

# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Country Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Country: BELIZE  
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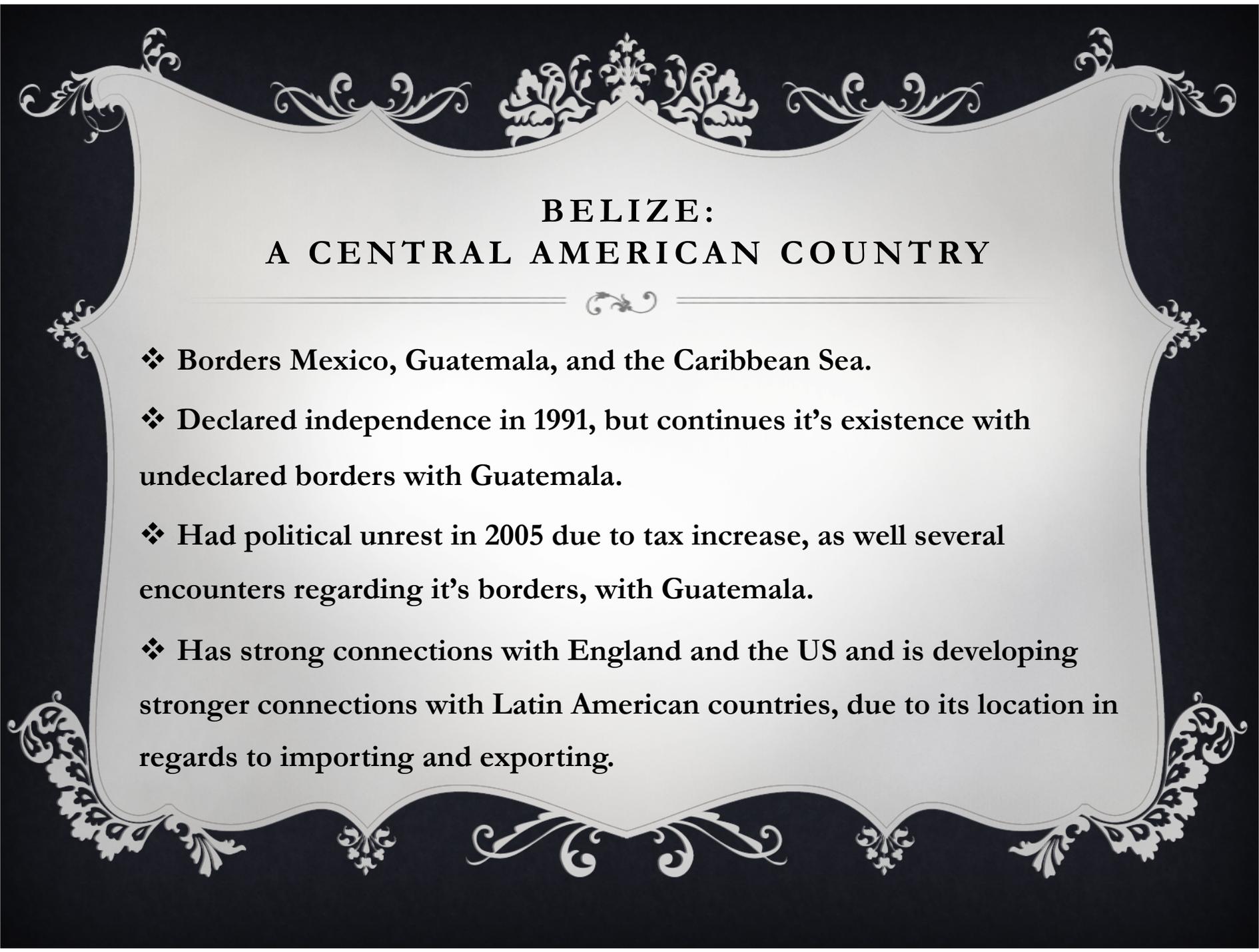
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# BELIZE

*By Jennifer Aguiar*





## BELIZE: A CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRY

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- ❖ Borders Mexico, Guatemala, and the Caribbean Sea.
- ❖ Declared independence in 1991, but continues its existence with undeclared borders with Guatemala.
- ❖ Had political unrest in 2005 due to tax increase, as well several encounters regarding its borders, with Guatemala.
- ❖ Has strong connections with England and the US and is developing stronger connections with Latin American countries, due to its location in regards to importing and exporting.



