I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Belize is a small, lower-middle income country with estimated population of 356,600 and a GDP per capita of US$4,133 in 2011. Belize’s main economic activities comprise export-oriented primary commodities such as sugarcane, bananas, citrus and other fruits, logging and fisheries, as well as tourism. The tertiary sector dominates the economy - accounting for 70.2 percent of the GDP (2010) and 66 percent of the labor force (2012). Contributing 10.8 percent of the GDP (2010), the primary sector is the third largest contributor to GDP, and it employs 19.3 percent of the workforce (2012). Over the last decade the Belizean economy has undergone a significant transformation - including the emergence of the tourism sector (with tourism arrivals doubling between 1995 and 2007), the growth of non-traditional agriculture products and fisheries, and the first commercial oil discovery in 2005. The oil sector has been the principal source of growth in recent years.
2. The governing party, United Democratic Party (UDP), came to a power in 2008 and was re-elected in 2012 for another five-year term, resulting in political stability and continued policy priorities. In 2008, after ten years of rule by the People’s United Party, voter’s concerns about governance and transparency resulted in the election of a new government led by the UDP. The new government has worked to establish a transparent and accountable government and has taken concrete steps to address governance issues including the passage of a freedom of information act, term limits for elected officials (including the Prime Minister), and empowering the Senate’s oversight abilities. The World Bank re-engaged with the new government after suspending its program for several years due to deteriorating fiscal conditions and fiduciary concerns within the country, as well as perceived governance problems. The relationship between the Bank and the Government of Belize (GOB) has improved over the years and there is a clear commitment by the GoB to the Bank’s lending and technical assistance programs.

3. The fiscal condition of Belize has deteriorated in recent years, as the country continues to work on the restructuring of their “Super-Bond”. Public external debt levels have remained high and external shocks to the market such as natural disasters and the decline of tourism during the global economic crisis further contributed to the increased debt level. According to Belize Central Bank (BCB), falling global oil prices and decreased tourism revenue, the primary foreign exchange earner, have added significant strain to the economy. Despite the 2007 debt restructuring exercise, public external debt levels remain high at 83.5 percent of GDP. Consequently, Belize was in danger of sovereign default for failing to make the debt payments on their “Super-Bond” by the due date in 2012. Although Belize and their creditors came to an agreement on their debt restructuring by the end of 2012, the fiscal space remains restricted and further fiscal consolidation measures will be needed to reduce public debt to a more sustainable level.

4. The poverty rate in Belize is high and has increased in recent years, highlighting the need to address socio-economic vulnerability in the country. The increase in the incidence of poverty is partially attributed to the stagnating economic situation, as national revenue declined with decreases in oil prices and tourism, the lack of foreign investment due to growing concerns about security and perceived underemployment, as well as the effects of the 2008 floods. The latest Country Poverty Assessment (2009) showed that the overall poverty rate increased from 34 percent in 2002 to 41 percent in 2009. Extreme poverty increased from 11 percent to 16 percent from 2002 to 2009. In addition to the 41 percent of the population classified as poor, a further 14 percent of households are deemed vulnerable to poverty. Therefore, 55 percent of all households are either poor or susceptible to falling into poverty. Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas (56.6 percent) than in urban areas (30.3 percent). Although income inequality is slightly lower than neighboring Central American countries, economic inequities remain high with a Gini coefficient of 0.42 in 2009. Sharp regional and ethnic differences in rates of poverty are evident, ranging from 32.5 percent in the Belize City district to 64.6 percent in Toledo, with the highest rate of economic inequality concentrated within the indigenous Mayan communities. Poverty and indigence has increased in all districts, with the sharpest increase experienced in Corozal, which now has a similar level of overall poverty as Toledo. The most vulnerable in Belize tend to be concentrated in urban areas, and there is a strong correlation between urban poverty and vulnerability to natural hazards. This is evident in Toledo and Corozal, which are known to be highly susceptible to natural disasters: Toledo was hit by Tropical Storm Matthew (2010) and Hurricane Iris (2001) and Corozal was hit by hurricanes Arthur (2008), Dean (2007) and Keith (2000).
5. The history of Belize has, in large part, been shaped by its vulnerability to natural disasters. Belize has experienced frequent natural disasters of catastrophic proportions over the last half century: Hurricane Hattie destroyed half of Belize City in 1961, killing 400 people and submerging Turneffe Island and Caulker Caye in 13-feet storm surges. According to EM-DAT database, economic damages from Hurricane Hattie were estimated at over 600 percent of GDP. The damage from Hurricane Hattie prompted the GoB to build a new administrative capital 50 miles inland in Belmopan. Hurricane Keith in 2000 caused damage exceeding 45 percent of GDP. Hurricane Iris destroyed 95 percent of Placentia in 2001, submerging Belize City in 14-feet storm surges, destroying some 4,000 homes there and causing damage valued at 25 percent of GDP. Tropical Storm Arthur in May 2008 caused extensive damage to critical infrastructure and the agriculture sector. The fiscal impacts of disasters have required significant capital expenditures on repairing and re-constructing damaged infrastructure and has resulted in unsustainable budgetary deficits and unreliable funding streams, which collectively prevent any form of sound macro-economic growth.

