



## DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

### PRESS RELEASE

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#### New project launched to prevent violence against children

A new human rights project aimed at protecting the country's children against violence was launched today. The project: **A Human Rights-Based Approach to Child Protection: Changing Social Norms and Engaging Civil Society to End Violence against Girls and Boys in Belize** has received funding of €100,000 or just over BZ\$272,000 from the European Union and will be implemented over a two year period by UNICEF. The project is being funded under the EU's European Instrument for the Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and is the first project under this funding to be initiated in Belize.

The launch of the project which took place at the Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry Conference Room in Belize City comes just months after the release of the US State Department 2012 Human Rights Report on Belize which raised concerns about child abuse, child marriage and sexual exploitation of children.

The objective of the project is to foster social change for the benefit of the most vulnerable boys and girls in selected urban and rural areas in Belize through engaging and mobilising civil society organisations, young people and care givers who are instrumental in helping to bring an end to violence against children. The project will also support activities aimed at supporting new social norms and strengthen the availability, access and quality of child protection services offered to survivors of sexual abuse and corporal punishment.

The project will also work to assist in and promote legislative changes and other policy initiatives which will prevent and mitigate child sexual abuse, corporal punishment and other forms of violence in schools, homes and the community. This will include standardised definition of a child in the Indictable Procedures Act, the Family Court Act, the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, The District Courts ( Procedures' Act) and the International Child Abduction Act to mention a few. The program is part of a greater initiative in Belize and around the world to recognize violence against children and end it by joining global, national and local movements to bring together new ideas to focus collective action on this goal and add to the many efforts already underway.

EU Ambassador to Belize Paola Amadei, who is on a one week visit to the island pointed out that projects like these were necessary to protect the rights of children who are vulnerable and often voiceless. *"I am happy also to see that this project will work to improve the response capabilities and sensitivity of public health and security officials to issues of child abuse. Improving the capacity of health and human service workers; the police; and educators, to detect, report, and halt physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children will be critical. We can work to treat the symptoms of this crisis as we also work to create long term and permanent change at a values level."*

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