



Spotlight  
Initiative



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WOMEN

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***EMPOWERING CHANGE:  
Women's Parliamentary Caucus of Belize Unites  
to advance Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment***

**BELMOPAN, August 17, 2023** – The Spotlight Initiative, in collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRC), partnered with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) of Belize as they convened on August 3, 2023, for a transformative retreat at Kiki Witz Resort in the Cayo District. The women leaders, members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, have embarked on a mission to fortify institutional capacities given their gender equality mandate, and design the roadmap to support gender-responsive legislation, policies, and strategies against the pervasive issue of gender inequality and violence against women and girls. Guided by the principles of gender transformative programming, four women elected to the House of Representatives, four women senators, and two women presiding officers together underscore the upward trajectory of women's empowerment within the National Assembly.

According to Hon. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives, "*The creation of the women's parliamentary caucus in Belize is particularly timely in a year when Belize is about to celebrate 42 years of independence. As a standing committee, it survives the results of any general election, and means that there will be a dedicated focus of issues that affect women, but gender issues overall.*"

Galvanizing political commitment at the highest levels, the Spotlight Initiative seeks to strengthen legislative and policy framework, state and non-state institutional strengthening that contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 5 on gender equality, fully integrating the principle of "leaving no one behind".

The retreat follows the pivotal engagement with UNICEF and UN Women in November 2022, and the signing of the Joint Declaration of Intent on December 1, 2022. The United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRC), the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, UNICEF and UN Women have issued a unified call for gender-responsive budgeting and transformative approaches to underscore their shared commitment.

The Spotlight Initiative support to the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, empowers and amplifies the caucus' capacity to shape gender-responsive policies that reverberate across Belize. An emerging outcome of the retreat is a clear understanding of the mandate and strategic objectives of the caucus, including defining their role as Allies for Change. The UN and the Spotlight Initiative will continue to support this process for a strong and active Women's Parliamentary Caucus as a Joint Standing Committee.

***About the Spotlight Initiative:***

*The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of family violence and VAWG embarked by the European Union and the United Nations. The initiative is implementing activities that strengthen policy and legislation to increase the protection of women and girls, build the capacity of state and non-state actors to respond to family violence, expand the range of services available, and address social norms and behaviours that promote violence against women and girls. The modality for the delivery in Belize is with the support of the Government of Belize, EU, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and Recipient United Nations Organizations (RUNOs) – UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF – with the support of UN Associate Agencies – UN Women, ILO, PAHO/WHO, UNHCR, and OCHCR.*