6. Belize’s vulnerability to natural disasters is being exacerbated by the effects of climate change as natural hazards are expected to intensify in terms of frequency and severity. While climate change scenarios and methodologies are subject to further validations, several analyses have indicated that there is little scientific doubt regarding climate trends. Studies indicate that Belize will undergo a warming and drying trend and is expected to endure more frequent heat waves and droughts, rainfalls with increased intensity, and rising sea levels. These climatic changes could harm fisheries, reduce agricultural yields and decrease tourism, which would further impact fiscal imbalances, exacerbate existing budget constraints, and limit Belize’s ability to finance adaptation and mitigation activities. Furthermore, rising sea levels will increase coastal flooding and precipitation variations may threaten Belize’s infrastructure which is already dilapidated and lacks proper maintenance – not to mention Belize’s rapid urbanization, which has further strained physical and environmental systems. For instance, during the extended rainfall in November 2008, an estimated US$11 million of damages resulted of which US$5 million was from damages to road infrastructure. Some of the damages to the infrastructure included: total loss of culverts or small bridges, localized destruction of the pavement structure and loss of surface material from roads. These events highlight (i) the need for infrastructure development, for which the GoB has expressed strong interest in investing resources, and (ii) the current infrastructural vulnerability to hazard events and the adverse impacts resulting from climate change.

7. Belize has experienced rapid urbanization in recent years and the country’s continued urbanization underscores the importance of managing urban resilience and proactively planning for urban growth for the future. According to United Nations estimates, Belize has the third highest urban population growth rate in its region at 3.1 percent per annum between 2005 and 2010. From the 2007 national statistics, 52 percent of Belize’s population was located in the nine urban centers, seven of which are located along the coast. Urban population growth is not evenly distributed and inland cities, including Orange Walk, San Ignacio/Santa Elena, Benque Viejo and Belmopan, are growing faster than the other cities. A large portion of the population growth in the cities can be explained by immigration coming from neighboring countries, such as Guatemala, El Salvador Nicaragua and Honduras. Unable to acquire land, many immigrants are squatters who build shanties, often in low-lying areas at risk of flooding and lacking in basic infrastructure. In fact, the experiences from Belize’s Municipal Development Project (MDP) demonstrate that much of the urbanization process in Belize has taken place in the absence of proper land use planning for urban growth and adequate infrastructure provisions - often resulting in urban settlements in high risk areas.
Sectoral and Institutional Context

