

THE ASSOCIATION OF PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATIONS- APAMO

THE VOICE

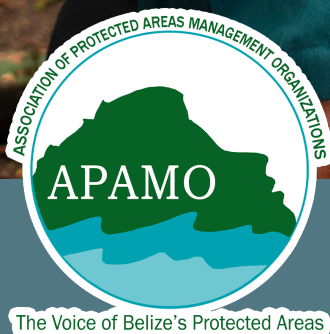


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STRENGTHENING APAMO'S RANGER FORCE

As a follow-up on the partnership between APAMO and the Belize Institute of Search and Rescue Training back in December 2021, both entities have united efforts towards operationalizing a comprehensive Ranger Training Programme.

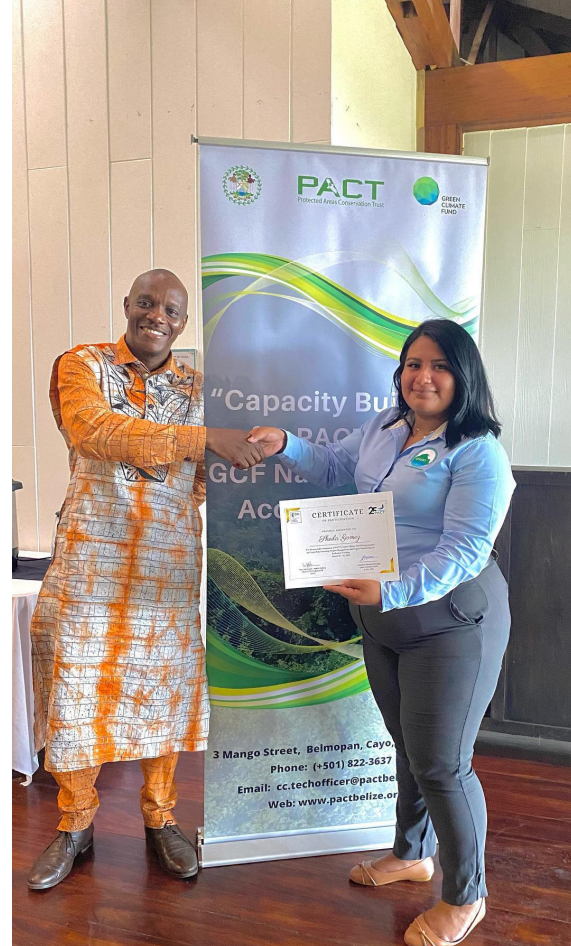
Launched in January 2022, the mission of this programme is to build an effective and robust Ranger force. As custodians of Protected Areas, it is critical for Rangers to develop, enhance and sustain the skills needed to save lives, especially in treacherous and remote conditions.

This is a major step in ensuring employee and visitor safety and security across APAMO co-managed Protected Areas. This partnership sustains APAMO's efforts towards enhancing the capacity of member organizations.

A total of eleven Rangers from three of APAMO's member organizations; the Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA); the Mayflower Bocawina Environmental and Development Group (MBEDG); and the Belize Audubon Society (BAS); kicked off the new year with a 5-day Introductory Level Training in Search and Rescue. The Introductory Level aims to enhance the participant's medical and technical skills in areas such as Airway Management, Environmental Emergencies, and Patient Packaging. With this added proficiency, the Rangers can integrate their Search and Rescue skills in the event of emergent response situations at their respective protected area and at a national level. APAMO looks forward to continuing incorporating its member organizations in this Training Programme that strengthens their role as effective protected areas co-managers.

ACRC Participates in the Capacity Building for PACT as a GCF National Direct Access Entity Workshop

APAMO's Business Development Officer, Ms. Sheila Gomez, participated in a 3-day Capacity Building Training with National Stakeholders under the GCF (Green Climate Fund) Readiness Project which was facilitated by the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT). The training involved group discussions, presentations, and a field visit to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary to apply topics such as Environment, Social and Gender Risk Identification, GCF Project Management, Project Monitoring and Evaluation. These topics were presented by consultants from E. Co. LTD of the UK. The application of tools such as Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Screening; PACT Risk Screening and Categorization Toolkit; and the Integrated Results Management Framework (IRMF); provided a hands-on experience through the analysis of an assigned case study. This training will provide APAMO with the capacity to utilize these tools and skills needed to develop and implement GCF projects while simultaneously enhancing the ACRC's (APAMO Central Resource Center) capacity in the GCF.



