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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Ministry of Investment Launches “Vanilla Training of Women and Girls in the West and South of Belize” Project in Bella Vista Village**

*Belmopan, November 1, 2024.*

The Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Investment, through the Investment Policy and Compliance Unit (IPCU), in collaboration with the National Women’s Commission (NWC), the Taiwan Technical Mission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Bella Vista Government Secondary School, and Belize Permaculture & Renewable Energy Ltd, officially launched the “Vanilla Training for Women and Girls in Western and Southern Belize” project in the Toledo District.

Through this phase of the project, 30 women from the Toledo District will receive training in growing and harvesting vanilla to enhance income-generating opportunities for women in rural Belize. The training aims to:

- Increase the acreage of vanilla cultivated in Belize.
- Provide hands-on training for women and young people on the propagation and establishment of vanilla vines.
- Teach participants the floral biology of vanilla and the hand-pollination process.
- Facilitate monitoring, data collection, husbandry, and supply of vanilla from backyards and forested areas.
- Educate trainees on harvesting, curing, and exporting their produce.
- Train regional women’s groups to organize efforts and develop the industry.
- Introduce farmers to crop harvesting and post-harvest treatment.
- Establish a propagation nursery at Bella Vista Government Secondary School.

Vanilla, which is native to Belize, is an emerging sector that can stimulate economic activity from the backyards of urban and rural households. A globally popular spice, it is used in beverages, desserts, baking goods, cosmetics, and industrial products. Ranked as the second most expensive spice in the world due to its labor-intensive cultivation, vanilla represents a significant economic opportunity for Belize, especially with international demand.

Present at the opening of the training were Hon. Dr. Osmond Martinez, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Trade; Mrs. Thea Garcia-Ramirez, President of the NWC; Senator Hon. Bevinton Cal; His Worship, Mayor Carlos Galvez; Mr. Lincoln Blake, Director, IPCU; Mr. Roberto Pan, Chief of Mission of the Taiwan Technical Mission; Ms. Seidi Quetzal, Foreign Service Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; Mrs. Juanita Lucas, Principal, Bella Vista Government Secondary School; and Ms. Jill Tsai, Project Manager, Taiwan Technical Mission. The instructors for the course are Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Nesbitt of Belize Permaculture & Renewable Energy Ltd.

## **Ends**

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