# BELIZEANS



- ❖ Ethnicity comes from Mayan and Mestizo history, region, language, and religion.
- ❖ The population is comprised of Mestizo 48.7%, Creole 24.9%, Maya 10.6%, Garífuna 6.1%, other 9.7%
- ❖ Country is known for avoiding ethnic conflicts. However, recently, Central American migrants and refugees have experienced racial harassments and assaults.

# POPULATION



- ❖ Population 327,719 (July 2012 est.)
- ❖ Life expectancy at birth total population: 68.28 years  
male: 66.61 years/female: 70.04 years (2012 est.)
- ❖ 48% of the population are 18 or younger.
- ❖ 43% of the population are below the poverty line.
- ❖ English is the “official language.”
- ❖ Languages spoken are mainly English, Creole, and Spanish, with several Mayan dialects.



# LITERACY

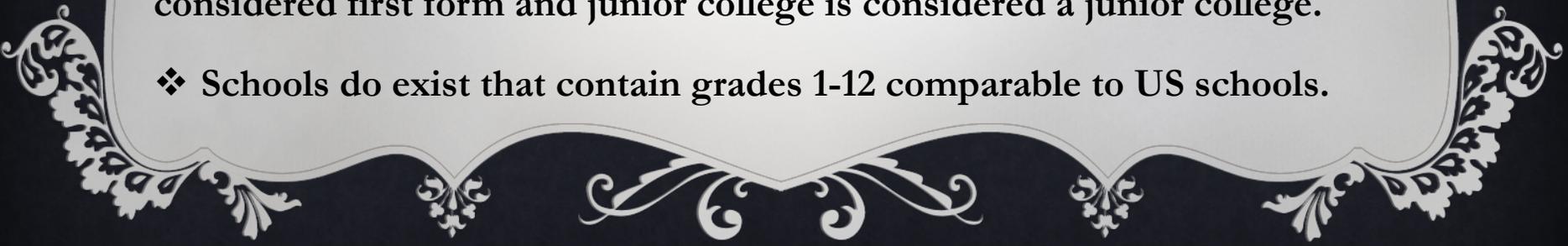
- ❖ Literacy definition: age 15 and over can read and write.
- ❖ Total population: 76.9%: male: 76.7%/female: 77.1% (2000 census), but in 2003 had increased to 94.1% literate.
- ❖ The teachers instruct in English.
- ❖ Children with disabilities don't usually go to school, but the government is working to make changes.

## EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- ❖ 95.9% of girls and 94.6% of boys are enrolled.
- ❖ It is required by law that all children attend free primary school, until the age of 14, where they would receive a Certificate/diploma awarded: Belize National Selection Exam.
- ❖ Many do not, due to the cost of required uniforms, books, supplies, and registration fees. Girls are the first to be removed from school. 8.6% repeat a grade, .8% drop out, and only 60% pass the standardized tests.
- ❖ The curriculum, created by the Education ministry, is used for primary and only standards for secondary.



# URBAN SCHOOLS

- ❖ The best schools in Belize are Catholic founded by the Jesuits and are located in the large cities.
  - ❖ The students wear uniforms, have ample supplies, and have well-trained teachers. Classrooms have blackboards or white boards, nicely painted walls, desks or one-armed desk chairs. Walls are print-rich.
  - ❖ “Forms” are the grade-level clusters of Belize. Primary school is considered first form and junior college is considered a junior college.
  - ❖ Schools do exist that contain grades 1-12 comparable to US schools.
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## RURAL SCHOOLS



- ❖ The neediest rural schools, in these areas, often lack supplies.
- ❖ Classrooms are equipped with worn furniture, walls and floors are often neglected. Volunteers or missionaries help fix things up.
- ❖ Toledo, a city in the south of Belize, struggles to get children to finish primary schools.
- ❖ One out of every two rural teachers have no post-high school professional education.
- ❖ In 2002, 19% of the teachers in these 900 primary schools were actually qualified to teach, based on the country's teacher's exam.

# NEW EDUCATIONAL LAWS

*School Attendance:* 34. “It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age who has not yet completed primary school to cause him to receive suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.” (BELIZE EDUCATION ACT CHAPTER 36 REVISED EDITION 2000)

❖ \$200 Belizean Dollars = \$100 US in fines for failure to attend.

❖ Educational Act of 2010:

- 100% of teachers must have a teaching license.
- Corporal punishment is banned in schools.

# BELIZEAN VIEWS

## ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH

- ❖ English is the official language of Belize, which helps in achieving political advancement.
- ❖ Although English is the national language, Belizean Creole is the primary language. Teachers will often use Creole to get their point across in the classroom.

## ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE US AND AMERICANS

- ❖ Belize and the US have a very favorable relationship.
- ❖ US supports the democratic system, some health and military aid, as well as tourism.
- ❖ American tourism and retirement are welcomed.

# IMMIGRATION & SETTLEMENT

❖ **Percent of the Foreign Born From Latin America and the Caribbean Who Are Naturalized U.S. Citizens by Place of Birth: 2010** (Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non-sampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www))

Country of Birth	Estimate	Margin of error (+/-) <sup>1</sup>
Central America	24.3 %	0.3 %

\*Other Central America includes Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama.

❖ **Largest communities in the U.S. exist in Maryland, D.C., Louisiana, Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Rhode Island.**



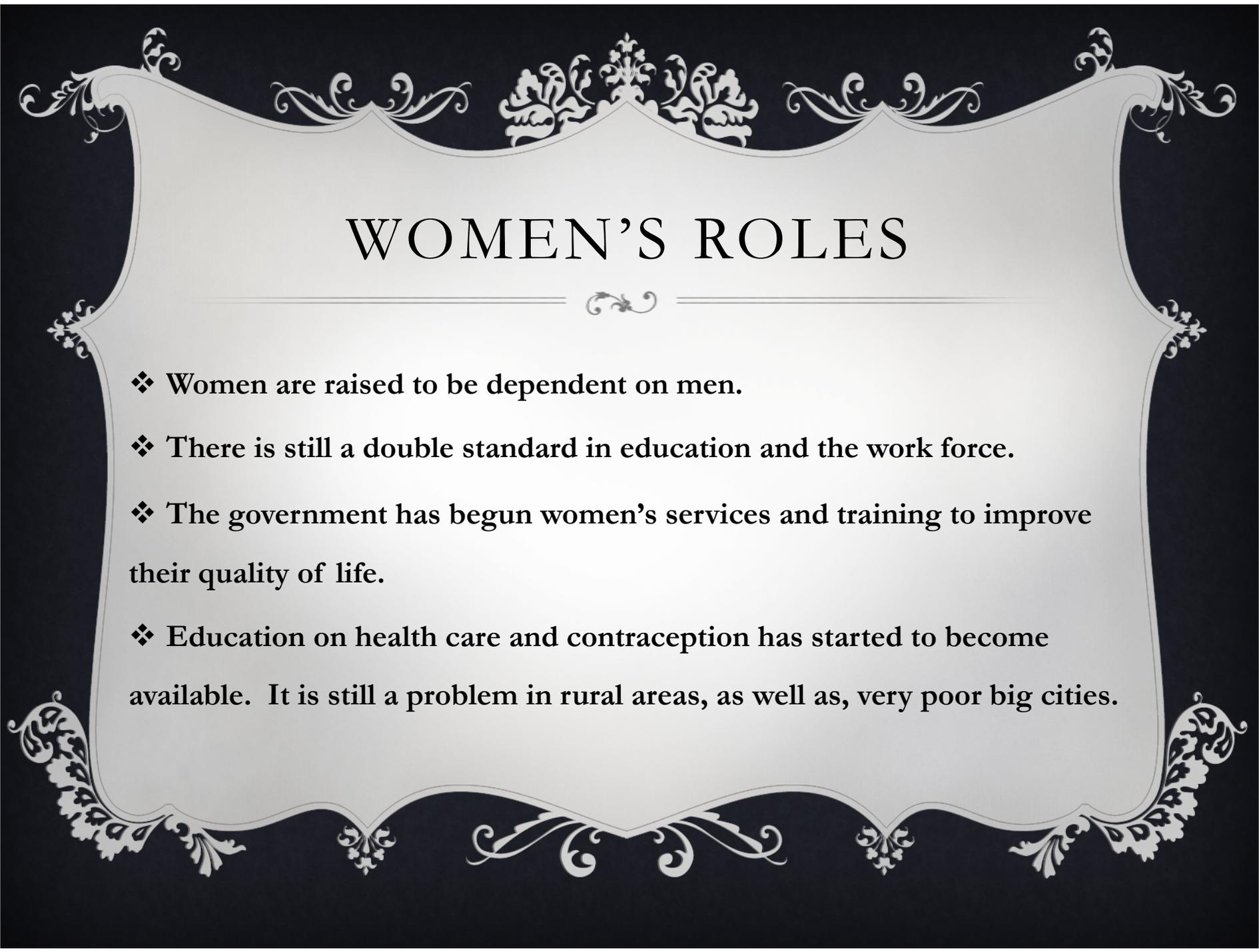
## BELIZEAN VALUES



❖  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population are Catholic/Christian.

