

April 2023

BL-L1045

Belize Water and Sanitation Program for Rural Areas

Sociocultural Analysis &
Indigenous Peoples Plan



Table of Contents

List of Figures	4
Acronyms	5
Introduction	7
Background information on the project	7
Program components.....	8
Purpose of the sociocultural analysis report.....	9
Scope of the report	9
Regulatory Framework	11
National legislation	11
International conventions	15
Inter-American Development Bank’s Environmental and Social Policy Framework.....	17
Governance Structure of Belize	18
Village council system in Belize	19
Alcalde system in Belize	19
The Commissioner of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs in Belize	20
Village water boards.....	20
Sociocultural Analysis	22
Introduction.....	22
Overview of the Socioeconomic and Cultural Landscape of Belize	24
Belize District.....	30
Gales Point Village.....	31
Cayo District	33
San Antonio	34
Stann Creek District	38
Santa Rosa, San Roman and Red Bank	39
Toledo District	43
Golden Stream, Indian Creek, Big Falls and San Pedro Columbia, San Jose and Na Luum Ca	45
Social Impact Assessment	48
Potential Positive Impacts.....	48
Potential Negative Impacts	49
Indigenous Peoples Plan	50
Introduction.....	50
Informed Consultation and Participation	50
Legislative consideration	50
Measures to Date	50

Culturally Appropriate Consultation	51
Grievance Redress Mechanism	53
Purpose	53
Guiding Principles of a GRM	53
Roles and Responsibilities	54
Grievance Redress Procedures	54
Monitoring and Evaluation of Grievances	55
Monitoring and Evaluation of Indigenous Peoples Plan	55
Introduction	55
Objectives	55
Indicators	55
Methods and Tools	56
Frequency	56
Conclusion	56
Conclusion	56
References	58
<i>Annex A: Maya of Southern Belize Free Prior and Informed Consultation Protocol</i>	<i>62</i>

List of Figures

Figure 1: Villages included in the Sociocultural Analysis	9
Figure 2: Location of vulnerable target communities	10
Figure 3: Governance structure for current project	21
Figure 4: Belize in figures.....	23
Figure 5: Demographic data for Belize district and related target community.....	30
Figure 6: Demographic data for Cayo district and related community	33
Figure 7: Migration route of San Antonio Yucatec Maya	35
Figure 8: Demographic data for Stann Creek district and related communities	38
Figure 9: Demographic data for Toledo district and related communities	43

Acronyms

BAPCOL	Blair Atoll Power Company Limited
BELCOGEN	Belize Cogeneration Energy Limited
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
BSIF	Belize Social Investment Fund
BSWaMA	Belize Solid Waste Management Authority
BTA	Belize Telephone Authority
BTL	Belize Telemedia Ltd
BWS	Belize Water Services Limited
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CFE	Comisión Federal de Electricidad
EPNP	Elijio Panti National Park
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESPF	Environmental and Social Policy Framework
ESPS	Environmental and Social Performance Standard
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOB	Government of Belize
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GSM	Global System for Mobile communication
HAQ	Healthcare Access and Quality
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICP	Informed Consultation and Participation
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPP	Indigenous Peoples Plan
KHMH	Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital
MAFSE	Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise
MLA	Maya Leaders Alliance
MRTCDLLG	Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government
MSBFPIC	Maya of Southern Belize Free Prior and Informed Consultation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OAS	Organization of American States
OSG	On-site generation
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization

PAPs	Project Affected Persons
RRB	Resilient Rural Belize
SCA	Sociocultural Analysis
SIB	Statistical Institute of Belize
TAA	Toledo Alcaldes Association
TCGA	Toledo Cacao Growers Association
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNICEF	United National International Childrens Emergency Fund
VWB	Village Water Boards
WB	World Bank

Introduction

The Government of Belize (GOB), through the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government (MRTCDLLG), in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), is working on a program to improve the quality of water services in rural areas. The Belize Water and Sanitation Program for Rural Areas (BL-L1045) is a pilot program aimed at improving the quality of drinking water and increasing the capacity of the country's water sector. The program will initially cover 20 villages at a cost of \$4.64 million, with the Belize Social Investment Fund as the implementing agency.

To ensure the interests of the beneficiaries, the GOB/IDB has hired a Social Consultant to conduct a sociocultural analysis of eleven vulnerable populations within the program. Included are one Afro-Descendant community located in the Belize district and ten Indigenous Maya (Yucatec, Mopan, and Q'eqchi') communities located in the Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo districts. The analysis aims to shed light on the socio-cultural and economic conditions of these communities. It also aims to identify the potential risks and impacts to these vulnerable groups and propose ways to mitigate them in accordance with the IDB's Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF), particularly its indigenous policies which are designed to safeguard the interests of Indigenous Peoples. The Social Consultant will also develop an Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) to ensure that the bank's Environmental and Social Performance Standard (ESPS) 7 is applied to support meaningful consultations with communities.

