Belize 2020
Annual Report

2015

Covering events, initiatives, partnerships and progress of the Belize 2020 Project from January 1 – December 31, 2015.
Summary and Timeline

Building upon the launch of the Belize 2020 initiative in July 2014, and the groundwork that was laid at the Belize Summit held in August of that year at Saint Louis University, 2015 was a banner year for the project. Over 250 individuals, representing a dozen organizations, have joined in solidarity with the people of St. Martin’s and Belize City to improve social conditions and work for the common good. These efforts were buoyed by the support of the Jesuit and the Central and Southern Province as well as Saint Louis University, in a true collaborative effort that has brought benefits to all involved.

This commitment was reinforced at the Solidarity Signing Ceremony held in October – Dr. Fred Pestello, Fr. Ron Mercier and Fr. Matt Ruhl, as leaders of their respective organizations, signed a proclamation to endorse and solidify the efforts of Belize 2020. Belize 2020, Saint Louis University and the Jesuits of the Central and Southern Province are fully committed to working with the people of St. Martin’s and Belize through educational training, socio-economic development, quality healthcare, and improved facilities.

2015 saw a number of events and programs held in support of the Belize 2020 efforts:

January: 13 SLU students, along with 6 faculty and staff, return from a 2-week interdisciplinary service and immersion experience with St. Martin’s.

January: SLU sponsors first Belizean graduate student to receive advanced degree in Early Childhood Education. Second student starts in Fall.

February: Sr. Jean Abbott conducts trainings for the people of St. Martin’s and surrounding areas of Belize City, to address violence trauma.

May-June: Public Health students travel to Belize to conduct health assessments of St. Martin’s children related to nutrition and violence trauma.

August: Faculty from School of Education and Belizean graduate student conduct workshops for early childhood educators in Belize.

October: Solidarity Signing Ceremony takes place at Saint Louis University - 120+ people commit their support to the efforts of Belize 2020.
Key Highlights by Area

Education

- The School of Education has sponsored two teachers from Belize to complete advanced degrees in Early Childhood Education and Special Education through SLU. When completed, they will be the first teachers in the entire country with advanced degrees in those two areas.
- Faculty and graduate students from the School of Education conducted workshops on early childhood education and literacy improvement for teachers from St. Martin’s and other Belizean schools.
- Summer extended program at St. Martin’s was expanded to include an additional 20 students.

Healthcare

- “Train the trainers” workshops held for teachers at St. Martin de Porres and other local schools, focusing on trauma counseling that can be provided to children in need.
- SLU Public Health students conducted needs assessment on children of St. Martin’s — over 50% of the schools 700+ students suffer from PTSD.

Socio-Economic

- Service-leadership program in the John Cook School of Business exploring collaborations with a similar program at St. John’s College.
- Program proposal underway for a social entrepreneurship venture focused on chocolate that would connect the south part of Belize (cacao growers) with a factory in Belize City that could provide employment.

Advancement/Other

- Established Belize 2020 official website (http://belize2020.org/), as well as social media and marketing materials.
- Priorities for the building of new facilities at St. Martin’s determined: 1.) Parish center, 2.) Parish, 3.) Additional school building.
- Students returning from the immersion trip significantly increased their: social justice commitment, openness to diversity, and future desires to work with the marginalized.
## Future Initiatives and Objectives

### Education
- Increase both quantity and quality of teacher trainings conducted by Saint Louis University faculty for Belizean teachers.
- Explore possibility of service/immersion experience for SLU students to tutor at St. Martin’s extended summer program.

### Socio-Economic
- Faculty-Student Undergraduate Research: Conduct feasibility study during Summer 2016 on social entrepreneurship project.
- Increase collaboration between Business Schools of Saint Louis University and St. John’s College.

### Healthcare
- Lower the rate of PTSD among St. Martin de Porres children through trauma counseling and other interventions.
- Determine need for nutritional education and programming based on needs assessment data.
- Work more closely with SLU faculty and students already serving at Hillside Clinic (located in the south part of the country) in order to achieve maximum outreach.

### Advancement/Other
- Submit ASHA and other grant proposals to obtain funding for the bolstering of technology at St. John’s College, which will allow for greater online training/courses to be offered.
- Establish Belize Scholarship Program to offset travel costs of Belizean and SLU students involved with various Belize 2020 initiatives.
- Add academic credit portion to current SLU immersion experience for students.