Infrastructure Investment

8. Underdeveloped and dilapidated infrastructure in Belize is a key constraint to achieving sustained economic growth and it increases its vulnerability to disasters. Over 70 percent of the population in Belize is located near the primary road network and is exposed to hazards that pose a recurrent risk to highly productive agricultural lands, critical life-line assets such as access roads and major power infrastructure as well as private property and human life. The main challenge associated with primary and secondary road networks has to do with inadequate maintenance and rehabilitation works, resulting in unsafe road conditions and frequent flooding during the rainy seasons. As for the municipal infrastructure, the need for good drainage systems has become more urgent due to the exacerbation of weather related events coupled with Belize’s low-lying topography. Furthermore, sewerage and drainage systems as well as water infrastructure has deteriorated in the urban areas, and has not kept pace with urban expansion. Although the Bank-supported MDP finances some drainage improvements, the investments remain largely insufficient and do not adequately meet the investment needs, particularly for new and extended urban areas. The lack of sufficient drainage infrastructure combined with an ineffective land use planning and inadequate delivery of services have contributed to re-occurring flooding during periods of heavy rains.

9. The GoB continues to prioritize improvement of the country’s infrastructure following years of low capital investments as a result of fiscal constraints. The GoB has mobilized substantial bilateral and multi-lateral financing of infrastructure, particularly transport investments, which are critical to support private sector development. The GoB prepares a five-year investment plan for key infrastructure sectors. However, this investment plan often lacks a strategic prioritization process and does not consider various financing instruments. Requirements for future investments on the primary network include raising the level of robustness to potential future disaster events (particularly coastal and in-land flooding) and addressing sub-standard conditions in parts of the network which have safety consequences.

10. Notably, a particular challenge facing the GoB is the absence of a sustainable maintenance financing mechanism due fiscal constraints and institutional resistance to adopting alternative approaches, such as private sector participation. The GoB has expressed commitment to undertake institutional reforms and developed a road maintenance plan supported by the European Union (EU) program for the Global Climate Resilient Alliance grant. However, this plan has never been adopted by the national cabinet due to institutional resistance to adopting alternative approaches, for instance, toll roads. As for the sub-national level infrastructure, the Bank-supported MDP is supporting, through a technical assistance program, a basic maintenance and implementing plan for participating municipalities.

Potential Impact of Climate Change

11. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) recognizes that Belize is one of those countries most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change due to the following geographical and meteorological factors: (i) long, low-lying coastline; (ii) 1,060 small islands; (iii) second-longest barrier reef in the world and 17,276 km sq of forest cover, each of which supports fragile ecosystems; and (iv) the fact that it is very prone to natural disasters -
particularly hurricanes. The impact of global warming on rising sea levels, which increase the elevation of storm surges, and the increase in the strength of hurricanes are two of the major climate change risk factors facing Belize. Clearly, climate change is a significant threat to Belize as it is expected to alter the hazard dynamics that affect competitiveness of productive sectors.

12. Changes in sea surface temperature as a result of climate variability could increase the intensity of cyclones and heighten storm surges, which in turn will cause more severe flood events in coastal zones and low-lying areas. According to the World Bank’s study, “Sea Level Rise and Storm Surges”, the impact of sea level rise and intensified storm surges in Latin America and the Caribbean will be high. Data available for Belize shows an increase of 26.93 percent - with 56.15 percent of the coastal population exposed and potential losses of coastal GDP projected to exceed 61.14 percent. Further, the projected sea level rises and extreme weather events are expected to jeopardize much of Belize’s low-lying territories, infrastructure and settlements which are located on the coastal plains and on the Cayes. The Cayes are particularly vulnerable given that they are small low elevation sandy islands formed on the surface of a coral reef.

13. Belize’s First National Communication on Climate Change (NCCC) was released in 2002. The NCCC concluded that coastline erosion is already considered a major concern, noting that it is inevitable that accelerated sea level rise would exacerbate the rate of erosion and possibly destroy all existing beaches within the century. Vulnerability assessment reveals that a 4 cm rise in sea level, over the next 25 years, would have a low impact. However, a 50 cm rise would claim over half the existing beaches, and a 100 cm rise in 100 years would destroy over 90 percent of Belize’s beaches. Regarding inundation, approximately 60 percent of coastal areas are already inundated. Considering that most of the mainland coastline between the existing communities is wetland-dominated, a one-meter rise in sea level would transform the wetlands into lakes. Dry land within a few meters of high tide levels would provide potential areas for new wetland formation.