Background information on the project

Village Water Boards (VWB) are the main providers of water services for the rural population in Belize, serving around 132 out of 194 villages, which is approximately 101,093 individuals (Grau & Rihm, 2013). However, the quality of service provided by VWB is inadequate due to a lack of clear strategy and regulations, weak institutional structure, and poor governance framework (Grau & Rihm, 2013). According to data from the MRTCDLLG, only 38% of VWB are currently disinfecting water using a chlorination system, while the remaining 62% are not (Scodelaro et al., 2023). Inadequate operation and maintenance often cause the chlorination equipment to stop working. Even when a chlorination system is installed and operational, VWB in rural Belize tend not to use it for disinfection due to logistical challenges, financial constraints, fear of making mistakes, and consumer complaints about the taste and smell of chlorinated water. This lack of active disinfection leads to low tap water consumption and high bottled water consumption in rural Belize, despite the low-income levels of rural population (Scodelaro et al. 2023).

To address the lack of active disinfection in rural Belize, the current program is piloting the installation of onsite generated mixed oxidant or hypochlorite disinfection systems. The program aims to install 21 mixed oxidant or hypochlorite disinfection systems in 24 communities, with each system serving up to 3,000 households.

The use of these disinfection systems will improve the quality of the water supply by providing a safe and cost-effective solution to disinfect the water at the point of consumption. The mixed oxidant or hypochlorite disinfection systems will be installed and maintained by the VWBs and will reduce the dependency on chlorine and the logistical challenges associated with its supply chain.

This project also includes a comprehensive training program for the VWB members on the proper operation and maintenance of the disinfection systems. The training program will ensure that the VWBs have the necessary knowledge and skills to operate and maintain the systems effectively.

Through this project, it is hoped that the installation of the mixed oxidant or hypochlorite disinfection systems will increase the trust of rural communities in their water supply, reduce the consumption of bottled water, and improve the health and well-being of the rural population in Belize.

Program components

The IDB (BI-L1045) Program consists of two main parts across the 20 villages in the pilot project. The components are as follows:

Component 1 - Improved water service quality (IDB-OC: US\$3,000,000; IDB-GRF: US\$600,000¹). The component of the Program involves financing the installation of new disinfection technologies in rural villages, which include on-site generation (OSG) options. There are two alternatives based on the quality of the water supply: (i) OSG sodium hypochlorite, recommended for raw water with no quality issues; and (ii) OSG mixed oxidants, recommended for raw water with quality problems such as the presence of iron, manganese, or organic matter. Additionally, this component will provide funding for minor system rehabilitations, including pipe replacement, electromechanical equipment, and storage tanks.

Component 2 - Institutional strengthening of the water sector (IDB-OC: US\$550,000; IDB-GRF: US\$40,000). This component will provide funding for several initiatives, including training for VWB on various aspects such as O&M, financial management, and water source protection. It will also support the development and implementation of a financial management system to address issues related to manual bookkeeping. Training will also be provided to promote the participation of women and migrants in VWB, while information campaigns will be conducted at the household level on issues such as tariff payment, water conservation, and tap water consumption. Furthermore, the component will finance a pilot program to assess the impact of introducing micro-metering on water consumption and service payment. Another initiative supported by this component is a study to identify the potential of innovative technologies to

¹ This component will investigate funding opportunities to enhance the quality of services provided to villages that have a significant migrant population.

improve the environmental conditions of the New River, including an analysis of the impact of these technologies on certain pollution parameters such as phosphorus, total coliform, and dissolved oxygen resulting from industrial and wastewater discharges.

Project Management, Audit and Evaluation (USD 0.5 million). The remaining funds will be used to cover costs related to management and supervision, as well as external audits for the program's operation and intermediate and final evaluations.

Purpose of the sociocultural analysis report

The specific purpose of this sociocultural analysis is to understand the social and cultural context of the eleven identified vulnerable communities and identify any potential social and cultural impacts. Here are the steps to accomplishing each point:

1. **Identify and understand the social and cultural context:** This involves conducting research and gathering information about the social and cultural environment in which each project is being proposed.
2. **Assess potential social and cultural impacts:** This involves identifying any potential positive or negative social and cultural impacts that each project may have on the affected community.
3. **Develop recommendations for managing or mitigating negative impacts and enhancing positive impacts:** Based on the assessment of potential impacts, develop recommendations for managing or mitigating any negative impacts and enhancing positive impacts.