APAMO EMBRACES A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BELIZE TOURISM BOARD



APAMO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) on February 2nd, 2022 that will strengthen cooperation in the sustainable development of Protected Areas (PAs) in Belize. This new partnership opens opportunities of collaboration towards enhancing marketing efforts, destination planning, training & certification, and data sharing. This partnership paves the way as a historic collaboration, not only for APAMO but for Conservation-Non-Governmental Organizations in Belize. This MOU was one more step in engaging the tourism sector in the enhancement of the PAs in an effort to market these sites as a tourism products while ensuring sustainability. In addition to the signed MOU, BTB established a \$75,000.00 fund for conservation, sustainable development and regeneration. This year's fund was awarded to APAMO for its conservation efforts and stride towards embracing sustainable tourism. The fund is assisting APAMO in its infrastructure upgrade, administrative and marketing efforts as we enhance co-managed sites as tourism destination. In efforts to operationalize this partnership, the APAMO Central Resource Center (ACRC), alongside the team at BTB, met to discuss and establish this year's strategic work plan that will consolidate significant activities for each area of collaboration.



THE WOMEN OF APAMO

WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMAN'S DAY MEAN, TODAY?

Manoellie Torres, Administrative Assistant

International Women's Days is celebrated around the world on March 18th it commemorates women of all ethnicities, in key areas such as economics, social, cultural, and political achievement and celebrating the overall growth of women in society. In Belize, women are now performing job that use to be male dominate positions, such as technicians, architect, and politicians. The world has evolved, and my hopes is that it keeps evolving to grant more opportunities for women. International Women's Day means different things to different people, but the global focus is on equality. And still to this day, International Women's Day continues to be a powerful platform globally that unifies women all around the world.

WHY DO WE NEED WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS?

Melissa Berjes, Project officer

The qualities of a great leader have never been gender-dependent. An individual's strength and personality traits make up a person's leadership attributes, whether it be a male or female. However, having female leadership in any organization leads to a more positive environment all around. A woman's potential and capabilities are irrefutable and having female leaders in positions of influence to serve as role models is not only critical to the career advancement of women but stands to generate broader societal impacts on pay equity, changing workplace policies in ways that benefit both men and women, and attracting a more diverse workforce.



WHY DO YOU SUPPORT WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY?

Sheila Gomez, Business Development Officer

Similar to other fields of work, the conservation field has been and continues being a male-dominated sector. Needless to say, women today have recognized the need for economic prosperity despite the societal structure that has hindered opportunities to increase their capacity in the past. Therefore, contributing to women's empowerment is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. The availability of equal opportunities in every field, regardless of gender, enables a paradigm shift for women aspiring to contribute to society. As a young female, I have observed that societal structures tend to gravitate towards instilling a mentality where college education is unnecessary given the fact that women can simply marry in order to live a comfortable life. This frame of mind incentivizes the necessity for young women like me, to advocate for women's empowerment through educational development. Gender equality is a larger scope that advocates for equal power and equal opportunities for both men and women. Therefore, this is a notion that I support as I strongly believe that men and women are deserving of equal opportunities; specifically in the workplace. Many instances have occurred in workplaces where critical circumstances arise which require an immediate solution and in these cases, accountability is usually highly demanded from women rather than men. I believe the best approaches to advocating for gender equality highly relies on enabling an environment with strategic action plans to maneuver those situations that may threaten gender equality.



WHAT PROGRESS HAVE YOU SEEN ON GENDER EQUALITY IN YOUR LIFE/ WORK?