14. Belize has introduced several legislations and policy measures to mitigate disaster risk and to enhance the disaster preparedness. The Disaster Preparedness and Response Act (2000, revised in 2003) is the primary legislation governing Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in Belize. The Act established the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) headed by a National Emergency Coordinator. The NEMO is the recognized as the national coordinating and implementing entity for DRM. NEMO comprises the Cabinet, with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, the Cabinet Secretary, as Secretary, the NEMO Secretariat and the 13 Operational Committees and nine District and Special Committees. It assigns broad responsibilities for “coordinating the general policy of the government related to the mitigation of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from emergencies and disasters”. The Governor-General has the authority, by Proclamation, to declare a National State of Emergency, which is required to be published in the Official Gazette. The following legislations have been adopted to support hazard mitigation:


ii) The Land Utilization Act (revised in 2000) provides for the subdivision and utilization of land; and for the National Emergency Coordinator (NEC) to be a member of the Land Subdivision and Utilization Authority.

iii) The Environmental Protection Act assigns to the Department of the Environment the authority to conduct its own environmental impact assessment where deemed necessary, and to
approve environmental impact assessments subject to consultation with the NEC. This provision enables the NEC to incorporate disaster risk considerations into the project cycle.

iv) The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1999 mandates the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute to address cross-sectoral sustainable development of coastal resources.

v) The Insurance Act (No. 11 of 2004) makes provisions for domestic insurers and to strengthen the regulatory framework for the insurance industry. The Act provides for risk coverage for government and private sector-financed infrastructure, up to the duration of the mortgage.

vi) The Reconstruction and Development Corporation Act facilitated the relocation in 1970 of the GoB’s main administrative center from Belize City to Belmopan, following damage from Hurricane Hattie in 1961. The Act has not been applied since, and has no current functioning administering unit.

15. The aforementioned acts support disaster risk management a) by improving physical planning and land use standards, which collectively strengthen the built environment, b) by protecting natural resources, which can help reduce the impacts of disasters, and c) by creating a risk transfer strategy through the insurance act, which helps to finance losses and lessen economic repercussions after a disaster, although the extent to which these rules are enforced varies.

16. Despite the GoB’s efforts to introduce relevant legislations and policy measures, Belize’s DRM policy framework is fragmented and its institutional capacity is low as indicated by the poor implementation of national strategies across ministries. Public sector agency organization and legislative frameworks mainly support the emergency management cycle, and suffer disparities in addressing comprehensive risk management including promoting climate change adaptation. One of the main challenges identified in implementing the National Hazard Mitigation Policy, which has never been officially adopted, is that it lacks a focus on institutionalizing ex-ante risk identification, prevention, and mitigation. Another is the lack of knowledge about the importance of hazard mitigation across ministries. There is also need for greater interagency coordination between the government ministries, private sector organizations, civil society and community groups. The regulatory, administrative, and institutional framework for hazard mitigation needs to be strengthened. Finally, an overriding challenge to implementation of the policy is the requirement for funding and capacity building to upgrade or develop information systems to support and facilitate multi-sectoral decision-making in the implementation of hazard mitigation programs.

17. Belize has made some strides in improving their risk identification capacity through participation in risk management programs; however, there are still significant capacity needs. In 2007, Belize became part of the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), which is a multi-country pooling facility that allows participating countries to purchase insurance coverage to finance immediate post-disaster recovery needs and to finance their risks through risk pooling, risk retention, and risk transfer. Through the CCRIF, basic risk identification analysis was conducted in order to determine Belize’s risk to hurricane winds. However, Belize still lacks a strategic overview of their base risk to other hazards such as flood, drought and storm surge. In addition, Belize is part of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which provides capacity building and technical assistance on risk identification. Furthermore, Belize participated in the first phase of the Central American Probabilistic Risk Assessment Initiative (CAPRA), which established the basic capacity to perform probabilistic risk assessment. Despite these efforts, there are still significant capacity constraints in performing in-depth disaster and climate risk assessments, which the CRIP aims to address under component 2.
Relationship to CAS