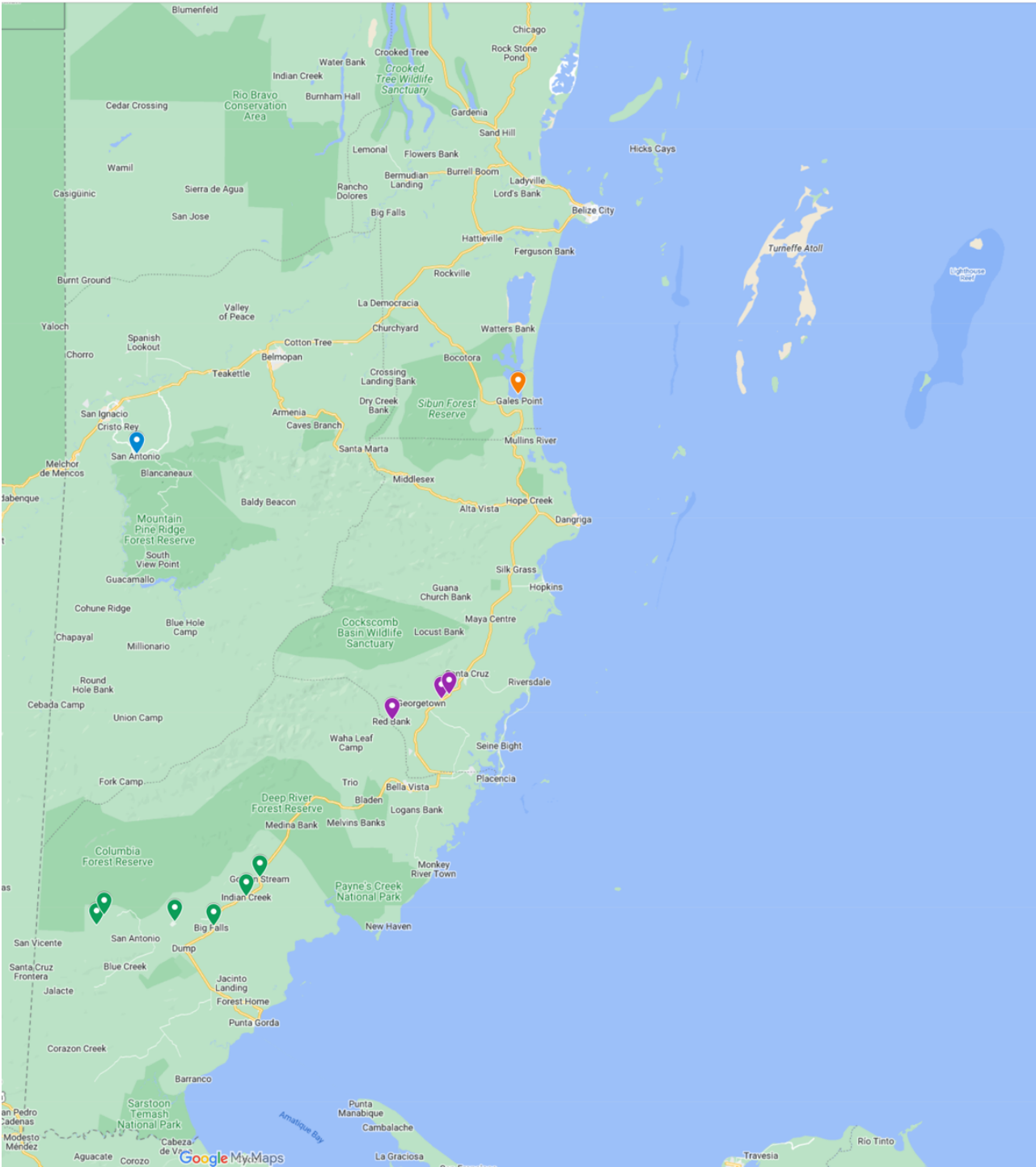
Scope of the report

This Sociocultural Analysis (SCA) is restricted to 11 villages in the program that are classified as Indigenous or Afro-descendant communities and are by that nature considered vulnerable. These communities are located across four districts including the Belize, Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo districts (see below).

Figure 1: Villages included in the Sociocultural Analysis

District	Village	Major Ethnic Group
Belize	Gales Point	Afro-descendants (Creole)
Cayo	San Antonio	Yucatec Maya
Stann Creek	Santa Rosa	Mopan
	San Roman	Mopan
	Red Bank	Q'eqchí & Mopan
Toledo	Golden Stream	Mopan & Q'eqchí
	Indian Creek	Q'eqchí
	Big Falls	Q'eqchí
	San Pedro Columbia	Q'eqchí
	San Jose	Mopan
	Na Luum Ca	Mopan

Figure 2: Location of vulnerable target communities



Regulatory Framework

National legislation

The Belize Constitution, CAP. 4, (2012) – Belize does not have any legislation specific to the protection or any other kind of treatment of indigenous peoples. The preamble of the Constitution of Belize, however does make mention of indigenous peoples in requiring that “policies of state protect the identity, dignity and social and cultural values of Belizeans, including Belize’s indigenous peoples.”² Further to this, indigenous peoples in Belize do not enjoy any separate legal rights and protections outside of the traditional fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual (section 3) and protection from discrimination (section 16) on the grounds of race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed or sex, which every Belizean enjoys.³

Indigenous Maya rights recognized by the courts – In April 2015, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), Belize’s highest appellate court, recognized the customary land rights of some 38 Q’eqchi’ and Mopan Maya indigenous communities of southern Belize. The court indicated that the lands that the Maya peoples had customarily used and occupied in southern Belize constituted property equal in legitimacy to any other form of property under the laws of Belize (Howard, 2015). The CCJ further required that the Government of Belize demarcate and register Maya village lands and also issued an order that it cease and desist from any further interference, destruction or use of the land without the Maya peoples free, prior and informed consent. This case was also significant as it upheld Maya peoples’ right to self-determination.