Shary Pat- Howe, Finance Officer

I am a daughter, wife, mother and an employee. Throughout my life experience, I can say that what has changed in our society is sharing the household chores at home. I can recall my grandfather and father telling me stories about their childhood, their parents and the way society used to be back then. Years ago, the culture and believe was that men were to go out and work in the field to provide for their families, while women were to stay at home to take care of the kids and to do the household chores. That culture and believe has changed. Presently couples share the household chores. You now see men doing tasks that were categorized as a women's role in the household such as taking care of the kids, hanging washed clothes and cooking. Most chefs out there now are men. Some men now have the opportunity to have a paternity leave. Women now have the opportunity to be out in the working environment. They are no longer just staying at home to take care of the kids and to do the household chores. Now, both men and woman have the opportunity to hold a managerial position, to have an equal salary. Moreover, women are becoming leaders of today's society. More women are becoming involved in political activities. We now hear of women's rights. Women are no longer afraid to report domestic abuse and violence. We need to continue giving equal opportunities to both male and female, for them to realize their human rights and to contribute and benefit from the society, the economy and political development.

MEET APAMO'S INTERN



My name is Louis Vander Borght and I am from Belgium. I am currently studying International Cooperation and I am doing an internship for my school with APAMO. I have been here for 2 months and I feel integrated with the team, I am working with the Project Officer. Everybody in the office is nice and they make me feel comfortable here. The food is different from what I am used to in Belgium. The Project Officer tries to make me taste Belizean foods, without forgetting the habanero sauce that all Belizeans put on their foods. I had to get used to spicy food, now I love it!

Since I've been here, I have seen my first canoe race, APAMO was supporting one of their members, the Belize Audubon Society and the team Audubon Green Guardians. I participated in a cleanup campaign with APAMO and other organizations, where we cleaned the highway between the Belize Zoo and Guanacaste National Park.

At APAMO, I am working on a global citizenship education program, this will address issues like global warming and sustainable development. I would like to develop workshops and games to sensitize people about global warming.

I feel supported by my coworkers in my initiative, they are interested in what I do and the project officer listens to me with a lot of attention when I ask her something and when I need something she is always ready to help me!

I also visited some of the protected areas that APAMO works with, and I saw the Coral Reef when snorkeling. I understand the importance of APAMO's work, a lot of people depend on the preservation of such a beautiful and extraordinarily biodiverse environment. I've never seen such beautiful natural landscapes in my life, I feel lucky to have experience this. When I see all of that I am proud to be the intern of APAMO!

Louis B.



