

RESPONSE TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Legal and Institutional Framework

Q. Does the Police Department have internal protocols for responding to cases of violence against women (VAW)?

A. Yes, the BPD does have internal protocols and legal obligations meant to guide responses to violence against women (VAW), mainly domestic and gender-based violence.

- Legal Framework and Mandatory Reporting

Under the Domestic Violence Act,¹ The Belize Police Department is legally obligated to respond to every complaint of domestic violence, whether or not the person making the report is the victim.

-In urgent cases, officers are empowered to enter premises without a warrant to protect victims, but they must submit a written report justifying the decision.

Q. Title and date of the most recent VAW protocol or manual:

A: Belize Police Department Policies and Procedures Manual.

- Final Draft (dated July 26th, 2020)*
- In addition to this, the Belize Police Department participated in the consultation and consolidation of the multisectoral protocol for child protection, sexual and gender-based violence. The principles outlined in the draft protocol guides the conduct of officers.*

¹ Chapter 178 of The Substantive Law of Belize Revised Edition 2020

Q. Are police officers required to follow a gender- sensitive or survivor-centred approach in GBV cases?

A. Yes, the BPD is required to follow a gender-sensitive and survivor-centred approach when responding to gender-based violence (GBV) cases. The include conducting forensic interviewing, maintaining confidentiality and ensuring that victims are not retraumatized due the way investigations are carried out.

- The Domestic Violence Act mandates that every complaint of DV or GBV be treated seriously, documented, and acted upon, regardless of whether the victim wants to press charges.

The BPD is formally required to use Survivor-centred, gender – sensitive methods. Whilst the officers attached to the GBV received more consistent in-depth training in these areas, other officers of the Department also receive basic training in this regard since they too are required to respond to Domestic violence matters.

Q. Is there a specific policy for disciplinary action in cases of officers' misconduct related to GBV complaints?

A. Yes, the BPD has specific policies and disciplinary procedures for cases where officers are accused of misconduct, including gender-based violence (GBV) or domestic violence against colleagues or civilians, which includes procedures of internal investigation, interdiction, and disciplinary hearings.

2. Reporting, Investigations, and Victim Protection.

Q. Number of reported VAW cases in the last Year.

A. For July 2024 to June 2025, a total of 3,113 incidents of VAW were reported countrywide.

Number of cases investigated and prosecuted?

Of the 3,112 investigated cases, arrests were made in 942 incidents.

Q. What is the average time between report and initial police response?

A. Response times are not recorded; however, response time would be based on the location of the incident. Where GBVRU officers cannot respond within a reasonable time, other officers respond. If necessary, the case would be handed over to the GBV officers subsequently.

‘Q. Are survivors provided with info about their rights and available services?

A. Yes, survivors of DV and GBV are actively provided with information about their rights and available support services. E.g., how to access the different orders (e.g. protection, occupation, and maintenance)

- Available referral pathways (e.g., counselling, medical care, shelter)

- Hotline services such as 0-800- A WAY OUT and the WhatsApp line for emergencies.

Q. Are Protection measures (e.g., restraining orders, emergency removal) enforced?

A. Yes, protection measures are enforced, as there was a total of 48 arrests made for ‘Breach of Protection Order’, over the past year.

- Under section 42 of the DV Act, police are required to take all reasonable measures to prevent further abuse, assist victims in obtaining medical care, retrieve personal belongings safely, and inform them of their rights and available services.

3. Specialized Units and Accessibility

Q. Are there specialized GBV of Family Protection Units within the police force?

A. The BPD maintains specialized units focused on DV and GBV. These units have recently been reorganized and rebranded to expand their scope and improve response capabilities.

Q. Number and locations of these specialized units.

A. There are 14 Gender Based Violence Response and Investigative Unit offices in Belize.

Belize City – Queen Street Police Station

Corozal Town – Corozal Police Station

Orange Walk Town- Orange Walk Police Station

Hattieville – Hattieville Police Station

Ladyville – Ladyville Police Station

Roaring Creek- Roaring Creek Police Station

Caye Caulker- Caye Caulker Police Station

Belmopan- Belmopan Police Station

San Ignacio – San Ignacio Police Station

Benque Viejo – Benque Viejo Police Station

Dangriga – Dangriga Police Station

I.S.F – ISF Police Station

Bella Vista – Bella Vista Police Station

Punta Gorda - Punta Gorda Police Station

Q. Are these units staffed with trained female officers?

A. Yes. The Belize Police Department conduct in-service training of its officers in addition to accessing training provided by other organizations.

Q. Is there a 24/7 hotline or dedicated contact for GBV complaints?

A. Yes, there is a 24/7 dedicated GBV hotline that connects survivors directly with police and support services.

- GBV Hotline (0-800-A-WAY-OUT-0-800-292-9688) – a toll-free emergency hotline operated by the National Women’s Commission (NWC) in partnership with the BPD. It is available around the clock every day.

- WhatsApp or SMS: - message 672-9628 for urgent assistance via text or WhatsApp, monitored by GBV Officers in Belize City 24/7.

4. Training and Capacity Building

Q. Have officers received training in:

- Gender – Based Violence (GBV)**
- Human Rights and victim protection**
- Investigating Sexual violence or femicide**

A. Yes

Q- Number of officers trained in the past 12 months:

A. In the Past 12 months, 192 officers participated in training programs aimed at enhancing their capacity in areas such as gender-based violence, trafficking, sexual assault response, teenage pregnancy prevention, human rights and Victim protection.