Brief background to the Indigenous Maya rights case – The government had in 1997 declared a large area of Maya ancestral lands in southern Belize, the Sarstoon-Temash National Park, a reserve and had subsequently used its authority over the park to grant concessions for logging, oil exploration and other developments, without the consultation and approval of the Maya peoples. This affected the Maya’s customary land and natural resource use, essentially displacing them from the area of the park.

In 1998, the Maya communities petitioned the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) seeking recognition of their customary land rights. The IACHR recommended in 2004 that this be done. In 2007, two Maya communities then filed a claim against the Government of Belize (GOB) to also recognize their customary land rights. They won this case; however, the GOB only recognized these rights for the two communities that had won the case.

The Maya communities then filed a second suit to have the court declare that customary land rights existed for all communities in Toledo. The Mayas were also successful in this case. Both parties ended up filing an appeal with the CCJ, however the government subsequently

² Government of Belize. (2012). Belize Constitution chapter 4, preamble

³ Belize Constitution 2012, s 3, s 16

withdrew its appeal. The effect was that the government now recognized customary land tenure for all communities in Toledo (Morrison, 2017).

Both parties also agreed to undertake several initiatives codified in a “Consent Order” between the GOB and the Maya people in the Toledo district. The Order is a legally binding agreement that was issued by the CCJ in 2015. The Order recognizes the land rights of the Maya people in Toledo and acknowledges that the government must seek their free, prior, and informed consent before taking any actions that could affect their land, resources, and cultural heritage.

Self-determination – Self-determination is a principle that recognizes the right of people to freely determine their political status, cultural identity, and economic, social, and cultural development. In the context of indigenous peoples, self-determination means the right to determine and control their own ways of life, including their political, economic, social, and cultural institutions.

The right to self-determination is recognized in international human rights law, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This right is based on the idea that all people have the right to determine their own future, and to live their lives according to their own values and beliefs.

For indigenous Maya peoples, the right to self-determination means that they have the right to determine their own political status, to control their own lands and resources, and to maintain and develop their own cultures and languages. It also means that they have the right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods, and that they should be given the information and resources they need to make informed decisions.

Free, prior and informed consent - The principle of free, prior, and informed consent is a broad concept that recognizes the right of indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. This principle is based on the idea that indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination, and that they should be given the information and resources they need to make informed decisions about matters that affect them.

The Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Protocol is related to the principle of free, prior and informed consent, however, it is a more narrow concept. The FPIC protocol is a specific set of guidelines that are used to ensure that indigenous peoples are able to give their free, prior, and informed consent in the context of proposed projects or initiatives that may affect their lands, territories, or resources. The FPIC protocol provides a framework for engaging with indigenous peoples in a respectful and culturally appropriate way, and for ensuring that their rights are respected and protected.

Maya of Southern Belize Free, Prior and Informed Consultation Protocol - The Free, Prior and Informed Consultation (MSBFPIC)⁴ protocol for the Maya of Southern Belize is a framework for how the Maya people of southern Belize can make decisions about any projects or activities that may affect their lands, resources, territories, and culture. The protocol is based on the principle that the Maya people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and the responsibility to ensure that these decisions are made with full information, free from coercion or intimidation, and in a culturally appropriate manner.

The protocol was developed as part of the consent order issued by the CCJ in 2015 in response to a case brought by the Maya people of Toledo District against the Government of Belize for violating their land rights. The consent order recognized the Maya people's rights to customary land tenure and ordered the government to take steps to protect those rights.

Under the MSBFPIC protocol, any project or activity that may affect the Maya people's lands, resources, territories, or culture must be subject to a process of informed consultation and negotiation between the government, the relevant developer, and the Maya people. This process must involve providing the Maya people with full and accurate information about the project or activity, its potential impacts, and any alternatives or mitigating measures, as well as allowing the Maya people to express their views, concerns, and preferences.

The protocol also recognizes the importance of cultural considerations in decision-making and requires that the process be culturally appropriate and sensitive to the Maya people's traditions and customs. It also provides for mechanisms to resolve disputes that may arise during the process.

Overall, the MSBFPIC protocol is intended to provide a framework for ensuring that the Maya people of Southern Belize can participate in decisions that affect their lives and that their rights to customary land tenure and cultural heritage are respected and protected.

Related activities to date

Land demarcation – Part of the process of protecting the land rights of the Maya peoples of southern Belize is demarcating or legally establishing the boundaries of indigenous lands and territories, particularly to ensure that they are not encroached upon by non-Indigeneous actors, such as extractive industries or land speculators.

There have been many issues in relation to the demarcation of lands including accusations of lack of political will, limited resources on the part of the government, disputes over the size and boundaries of lands, opposition from non-Indigenous actors who may have economic interests

⁴ Note that in Belize, this document is referred to as the “FPIC protocol” although the title of the document indicates that it is a “consultation” protocol rather than a “consent” protocol. So as not to create confusion, within this SCA document, the “Maya of Southern Belize Free, Prior and Informed Consultation Protocol” will be referenced by the acronym MSBFPIC.

in the same area and concerns that the government's approach to demarcation may not fully respect the rights and sovereignty of indigenous communities, particularly in cases where the demarcation process is driven by external actors rather than the indigenous communities themselves. These issues have slowed down the process significantly and to date only one village, Santa Elena, has been fully demarcated (Seven News Belize, 2023).