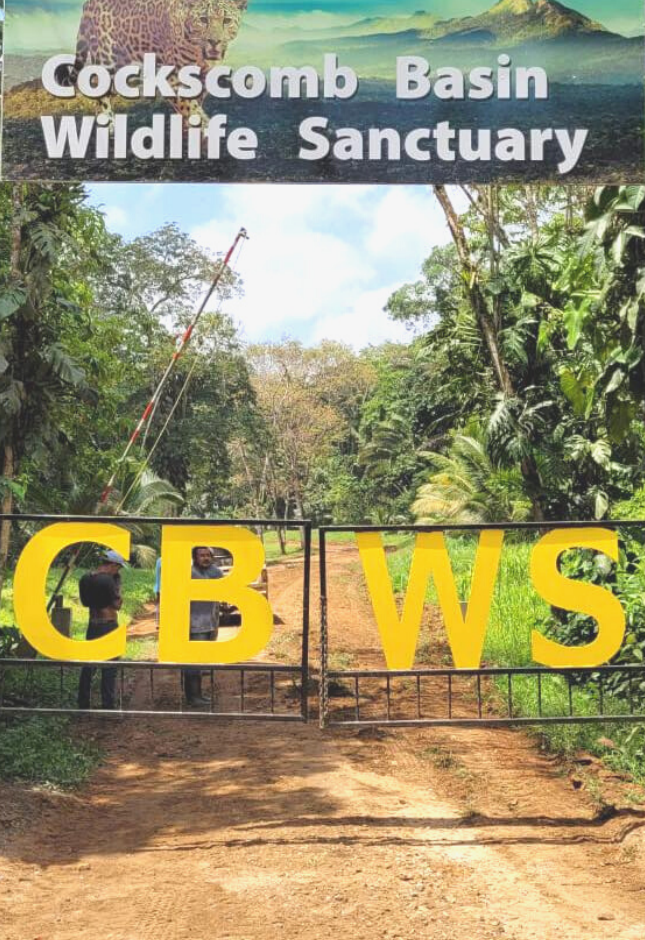


AUDUBON GREEN GUARDIANS

TAKES ON THE 2022 LA RUTA MAYA BELIZE RIVER CHALLENGE

This March, the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) with APAMO were pleased to sponsor the Sho family as they paddled under the “Audubon Green Guardians” name for the La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge. The idea of supporting a family team was welcomed by BAS as we strongly advocate for a family and community approach to conservation. The La Ruta Maya canoe race has evolved into a competitive sport over the years, but not withstanding its ability to bring Belizeans together united for a cause. In this case, the family approach to protecting our environment was resonated with pride through the Sho family. Their exemplary support and team work to persevere and complete the race was most inspiring. We are proud of them for taking on the challenge and for championing conservation of our natural resources. The father-son team ranked 19th overall and 7th in the Family Adventure category with a total time of 20:58:28. They were awarded the People’s Choice Award by United Nations Belize!

APAMO would like to thank the Silk Grass Farms for their invaluable support during the 2022 La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge!



COCKSCOMB BASIN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY WELCOMES YOU

Improving infrastructure is something we take seriously at BAS' protected areas as it relates directly to visitor satisfaction and experience. Check out the new welcome gate at the entrance of Cockscomb on your next visit.

Our other most recent infrastructure project is our new spacious kitchen facility at CBWS. The new kitchen will now be able to host large groups of up to 30 persons. This improvement was made possible with funds from the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) which continues to support BAS in achieving financial sustainability for CBWS! Look out for more improvement on site at Cockscomb in the upcoming months.





MBEDG & STACA

Gold Standard Certified

In an effort to adapt to the Covid-19 Pandemic, APAMO worked closely with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), namely the Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA), and the Mayflower Bocawina Environmental and Development Group (MBEDG) to protect the staff and visitors by putting in place various protocols including the installation of a sanitization station and signage throughout the National Parks. The parks encourage social distancing and proper usage of masks and implementing temperature checks upon visitors' arrival. Both CBOs have now received the Belize Tourism Board Gold Standard Certification with assistance from the ACRC (APAMO Central Resource Center). We were able to enhance safety for visitors and staff for a much more gratifying experience while visiting the Billy Barquedier National Park and the Mayflower Bocawina National Park. Visitors can now rest assured that the staff has been trained and are well prepared to safely greet and interact with during their visit.





MBEDG'S COMMUNITY OFFICE DAYS

The Mayflower Bocawina Environmental and Development Group (MBEDG) conducted community outreaches in the buffering communities of Silk Grass, Hope Creek, and Hopkins between the months of November 2021 and March 2022. MBEDG strives to promote a good working relationship with its stakeholders and with the technical support from the ACRC and the financial support from PACT, MBEDG was able to successfully conduct these educational outreaches. The objective of these activities is to continuously build the relationship between the National Park and its buffering communities. The Community Office Days had a great turnout within each community summarizing the total persons reached to 250. MBEDG will continue to provide educational outreaches to its buffering communities and schools.

The ACRC Working Towards CBO's Financial Accountability

Transparency and Accountability is one of our core values at the Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations. Currently, that the APAMO Central Resource Center (ACRC) provides accounting and financial support and services to two of its members as a partnership agreement since 2019. Over the past months we have been working hard in establishing an accounting system for the Steadfast Tourism and Conservation Association (STACA). We can now proudly say STACA is operating with an accounting system and it has been externally financially reviewed for the year 2019 and externally audited for the year 2020.

We have also accomplished the audit for APAMO and Mayflower Bocawina Environmental Development Group (MBEDG) for the year 2020. Also, APAMO recently enters a partnership with the Belize Institute of Search and Rescue Training (BISART). We are also providing our accounting and financial services to BISART and we are currently working on establishing an accounting system for this organization. APAMO is committed to work efficiently and effectively for adequate financial operation.