The proposed Belize Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project (CRIP) represents the only IBRD investment programmed in the Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) and is fully in line with the CPS. The Belize CPS concentrates on one central area: to support the GoB to achieve Inclusive and Sustainable Natural Resource-Based Growth and Enhanced Climate Resilience. After a long hiatus, the Bank re-engaged with Belize in 2009 via a two-year Interim Strategy Note (ISN - FY09-11). The ISN has been satisfactorily implemented and has helped the Bank establish a productive dialogue with and build a knowledge base of the country’s development challenges to inform future engagement. Under the ISN, the Bank prepared together with the GoB the Municipal Development Project (US$15 million), which is currently the Bank’s only lending operation in Belize. Based on this successful re-engagement, the Bank prepared a Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) from FY 2012 to FY 2015, which concentrates on supporting the country’s efforts to move towards a more sustainable development model, safeguarding its natural resource base while reducing vulnerabilities to climate change and natural hazards. The CPS supports the GoB’s efforts to adopt a sustainable natural resource based economic model while enhancing the country’s resilience to climate change and natural hazards. The three results areas of the CPS are: 1) policies and strategies for mainstreaming of natural resources and climate resilience; 2) institutional capacity strengthening for natural resource management and climate change; and 3) investments to strengthen climate resilience.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)

The development objectives of the proposed Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project (CRIP) are to improve the resilience of critical infrastructure to natural hazards and understood impacts of climate variability and to strengthen the capacity of the national and local government in managing climate resilience.

Key Results (From PCN)

- Improved quality of selected infrastructure against natural hazards and understood impacts of climate variability
- Strengthened institutions to identify and manage climate risk

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

20. Description. The Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project (CRIP) would support the GoB in strengthening the resilience of critical infrastructure to natural hazards and the anticipated impacts of climate variability through targeted retrofitting, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. The investments financed by the CRIP would be informed by an extensive project identification and prioritization process enabled through provisions provided by a Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and European Union (EU) Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) grant in the amount of US$750,000. The primary output of the GFDRR/EU-ACP grant would be a comprehensive cross-sectoral climate resilience investment plan, which is currently being developed jointly with the GoB, and is expected be adopted as the GoB’s mid-term investment strategy. Activities included in the national climate resilience investment plan would be identified and prioritized using a multi-criteria evaluation (MCE) methodology. The MCE will be based on a combination of physical, social, economic, and environmental criteria, which will be defined and
confirmed by key national stakeholders.

21. In order to establish the institutional priorities and appropriately define the weight of each criterion included in the MCE methodology the following activities would be conducted under the GFDRR/EU-ACP grant: 1) the establishment of a hazard and disaster baseline, 2) the conduction of a series of participatory workshops to reach consensus on MCE criteria, 3) the analysis of socio-economic vulnerability, and 4) an integrated (qualitative and quantitative) locational-based vulnerability assessment of critical infrastructure.

22. The secondary output of the GFDRR/EU-ACP grant would be a country specific hazard and disaster risk analysis framework and an inter-institutional capacity-building strategy for improved disaster/climate risk identification and assessment. The referenced framework and capacity building strategy would identify activities that could be financed under the CRIP. These would likely include technical assistance activities such as land-use and physical planning, improved performance of infrastructure maintenance, institutional strengthening, capacity-building, awareness raising and knowledge-building around geospatial data management, climate/disaster risk analysis. The combination of these activities would establish the institutional capacity and analytical foundation required for the GoB to create an information platform and integrate risk analysis into the decision making process as well as facilitate the mainstreaming of disaster risk management across sectors.

23. It is anticipated that the investment portfolio identified under the GFDRR/EU-ACP grant will exceed the CRIP financing envelop. The CRIP would, therefore, seek to finance the most critical investments within the agreed Project envelop. Specific investment programs for the CRIP will be selected based upon a set of criteria which will be developed further, taking into account the requirement of safeguards policies and economic and financial analysis. As noted above, the investments that would be financed under the proposed CRIP would only cover critical infrastructure needs and would therefore not be sufficient to build climate resilience across all sectors of public infrastructure. However, the CRIP would provide a strong institutional foundation to strengthen climate resilience across sectors in the long-term.