Conflict over the MSBFPIC – In January 2022, the government issued a Cabinet brief announcing that they had approved and submitted to the CCJ, a Free, Prior and Informed Consultation Protocol for the Mayas of southern Belize, in keeping with its commitment to the implementation of the 2015 Consent Order of the CCJ. Spokesperson for the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) and Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA) Cristina Coc, however, came out to say that the Maya communities unequivocally rejected the Government's proposed MSBFPIC protocol, asserting that the document did not have the consent of the Mayan people. Her main issues were that the Government had not consulted with the Maya community but had moved ahead unilaterally with the protocol; that the protocol was using the "ambiguous term of consultation rather than consent, which is what is ultimately the safeguard" and; that the government was "attempting to remove and erase the traditional governance institution of the Maya," that is that the Maya "organize themselves under a collective traditional governance institution," which is the Toledo Alcaldes Association (Amandala, 2022).

The government for its part issued a press release, dated January 28, 2022, outlining the consultations they conducted with the member organizations of the MLA including the TAA, which is a member of the alliance. The government asserted that they had "recognized and given prominence to the Alcaldes System of Governance of the Maya People. However, this has caused some misapprehension and need for clarification. To be clear, the MLA and the TAA are membership organizations, but do not encompass the entire Maya customary governance system." The government asserted that there is no "collective governance system of the Maya people... Customary governance is based at the village level, and as such, the authority to make decisions resides solely in meetings convened by village members, and not a collective or association. Furthermore, the [Maya of Southern Belize Free, Prior and Informed Consultation Protocol] recognizes this principle of Maya customary law: that village members at a village meeting, and not only the leaders, are the supreme decision-making authority" (Government of Belize Press Office, 2022).

On August 21 and November 27, 2022, two Maya villages, San Jose and Santa Rosa respectively, were celebrated for signing the first ever FPIC Protocol in Belize for activities being conducted in their villages by the Resilient Rural Belize (RRB) Program (Channel Five Belize, 2022; Government of Belize Press Office, 2022). The RRB however, developed their own FPIC Protocol as required by their donor agencies, "using international instruments such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development and Green Climate Fund requirements, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Caribbean Court of Justice Ruling of 2015, and the Maya of Southern Belize FPI Consultation Protocol" (Government of Belize Press Office, 2022).

By December 2022, during a compliance hearing of the CCJ, the President, Justice Adrian Saunders, had chastised the GOB for unilaterally implementing the MSBFPIC Protocol (Channel Five Belize, 2022). It is unclear where the dispute of the MSBFPIC currently stands.

International conventions

The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO Convention No. 169) – Belize has not signed nor ratified the landmark International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169, which specifically recognizes and provides substantial protections for indigenous peoples. However, the convention has been accepted and, in many instances, applied, particularly by donor institutions, as a set of standards for the protection of the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) – the UNDRIP is an international instrument adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, with Belize being one of the 144 countries which approved the resolution. The document recognizes Indigenous peoples' inherent rights to self-determination, lands, territories, resources, culture, language, and traditional knowledge. It also prohibits discrimination against Indigenous peoples and recognizes their right to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities. The Declaration also addresses issues such as education, health, employment, and other economic and social rights, as well as issues related to Indigenous women, children, and persons with disabilities.

While the UNDRIP is not legally binding, it is considered a significant milestone in the recognition and protection of Indigenous peoples' rights globally. It provides a framework for States to develop laws, policies, and programs that promote and protect Indigenous peoples' rights and cultures. Many countries have used the UNDRIP as a basis for legislation and policy development, and it has become an essential tool for Indigenous peoples' advocacy and activism.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) – is a binding international treaty that obligates states to ensure the protection and fulfillment of the economic, social, and cultural rights of all individuals, including Indigenous Peoples. Belize ratified the ICESCR in 2015, making a commitment to respect, protect, and fulfill the economic, social, and cultural rights of all its citizens.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – is a binding international treaty that obligates states to ensure the protection and fulfillment of the civil and political rights of all individuals, including Indigenous Peoples. Belize ratified the ICCPR in 1996, committing to respect, protect, and fulfill the civil and political rights of all its citizens.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) – is a binding international treaty that obligates states to take effective measures to eliminate racial discrimination and promote understanding and tolerance among all racial, ethnic, and

national groups, including Indigenous Peoples. Belize ratified the ICERD in 2001, indicating its commitment to eliminate racial discrimination and promote tolerance and understanding among all its citizens.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – is a non-binding international agreement that establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the protection and promotion of human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Belize expressed support for the Declaration by ratifying the ICCPR and the ICESCR, which are both based on the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration. Additionally, the preamble to the Belize Constitution (2012) refers to the Universal Declaration and states that Belize is committed to upholding its principles.

The OAS Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – is a non-binding agreement that sets out the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas. It was adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in 2016, and it aims to recognize and protect the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples, promote their full and effective participation in all aspects of society, and ensure that their cultural and linguistic diversity is respected and preserved. The Declaration covers a wide range of issues, including land and resource rights, self-determination, cultural and linguistic rights, and participation in decision-making processes. It also includes provisions related to the protection of Indigenous women, children, and youth, and the promotion of their social, economic, and political development. Although the Declaration is not legally binding, it is seen as an important step in promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas.

