Domestic Violence in Belize: Opening the Doors to Change

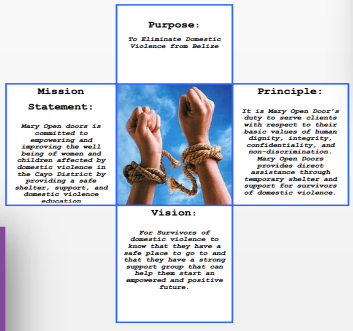
A CASE STUDY OF MARY OPEN DOORS



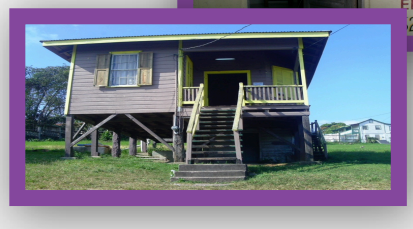


Mary Open Doors (MOD):

Founded in early 2008 by Anna Silva, a survivor of domestic violence, Mary Open Doors is a small domestic violence shelter located in the Cayo District of Belize. Mary Open Doors provides a safe location, counseling and emotional support to each of its clients and is one of only two such establishments in the entire country. The passion and dedication of the two member staff has compensated for a lack of resources, but long-term sustainability is a looming issue.







Challenges Facing MOD:

- Inexperienced and unengaged Board of Directors
- Administrative: inconsistent and relatively underdeveloped internal and external communications, data collection and management, clear tasks and timelines
- Organizational Structure: lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the CEO, staff, Board of Directors, or volunteers
- Funding: No fundraising strategy, no pipeline funding, irregular contributions from donors, weak accounting systems

Gender Issues in Belize:

- *Gender-based violence:* Violence that is directed mainly toward women because they are women or that affects women disproportionately.
- Domestic Violence Unit established within the Police Department in 2000.
- *Special need areas for gender-based issues:* health, wealth and employment creation, education and skills training, violence producing conditions, and women in power and decision-making.
- Inadequate data on gender-based violence hinders the development of appropriate initiatives and funding to combat it.
- *Belize is a signatory to:* Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on Population and Development (ICDP), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), numerous ILO Conventions as well as other related social and economic commitments.

How we engaged with MOD:



Pre-trip: agreed upon deliverables, relevant issues and country research

Met directly with client; adjusted to "on-the-ground" realities

Met with stakeholders; identified resources

The Belizean Network on Gender-based Issues:

Women's Issues of Belize (WIN Belize), a network of organizations with a special interest in women's issues, established in 1993

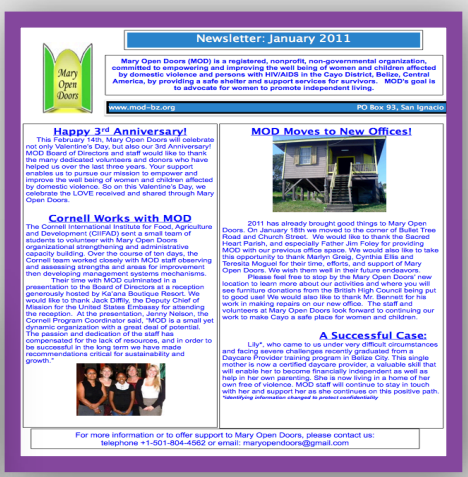
- Committed to the improvement of social and economic opportunities for women and their families in Belize.
- Provides leadership by empowering and strengthening its member agencies.
- Develops linkages among organizations to promote the development of women.
- Facilitates the sharing of knowledge, skills and resources.
- Advocates at the government level for improving the quality of life of women and their families in Belize.

Haven House, the first domestic violence shelter in the country:

- Founded in 1993
- Located in Belize City, the most densely populated and crime riddled region of the country
- Engaged and effective Board of Directors
- Creative and robust fundraising strategies
- WIN Belize







Newsletter: January 2011

Mary Open Doors (MOD) is a registered, nonprofit, non-governmental organization, committed to empowering and improving the well being of women and children affected by domestic violence and persons with HIV/AIDS in the Cayo District, Belize, Central America, by providing a safe shelter and support services for survivors. MOD's goal is to advocate for women to promote independent living.

www.mod-bz.org PO Box 93, San Ignacio

Happy 3rd Anniversary!

This February 14th, Mary Open Doors will celebrate not only Valentine's Day, but also our 3rd Anniversary! MOD Board of Directors and staff would like to thank the many volunteers, donors and friends who have helped us over the last three years. Your support enables us to pursue our mission to empower and improve the well being of women and children affected by domestic violence. So on this Valentine's Day, we celebrate the LOVE received and shared through Mary Open Doors.

Cornell Works with MOD

The Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development (CIIFAD) sent a small team of students to volunteer with Mary Open Doors organizational strengthening and administrative capacity building. Over the course of ten days, the Cornell team worked closely with MOD staff observing and assessing strengths and areas for improvement then developing management systems mechanisms.

Their time with MOD culminated in a presentation to the Board of Directors at a reception generously hosted by Ka'ana Boutique Resort. We would like to thank Jack Diffily, the Deputy Chief of Mission for the United States Embassy for attending. The Cornell Program Coordinator said, "MOD is a small yet dynamic organization with a great deal of potential. The passion and dedication of the staff has compensated for the lack of resources, and in order to be successful in the long term we have made recommendations critical for sustainability and growth."

MOD Moves to New Offices!

2011 has already brought good things to Mary Open Doors. On January 19th, we moved to 48 of Ballet Tree Road and Church Street. We would like to thank the Sacred Heart Parish, and especially Father Jim Foley for providing MOD with our previous office space. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Martyn Greig, Cynthia Ellis and Teresita Moguel for their time, efforts, and support of Mary Open Doors. We wish them well in their future endeavors.

Please feel free to stop by the Mary Open Doors' new location to learn more about our activities and where you will see furniture donations from the British High Council being put to good use! We would also like to thank Mr. Bennett for his work in making repairs on our new office. The staff and volunteers at Mary Open Doors look forward to continuing our work to make Cayo a safe place for women and children.

A Successful Case:

Lily*, who came to us under very difficult circumstances and facing severe challenges recently graduated from a Daycare Provider training program in Belize City. This single mother is now a certified daycare provider, a valuable skill that will enable her to become financially independent as well as help in her own parenting. She is now living in a home of her own free of violence. MOD staff will continue to stay in touch with her and support her as she continues on this positive path.

*Identifying information changed to protect confidentiality

For more information or to offer support to Mary Open Doors, please contact us:
telephone +1-501-804-4562 or email: maryopendoors@gmail.com

What we recommended:

- Join the Women's Issues Network (WIN) of Belize to access the organizations, projects, trainings, and potential funds provided under the linkages WIN Belize builds.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of the Board, reconfirm the commitment of current members, and strategically expand the Board to include individuals with the needed skills, background and commitment to advance MOD's mission and vision.
- Strengthen organizational and administrative aspects of MOD by articulating roles and responsibilities of staff, Board members, and volunteers and initiate and consistently execute internal and external communications strategy.
- Develop and implement a realistic fundraising strategy with clearly defined responsibilities for MOD staff and Board.

References:

- Women's Issues Network of Belize Website: http://www.winbelize.org/about-win-belize/about-win-belize.html Accessed February 5, 2011.
- National Gender-Based Action Plan 2010 National Gender Policy: Situation Analysis of Gender Issues in Belize.

Cornell University
Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development