

~~I. Myrtle Palacio~~

Mrs. Myrtle Palacio is a Belizean mother of two and grandmother of three. She holds a Trained Teacher's Diploma, Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting and Business Management with *cum laude* honours, and a Master of Science degree in Urban Studies with concentration in Community Economic Development and Social/Policy Planning. She conducts research, presents technical papers at national & international conferences, and has published on topical areas of socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economical concerns. Her weekly column in the Amandala in 1998/2000 broached topics such as, the family, poverty, gender issues, ethnicity, and the socio-political context.

As an entrepreneur, Mrs. Palacio pioneered the political opinion polling culture, the computer and offshore data entry industry in Belize, through her organization Glessima Research and Services Ltd.. Glessima was also well known for its commitment to skills training and job placement for those at risk, as well as, its contribution of equipment to education institutions in Belize City. Glessima was influenced by her short term experience in party politics, as one of two women candidates for the Peoples United Party in the 1984 general election. Mrs. Palacio taught for over twenty years at the primary, high school and university levels of education in Belize. She participated in several election observer missions with CARICOM, IFES and The Commonwealth Secretariat. Mrs. Palacio was one of five persons appointed in February 2002 by the President of Trinidad & Tobago to serve as a member of the Commission of Enquiry into the work of the Elections and Boundaries Commission of Trinidad and Tobago.

In 1999, Mrs. Palacio was honoured three times—in March by the Ministry of Education for her contribution to cultural awareness; in May, by the National Library Service for her outstanding contribution to the Belizean society; and in June she was appointed to be an Ordinary Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. In June 2001, Mrs. Palacio was recognized by Friends in Support of the Diocese of Belize, in New York, for her dedicated service to family and community. In 2003, she was acknowledged by the Los Angeles Belizean Educational Network ([LABEN](#)), and was featured in the newsletter LABEN News for its January/February issue. In June 2007, she was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her contribution to community service.

Her voluntary participation includes being founding member of the Child Abuse and Neglect Council, and the Belize Nutrition Communication Network; conducting Election analysis for Radio and TV Election Watch programmes; Board Member of National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse; Assistant Chair to the Board of the Belize Technical College; Coordinator for the National Garifuna Council, including anchoring a weekly (45 min.) cultural radio programme; Member of a six-person team of the National Housing Task Force; Chairperson to the National Committee for Families and Children; and Board Member for the Association of the Caribbean Electoral Organization.

Mrs. Palacio served in the Public Service of Belize from June 1999 to February 2008, firstly as Chief Elections Officer, Elections and Boundaries Department, until September 2005. During her tenure, the Department was fully computerized and restructured,

continuous voter education implemented, and full-time customer services expanded to three other areas in the country. Other major accomplishments included maintaining an informative website, setting strategies and policies for 100% data integrity and transparency, facilitating an annual Open House, organizing the first ever three-in-one elections in 2003, and providing the atmosphere for career and personal development for staff members.

In September 2005, Mrs Palacio accepted the position of Director, Office of Governance extending her work to the wider Public Service until the remainder of the life of the Government in February 2008. The Office of Governance was itself an initiative of public service modernization, in furthering the goal to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service management, public sector modernization and good governance initiatives. The Office of Governance was an amalgam of two government agencies, namely, the Governance Unit from the Ministry of National Development, and Public Service Reform and Human Resource Management and Development from the then defunct Ministry of the Public Service. In addition the Office was also responsible for a new business of government, that of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and Electronic Government (e-government). Under the theme “Putting People First—Achieving More with Less”, the Office as the leading catalyst for change embarked on a series of initiatives including:

- Conducting in earnest public sector managerial capacity building efforts through the capacity building project that trained locally over 1700 senior public officers

representing over 50 government agencies, in several topical areas to address competency gaps by upgrading soft skills

- Valuing employees through the celebration of International Public Service Day and publicly honouring long serving Public Officers for the first time
- Building awareness to the machinery and business of government through a “Public Service Information Day”, maintaining a government website portal, and countrywide governance awareness tours
- Supporting tools to sustain public administration reform such as, e-government policy and strategy, merit awards policy, HIV/AIDS policy, a performance management and appraisal system, draft bill for a legal framework for governance, strategic planning, organization reviews, draft human capacity development policy, and the process towards a national ICT policy

Belize was a member of a sub-regional legislative drafting task force to develop and harmonise approaches to ICT legislative framework for the respective five participating countries in the project. Funded by the European Commission to Barbados and the OECS, Belize’s representative participated in several meetings and legislation drafting workshops for ICTs. This has provided useful guidance to Belize in formulating much needed ICT legislation as identified by Belize’s E-government policy.

Mrs. Palacio is a trailblazer. She will continue to amass knowledge on Belize through primary and secondary research and share the findings. Until we write our own history