Belize supports the OAS Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Belize was one of the countries that participated in the drafting of the declaration, and it was adopted at the General Assembly of the OAS on June 15, 2016, with the support of Belize and other member states. Belize has also expressed its support for the declaration in various international forums, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the United Nations. In addition, Belize has taken steps to implement the principles of the declaration, such as through the recognition and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in its national laws and policies, such as the National Gender Policy and the National Cultural Policy.

The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (The Escazú Agreement) – Belize recently (March 7, 2023) ratified this regional environmental treaty that was adopted on March 4, 2018, in Escazú, Costa Rica. The agreement aims to promote and protect environmental rights, strengthen the implementation of environmental laws and regulations, and improve access to justice in environmental matters for the countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The agreement also specifically recognizes the importance of protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities in environmental decision-making processes. It is also the first environmental agreement in the world to include specific provisions on environmental human rights defenders.

Inter-American Development Bank's Environmental and Social Policy Framework

The IDB's Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF) is a set of policies and guidelines that apply to all IDB operations and activities. The framework provides a structured and comprehensive approach to managing environmental and social risks and impacts associated with IDB-funded projects, programs, and activities.

The IDB's ESPF includes ten standards that cover a range of environmental and social topics, including environmental and social assessment and management, labor and working conditions, resource efficiency and pollution prevention, community health, safety and security, land acquisition and involuntary resettlement, biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources, indigenous peoples, cultural heritage, gender equality, and stakeholder engagement and information disclosure. The framework is designed to ensure that IDB operations are conducted in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, and that they comply with relevant national laws and regulations, as well as international standards and best practices.

The ESPF also includes a set of operational procedures that outline the steps that the IDB and its clients must take to assess and manage environmental and social risks associated with specific projects and activities. These procedures include requirements for environmental and social assessments, stakeholder engagement, consultation with indigenous peoples, and monitoring and evaluation.

In essence, the IDB's ESPF is intended to ensure that the Bank's investments and activities are sustainable and contribute to the achievement of social and environmental objectives, while also respecting the rights and interests of affected communities and stakeholders.

Inter-American Development Bank's Environmental and Social Performance Standard 7: Indigenous Peoples

The IDB's Environmental and Social Performance Standard (ESPS) 7 "recognizes that Indigenous Peoples, as distinct social and cultural peoples, are often among the most marginalized and vulnerable segments of the population. In many cases, their economic, social, and legal status limits their capacity to defend their rights to, and interest in, lands and natural and cultural resources, and may restrict their ability to participate in and benefit from development that is in accordance with their worldview" (IDB, 2020, p. 85). In light of this situation, the IDB's ESPS 7 establishes the framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples in IDB-financed projects. The standard requires IDB borrowers to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in all stages of project development, to respect their cultural heritage and property rights (including intellectual), and to identify and mitigate any negative impacts that projects may have on their livelihoods and well-being. The standard also includes requirements for the development of culturally appropriate consultation processes and the establishment of grievance mechanisms for indigenous communities. The aim of the standard is to ensure that

IDB-funded projects are developed in a manner that is respectful of the rights and needs of indigenous peoples, while contributing to sustainable development in the region.

Objectives of Environmental and Social Performance Standard 7 – The specific objectives of ESPS 7, are as follows:

- To ensure that the development process fosters full respect for the human rights, collective rights, dignity, aspirations, culture, and natural resource-based livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples.
- To anticipate and avoid adverse impacts of project on communities of Indigenous Peoples, or when avoidance is not possible, to minimize and/or compensate for such impacts.
- To promote sustainable development benefits and opportunities for Indigenous People in a culturally appropriate manner.
- To establish and maintain an ongoing relationship based on Informed Consultation and Participation (ICP) in a culturally appropriate manner with the Indigenous Peoples affected by a project throughout the project's life cycle.
- To ensure the FPIC of the project-affected communities of Indigenous People when the circumstances described in the ESPS are present.

Governance Structure of Belize

Belize is a sovereign country that follows the principles of parliamentary democracy based on the British Westminster system. The titular head of state is King Charles III, represented by a Governor General who must be a Belizean citizen. The executive branch of government consists of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, while the legislative branch comprises a bicameral National Assembly consisting of a 31-member elected House of Representatives and a 13-member Senate. The Governor General appoints the Cabinet on the advice of the Prime Minister, who is usually the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives. The Governor General also appoints Senators based on advice from various organizations.

There are six administrative districts in Belize: Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize, Cayo, Stann Creek, and Toledo. However, there are no representative district councils. Each urban area has a locally elected town board (7 in total), while Belize City and Belmopan have city councils. Village councils aid in village-level administration, and the traditional Alcaldes system is incorporated into this structure in the south. The Alcaldes have a judicial role in their jurisdictional district, with very limited administrative functions as prescribed by legislation.