24. Project Components. The CRIP will finance climate resilience activities under the following three mutually reinforcing components:

25. Component 1: Climate Resilience Infrastructure. This component would be designed to reduce physical vulnerability of critical infrastructure through the retrofitting and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure such as primary and secondary road networks, drainage systems, as well as flood mitigation measures in order to strengthen their resilience to natural hazards and the anticipated impacts of climate variability. The identification of investments under this component will be facilitated through the execution of the GFDRR/EU-ACP grant.

26. Under the GFDRR/EU-ACP supported investment identification process, characteristics and components of infrastructure such as primary and secondary road networks, drainage systems, as well as select critical public buildings, and critical flood mitigation infrastructure will be assessed in terms of the extent they are exposed to natural disasters and climate variability. The intent of this risk exposure assessment is to identify critical infrastructure, focusing specifically on infrastructure performance, that are at risk of failure, loss of service, damage and/or deterioration from hazards.
and extreme climatic events. Based on the outcome of this assessment, a set of strategic investments would be identified to be financed under the CRIP.

27. Identified physical investments would likely concentrate on priority public infrastructure in the primary and secondary road network and surrounding geographical areas – given the exposure of the road network to coastal and in-land flooding. Over 70 percent of the population is located near the primary road network and is exposed to hazards that pose a recurrent risk to highly productive agricultural lands, critical life-line assets such as un-redundant roads and major power infrastructure as well as private property and human life. Activities would be comprehensive in nature and may include activities such as river defense, drainage and small scale flood mitigation improvements, the rehabilitation and replacement of critical small-scale bridges, and road improvements, which directly impact the primary road network and surrounding populations. It may also potentially include reinforcement of embankments, slopes, including through bio-engineering or re-vegetation.

28. This component will also fund supporting studies required for the development of physical works packages such as in-land flood studies relating to the design of specific river defenses, hydrologic/hydraulic investigations, geotechnical investigations and associated pre-engineering and engineering efforts required to support engineering design options and final designs solutions. During the execution of the proposed physical works investments, the integration of climate resilient design standards, hazard/risk analysis and climate change impact analysis would be integrated into the preparation process in order to ensure the design and construction of climate resilient infrastructure.

29. Component 2. Technical Assistance for Improved Climate Resilience Management. This component would aim to strengthen relevant technical line ministries capacity mainstream climate resilience considerations into their core development planning. Technical assistance provided under this component would potentially include four mutually-reinforcing core activities: 1) mainstreaming climate variability considerations into the existing land-use and territorial planning decision making processes; 2) support the deployment of an information platform and complimentary data management infrastructure; 3) strengthen infrastructure maintenance and asset management; and 4) strengthen institutional coordination and capacity to implement their DRM and climate resilience policy framework.

30. Provisions of technical support for improved land-use and territorial planning as well as the development of an information baseline and complimentary data management platform would target relevant technical staff within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture (MNRA) and possibly NEMO. The former would promote the use of geospatial technology in the land use and territorial planning processes, which would enable the visualization of current and future hazards and amplified impacts associated with anticipated climate change. Complimentary technical assistance would enable the MNRA to meet GIS database maintenance and information sharing requirements in-line with the recently approved National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) Policy. This would also include assistance to the MNRA in the listing, consolidation and availability of the existing GIS databases, the establishment of data sharing protocols and the development of training programs tailored to the LICs and other government staff needs.

31. In addition to training and institutional strengthening with the LIC and other relevant line ministries, targeted technical assistance and training would be financed under the component with
the aim of strengthening the Ministry of Works and Transport’s (MoWT) infrastructure maintenance and asset management capacities.

32. Component 3: Project Management and Implementation Support. This component would finance activities that relate to the institutional support and capacity development for project management and execution to ensure compliance with fiduciary controls, supervision, monitoring and reporting, and compliance with social and environmental safeguards, through the provision of technical advisory services, training, operating costs, and acquisition of goods. Activities would include training, staffing and development activities associated with project execution such as project coordination, evaluation, supervision and implementation.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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V. Financing (in USD Million)

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