



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Plan for Schools: Hurricane Lisa Response Efforts**

*Belmopan, November 6, 2022. 1:30 p.m.*

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) stands in full support of the families who have experienced severe loss and destruction from the impact of Hurricane Lisa. The ministry is especially mindful of the difficult times being experienced by many teachers.

In collaboration with both the Belize National Teachers' Union (BNTU) and the general managers of those schools severely affected, it has been determined that classes will resume, as previously indicated, on Monday, November 7 for all schools, including those in the Belize District that are able to return safely. For other Belize District schools that have been impacted, the week of November 7 to 12 will serve as a transition week in preparation for a full return by November 14 except, of course, in extreme cases.

Those schools that have been extensively impacted have already been in touch with the ministry, and various allowances for the additional days needed for cleaning and restoration have been granted. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing has been providing invaluable assistance through a team that has been on the ground since Thursday, conducting structural assessments in accordance with the reports that have been provided to the MoECST by the principals. It has already been noted that repairs and reconstruction in some cases will take weeks.

Teachers who have been severely impacted by the hurricane are asked to share their information here: [bit.ly/hurricanelisa\\_teachersurvey](https://bit.ly/hurricanelisa_teachersurvey). The MoECST and BNTU will work jointly to prepare a list of affected teachers to ensure that they receive the necessary support and assistance. Those teachers are also asked to communicate with their principals to be allowed days off to take care of their personal affairs. These teachers will not be required to apply for UPAs; permission will be given through principals and management. The ministry looks forward to strong support from school

management and expects sensitivity and flexibility in their approaches to teachers' situations, especially for those most in need of assistance at this time.

The ministry recognises that students have also been impacted and some may not be able to attend school because they have lost their homes, clothing or books, and may also be suffering from trauma. The MoECST will be working with the schools to identify the students and ensure that they too receive the support and care needed.

The MoECST and the Ministry of Health & Wellness will partner to ensure that counseling services and psychological first aid for persons who have experienced trauma are made available for both teachers and students. The ministry understands the importance of taking care of both physical and mental health, especially after potentially traumatic experiences like Hurricane Lisa.

The Ministry of Education is grateful for the education community and the larger community across our beloved Belize. Already the kindness of many has been seen through their willingness to assist and support those in need. Together, we will rebound and rebuild.

## **Ends**

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