Q. Training providers or partners (e.g., UNFPA, UNICEF, NWC, regional police academy)

A. These programs were coordinated and delivered by a range of partners, including the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW), ICITAP, the Human Trafficking

Institute, Peace Corps Organization, the United Nations, the Child Development Foundation, Human Development, UNICEF Headquarters, and the Belize Police Department (BPD). The diversity of organizers reflects a collaborative effort across government, international organizations, and civil society, demonstrating a commitment to strengthening human rights protection and trauma-informed response throughout Belize.

5. Data Collection and Management

Q. Does the department collect data on?

- Type of violence

The type of violence collected varies from physical, psychological, and sexual.

<i>Physical Violence</i>	<i>Psychological Violence</i>	<i>Sexual Violence</i>
<i>Aggravated Assault</i>	<i>Threatening Behaviour</i>	<i>Rape</i>
<i>Common Assault</i>	<i>Threatening Violence</i>	<i>Attempt Rape</i>
<i>Dangerous Harm</i>	<i>Using Threatening Words</i>	<i>Incest</i>
<i>Grievous Harm</i>	<i>Using Insulting Words</i>	<i>USI</i>
<i>Harm</i>	<i>Threat to Death</i>	<i>Indecent Assault</i>
<i>Use of Deadly Means of Harm</i>	<i>Using indecent words</i>	<i>Sexual Assault</i>
<i>Wounding</i>	<i>Psychological Abuse</i>	<i>Indecent Exposure</i>
<i>Main</i>	<i>Using Obscene language</i>	<i>Exposing Person in Public</i>
<i>Attempt Murder</i>	<i>Harassment</i>	<i>Sexual Harassment</i>
<i>Damage to Property</i>		

Q. Victim demographics (age, sex, ethnicity, district)

A. This info is included in official GBV statistics except for ethnicity.

Q. Type of perpetrator (e.g., intimate partner, stranger)

A. The information in relation to perpetrators are not aggregated.

Q. Are GBV-related data shared with other sectors (e.g., judiciary, health, social services)?

A. GBV-related data should be shared with other key sectors, including the judiciary, health, and social services, as part of Belize's coordinated national response to GBV. When requested, the information is provided where merited. The Belize Crime Observatory also receives Data from the Belize Police Department for their reports.

6. Interagency Coordination and Referrals

Q. Is there a referral protocol in place for survivors to:

- Health Services**
- Legal Aid**
- Shelters or psychosocial support**

A. Yes, the BPD follows a formal referral protocol ensuring that survivors of GBV, including DV, are connected to health, legal, shelter, and psychosocial support services as part of a survivor-centred response.

- Under the DV protocol, mandated by the DV Act, BPD officers are required to refer survivors to other support agencies, when necessary, once a case is recorded.

Q. Does the police participate in national or district-level GBV coordination mechanisms?

A. Yes. The police officers actively participated in both national and district-level coordination mechanisms on gender-based violence, ensuring multi-sectoral collaboration.

- National-Level Coordination: The National Gender Based Violence Committee, chaired by NWC, includes key institutions, including the BPD.

- *District Level Coordination: the same structure is mirrored by the District gender and GBV committees, which include police representatives among other stakeholders.*

7. Accountability and Oversight

Q. Number of complaints received about police mishandling of GBV cases:

A. Since Aug 2020, the NWC has operated a victim's complaint mechanism, where survivors and advocates can report insufficient or unprofessional treatment by police, healthcare, court, or other state providers; however, no release was made specifically about police misconduct in GBV cases.

Q. Number of internal Investigations and disciplinary actions:

A. The BPD Professional Standards Branch (PSB) handles complaints against police officers. These complaints include several different allegations, but they are not separated by content type, e.g., GBV-related vs. other misconducts. Consequently, such data is not aggregated.

Q. Is there a civilian complaints mechanism in place for reporting police misconduct?

A. There is a civilian complaint mechanism for reporting police misconduct, including handling GBV or general wrongdoing.

- *Professional Standards Branch (PSB) – (Internal Mechanism)*
- *Office of the Ombudsman – Civilian oversight*

8. Outreach and Community Engagement

Q. Are public education campaigns conducted on VAW prevention and rights?

A. Yes, the BPD does participate in public education and awareness efforts related to violence against women (VAW), most of which are in partnership with other agencies. For example.

- Participation in 16 Days of Activism,*
- Forums & Awareness Events,*
- Women's Month Community Outreach.*

Q. Are community police officers engaged in outreach on GBV?

A. Community policing outreach addresses broader themes of safety, civic engagement, and social issues which include Domestic Violence. Officers also partake in open days across the country to sensitize persons

Q. Are services accessible to?"

- Rural communities:

A. Yes. Each District and some rural communities have a GVRIU.

- The BPD, GBV services, including those operated through GVRIU, are available and accessible to survivors across rural communities. However, the extent of accessibility depends on capacity and geography.*
- Rural isolation poses significant barriers.*

- Indigenous populations?

- Yes. They are available to the indigenous population; however, accessibility challenges persist, particularly in isolated communities*
- Persistent barriers to access, cultural trust, and confidentiality issues*
- Geographic and logistical obstacles*

Nonetheless, the Department work along with Alcaldes.

- Persons with disabilities

- **GBV-related** services are available to people with disabilities, but practical accessibility often remains limited due to infrastructure challenges and the evolving state of inclusion policy.

- However, they can report through the hotline or SMS/WhatsApp. This medium assists people with mobility or hearing challenges.

- **LGBTQ+ individuals?**

- GBV services are also accessible to LGBTQ+ individuals; however, real-world experience suggests that barriers and inconsistencies still exist in practice. A low number of reports is believed to be caused by individuals avoiding reporting due to fear of bias or negative reactions.

9. Resources and Budgeting

Q. Does the Ministry have a budget line dedicated to GBV prevention and response?

A. No

Funding comes from the Administrative Budget as well as the Crimes Investigation Branch.