the planning area of its jurisdiction;

f. conduct, promote and co-ordinate research in relation to any aspect of the physical, social or economic environment which may be necessary in carrying out its functions;

g. provide information to the public regarding the importance of land use planning as a tool for sustainable land management; and

h. provide decision –makers in various government ministries and non-government organizations with the necessary information on the planning area of jurisdiction so as to enable planning to inform national and sectoral policy formulation and programme design in those ministries and organization.

The Local Board shall–

a. develop standards and practices for regulating the use and development of land in the planning area of its jurisdiction for inclusion in the development plan;

b. ensure compliance of all development in the planning area of its jurisdiction with the requirements of the development plan

c. consider and determine planning applications for permission for the development of land under in respect of any matter that is not subject to the jurisdiction of the National Board or other Local Boards or reserved for decision by the Minister or National Board

d. monitor and oversee the effectiveness and status of the development plan;

e. prepare periodic evaluation and appraisal reports on the development plan and submit them to the National Board at least once every three years;

f. submit annually to the National Board, not later than three months before the beginning of each financial year, a list of recommended capital improvements and capacity needs, which in the opinion of the Local Board are necessary or desirable for implementing the development plan in the planning area of jurisdiction or any element or portion of it; and

g. ensure a high degree of service and efficiency to applicants in regulating the use and development of land and establish time frames and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that this is done.

Annex 05 – Processes for preparation and adoption of a local development plan

Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation:

The Local Board, before adopting a LDP, ishall:-

a. make copies of it available for inspection at such places as maybe prescribed;

b. send a copy to the National Board; and

Each copy made available for inspection or sent to the National Board shall be accompanied by a statement of the prescribed period within which objections to the LDP may be made to the Local Board.

A LDP shall not be adopted by the Local Board until:-

a. after they have considered any objections made in accordance with the regulations; and

b. if no objections are made, after the prescribed period.

A LDP may be withdrawn by the local authority at any time before it is adopted by the Local Board or approved by the National Board and shall be withdrawn by the Local Board if the National Board so directs.

Adoption of a Local Development Plan

The Local Board may by resolution at a meeting called for such purpose and advertised in the gazette and a widely circulated newspaper for one day each of three consecutive weeks, adopt the Local Plan, either as originally prepared or as modified so as to take account of:-

a. any objections to the plan; or

b. any other considerations which appear to them to be material

Where an objection to a LDP has been made by any Ministry of Government and the Local Board do not propose to modify the LDP to take account of the objection, the Local Board shall:-

a. send to the National Board the particulars of the objection and a statement of their reasons for not modifying the LDP to take account of it; and

b. not adopt the LDP unless the National Board authorizes them to do so

A LDP shall become operative on the date on which it is adopted by the Local Board.

Local inquiries

Where any objections have been made to proposals for a LDP copies of which have been made available for inspection, the Local Board shall cause a local inquiry or hearing to be held for the purpose of considering any objection to the proposals.

The local inquiry or hearing shall be held by a person appointed by the National Board for such purposes, or in such cases as may be prescribed, by the local authority not constituted as the Local Board.

The Minister may make regulations for the purposes of this section to:-

a. make provisions with respect to the appointment and qualifications for appointment of persons to hold a local inquiry or hearing under this section including provision enabling the National Board to appoint a particular person or group of persons or one of a specified list or class of persons

b. make provisions with respect to the remuneration and allowances of a person or persons appointed for that purpose

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No local inquiry or other hearing need be held if all persons who have made objections to the Local Plan have indicated in writing that they so not wish to appear.

[i] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report, Final Update, June 16, 2023 on defining climate resilient development

[ii] Statistical Institute of Belize defines cities and towns as urban and all other settlements as rural.

[iii] Adapted from

[iv] Adapted from the combined meaning of coastal zone and zone of influence in Belize Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan 2016, p.xii

[v] Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly

[vi] SIB notes that internationally, and in addition to the size of the population and the relatively rapid rate of population growth occurring in an area, other criteria considered in distinguishing urban from rural areas include, but are not limited to, access to utilities and the level of participation in agriculture (both fishing and farming).

[vii] These are recognised by the Housing and Population Census (Confirm names of villages with MRTCDLGL)

[viii] Source: S2 (2) in Western cape Planning and Development Act 1999, Government of Zambia)

[ix] Source: UNCCD, 1993. Land degradation. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Accessed 09-10-2024

[x] Jha et. al. 2010 in Dr. Perry Polar and Dr. Asad Mohammed (2016) Strengthening the Land Use Planning Framework in the Caribbean: A case study on the Caribbean Network for Urban and Land Management Presented at the 15th Association of Caribbean Higher Education Administrators (ACHEA) Conference, Jamaica on July 7th -9th 2016

[xi] Source: (https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary accessed 04-11-2024)

[xii] ESPON, E.-L. European Land Use Patterns, Applied Research 2013/1/8,(Draft Final). 02.09.2016]; Available from: https://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/EU-LUPA/DFR/DFR_Scientific_Report_EU-LUPA.pdf.

[xiii] [11] Zivanovic-Miljkovic, J., T. Crncevic, and I. Maric, Land use planning for sustainable development of peri-urban zones. Spatium, 2012(28): p. 15-22.

[xiv] Liniger, H.P., R. Mekdachi Studer, C. Hauert and M. Gurtner, Sustainable Land Management in Practice – Guidelines and Best Practices for Sub-Saharan Africa. TerrAfrica, World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2011 in UNCCD 2017, p.5

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