It is important to understand that Belize has a unitary governance structure (as opposed to a federal or republican system). A unitary governance structure is a form of government where the central government (including legislature, executive and judiciary) holds all the power and makes decisions on behalf of the entire country. In a unitary system, the power is not divided between various levels of government, and there are no independent states, provinces/districts or nations with their own governments. Instead, the central government has authority over all aspects of governance and can delegate or withdraw powers to local authorities, such as municipalities or regions, as it sees fit.

Village council system in Belize

The village council system was established informally after hurricane Janet in 1949 in Gales Point and 1951 in the Corozal district as a way to aid in relief and reconstruction efforts. In 1991, efforts to formalize the system began, and the Village Council Act was enacted in 1999. The system is based on community participation and decision-making through regular village council meetings.

The Village Council System is governed by the Village Councils Act, which establishes the legal framework for the establishment, composition, powers, and functions of the councils, as well as election procedures and meeting conduct. The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government is responsible for overseeing village councils. Villages are declared by ministerial order and one qualification for village status is a minimum of 200 voters. Village councils consist of a chairperson and six councilors, who are directly elected by residents of the village who are over the age of 18. Village council elections occur every three years, with the last elections being held in 2022.

The Village Councils' duties encompass enhancing the well-being of the village and ensuring good governance by registering births and deaths, making recommendations for judicial and administrative appointments, maintaining public properties, managing council assets, enforcing the Act, by-laws, and regulations, and managing village affairs such as organizing community events and maintaining public facilities.

Alcalde system in Belize

The Alcalde system is a traditional governance system used by the Maya people in southern Belize, particularly the Q'eqch'í and Mopan Maya who reside in rural areas. The word "Alcalde" derives from the Spanish language and refers to "mayor" or "magistrate." This system is established through the Inferior Courts Act and falls under the purview of the Attorney General's Office in Belize. The Act addresses the establishment of the alcalde jurisdiction district, the constitution and jurisdiction of court and the appointment of alcalde and deputy alcalde. Alcaldes are responsible for adjudicating disputes and managing community lands, and they also have some traditional administrative authority to call for group cleaning of the village (*fajina*), bury community members and determine who can live in the village.

In southern Belize, there are 39 Maya villages that elect an Alcalde and Deputy Alcalde. The Alcalde is responsible for maintaining law and order, resolving disputes, and representing the village alongside the village council in governance matters. They also ensure that traditional practices and customs, such as natural resource management, agriculture, and cultural events, are followed.

The Alcalde system has roots in pre-Columbian Maya governance structures and is recognized by the Belizean government as a legitimate form of traditional governance. While the Alcaldes have limited powers under Belizean law, they can enforce local bylaws and issue fines for minor offenses. However, they lack the authority to create or implement national laws.

The Alcalde system is crucial for preserving Maya cultural identity, but it has faced some challenges as the Maya people have become more integrated into Belizean society, which has exposed them to different cultural practices and values.

The Commissioner of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs in Belize

The Commissioner of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs in the Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs is a government-appointed official responsible for advocating on behalf of indigenous peoples and promoting their interests. The Commissioner's role includes providing advice and recommendations to the government on issues related to indigenous peoples, promoting the rights and interests of indigenous communities, and ensuring that policies and laws are in place to protect their cultural heritage and natural resources.

The Commissioner is also responsible for promoting awareness and understanding of indigenous cultures, customs, and traditions. This includes organizing educational and cultural programs, promoting the development of indigenous communities, and supporting indigenous-led initiatives that help to address social, economic, and environmental challenges.

In addition, the Commissioner of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs serves as a liaison between indigenous communities and the government, helping to build partnerships and facilitate communication between the two. The Commissioner also works closely with other government agencies and civil society organizations to promote the rights and welfare of indigenous peoples in Belize.