❖ Poor families continue to struggle to get a good education. The rural poor are often laborers and children miss many days of school.





# WOMEN'S ROLES

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- ❖ Women are raised to be dependent on men.
- ❖ There is still a double standard in education and the work force.
- ❖ The government has begun women's services and training to improve their quality of life.
- ❖ Education on health care and contraception has started to become available. It is still a problem in rural areas, as well as, very poor big cities.

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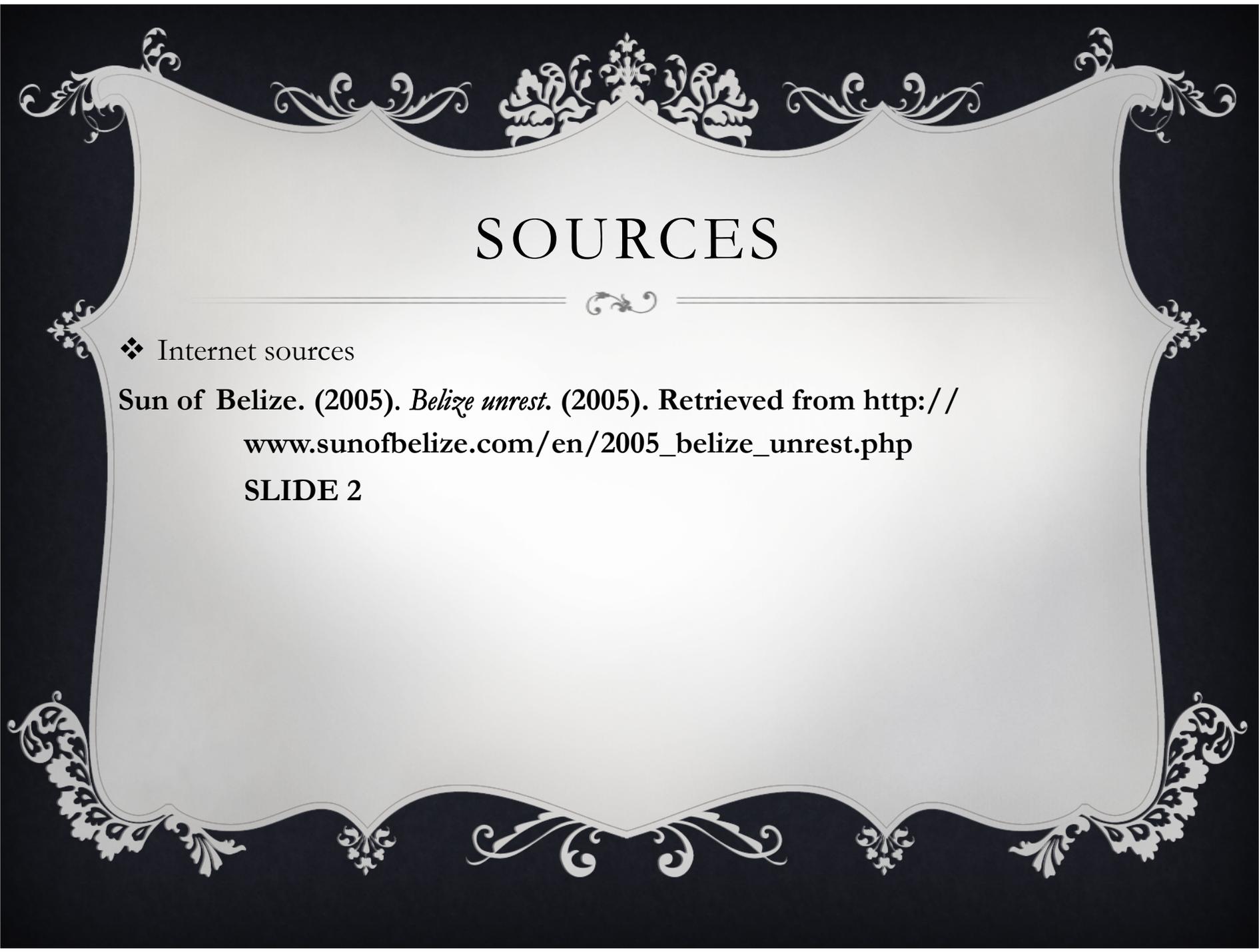
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