LET'S CHAT WITH SEA

Has your protected area been affected by any natural disaster?

SEA co-manages two Protected Areas (PAs)- Laughing Bird Caye National Park (LBNCP) with Forest dept and Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve (GSSCMR) with Fisheries dept. Which takes day- to- day oversight in terms of providing public use management and surveillance and enforcement. One concern that SEA currently possess is the constant implications inflicted by climate change, specifically erosions. Both PAs are facing erosion, particular occurrence is visible with GSSCMR. It also important to note, that erosion is occurring not just the PAs but can be evident with other cayes within Managed Access Area 3. Therefore, immediate action to curb /mitigate the loss of valuable marine ecosystem is required.

Is there any team member that SEA would like to recognize?

SEA would like to recognize a dedicated SEA Ranger- Mr. Benedicto Yatz, who has been with the organization for over 4 years. Furthermore, he conducts dual approach of Public- use Management and Surveillance & Patrol with the integrity of providing effective care to the protected areas. Recently, he attended a training facilitated by the Belize Fisheries Department entitles, "Ranger and Conservation Officer Enforcement Training". The training is added capacity to his role as Ranger- one that oversees the use of our marine ecosystems. A training that sharpens the skills of dealing with everyday encounter with visitors of the PAs along with fisherfolk and tour guides; primary users of marine ecosystems. Additionally, continuous capacity building for Rangers who are in essence- tourism ambassadors is a pivot aspect within Marine conservation. In conclusion, lets shed some light on the continued outstanding efforts by Mr. Benedicto Yatz as he possesses qualities that deserves recognition. Mr. Benedicto Yatz goes above and beyond the job title; always willing, honest and determined.



LET'S CHAT WITH STACA

Has your protected area been subjected to any illegal activity?

Throughout this year, the Rangers also recorded several illegal activities. These include illegal entry, illegal camps, hunting etc. Support is being requested from the National Biodiversity Office and the Police Department to deter these instances of illegal activities within the park.

What work has your organization been doing or has done in terms of climate change and climate action?

STACA completed its Climate Change Education Campaign in January 2022. The campaign involved carrying out an eco-challenge with youth in the three buffering communities we work with. The campaign also involved an extensive social media campaign where the public was made aware about climate change concepts, impacts, and mitigation efforts. Finally, STACA completed a series of educational activities within three buffering primary schools. The students were also part of a Climate change poster competition that is currently being finalized.

What initiatives have your organization undertaken to help restore, conserve and or protect the environment?

STACA has been continuing its monthly water quality monitoring initiatives within the BBNP. This has led to valuable information being collected on the status of the water being distributed to the neighboring households. With this data, STACA will be able to advise the local water boards on proper management of their water system. STACA has also recently recruited a team of Research and Monitoring volunteers to assist in any form of monitoring activities, from data collection, data sorting and reporting.



OUR PARTNERS



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GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE
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OUR MEMBERS



Mayflower Bocawina Environmental and Development Group



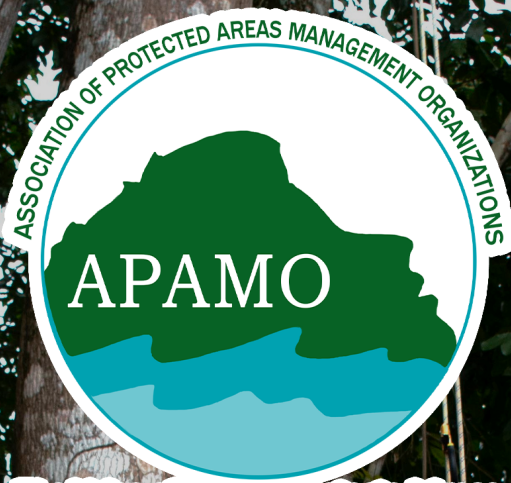
Voluntary Community-based Conservation



COROZAL
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The Voice of Belize's Protected Areas



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