Village water boards

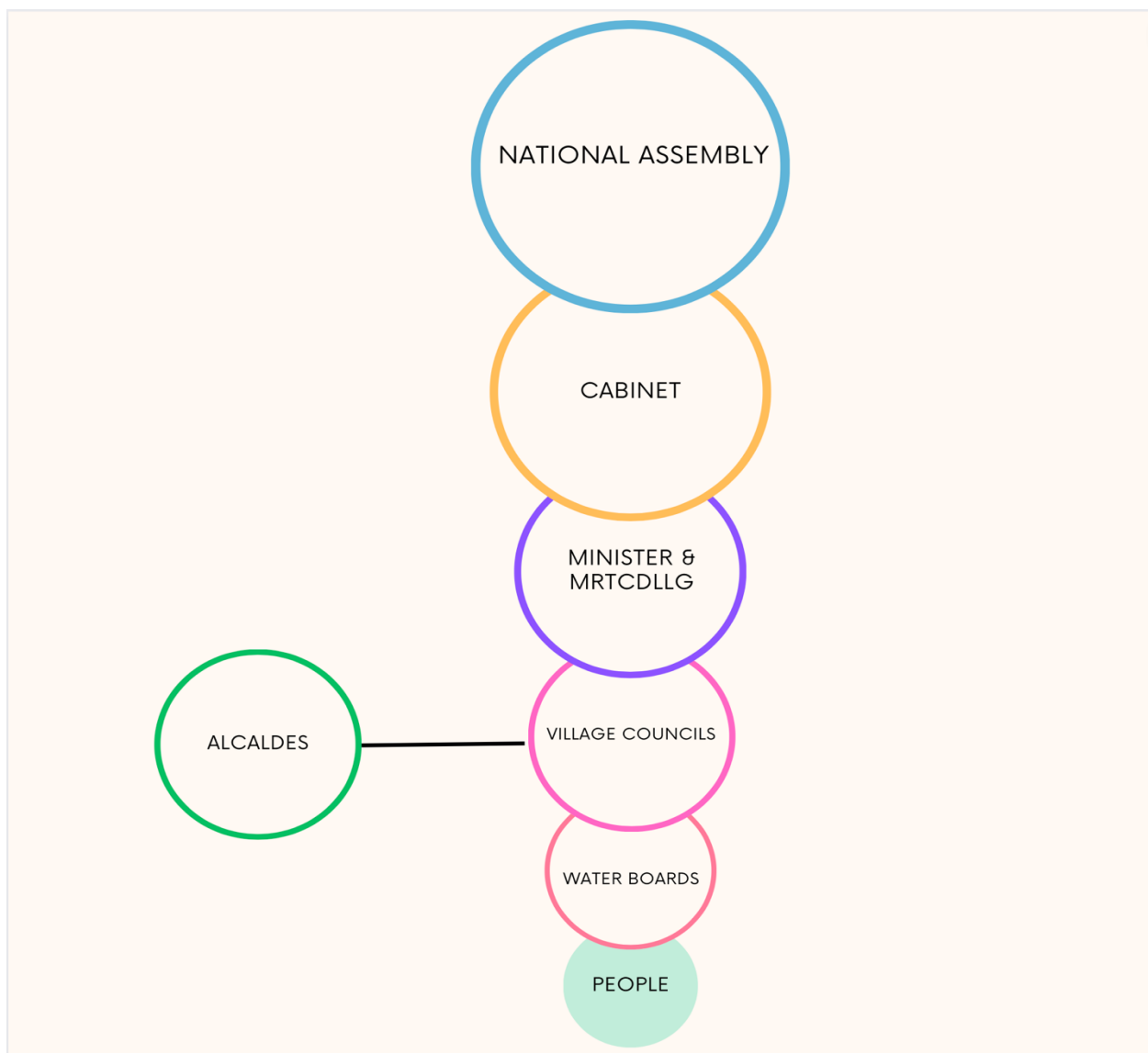
In Belize, village water boards are responsible for the management and operation of rural water supply systems. The boards are established through the Village Councils Act and are administered by the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government. They are typically formed by members of the local community who are

appointed to serve as board members, and they work closely with the government and other organizations to ensure that clean and safe water is available to all members of the community.

The duties of village water boards include maintaining the water system, regulating pumping hours, expanding the system, laying pipes, collecting user fees, carrying out disconnections, keeping records, and performing other functions related to the supply of water in the village. The government provides technical support and assistance to village water boards.

The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government is responsible for overseeing and providing financial supervision, approving tariffs set at the village level, as well as assisting in the capacity building and organization of village water boards.

Figure 3: Governance structure for current project



Sociocultural Analysis

Introduction

The objective of the Sociocultural Analysis section in this report is to illuminate the social, cultural, and economic background of 11 villages classified as vulnerable or Indigenous communities in Belize. Due to the scarcity of village-level data, the report will first present general demographic and socioeconomic information about Belize to provide a broader context for the analysis. Additionally, since each village is situated in a specific district, the report will also offer district-wide data to help contextualize the data on each village. The goal of this analysis is to recognize potential hazards and effects of the Belize Water and Sanitation Program for Rural Areas (BL-L1045) on the vulnerable and Indigenous populations in these communities and suggest culturally appropriate mitigation strategies in line with the bank's ESPF.

Figure 4: Belize in figures

Geographic information	
Dimensions	170 miles (274 kms) N-S, 68 miles (109 kms) E-W
Area	8,867 sq. miles (22,700 sq. kms)
Rainfall (annual average)	40" (1,016 mm) N, 180" (4,572 mm) S
Temperature range	50° - 95° F (10° - 35° C)
Demographic and socioeconomic statistics	
Population	322,457 (2010), 444,802 (2022 estimate) ⁵
Population growth rate	2.65% (2010)
Population density	36 people/sq. mile (14.2 people/sq. km.) (2010)
Distribution of population	Urban = 45.2% Rural = 54.8%
Average household size	4.1 people/household
Sex ratio	100.0% ⁶ (Urban – 95.1%; Rural – 104.2%)
Age distribution of population	< 15 years = 36%, 15-64 years = 60%, 65+ = 4% (2010)
Total dependency ratio	59.1% ⁷ (CDR – 59.1%, ADR – 7.0%)
Life expectancy	74.9 years (2021) ⁸
Fertility rate	2 (2020) ⁹
Maternal mortality rate	36 per 100,000 live births ¹⁰
Infant mortality rate	10 (per 1,000 live births) (2020) ¹¹
Multidimensional poverty	4.3% of population (17,000 people) (2020) are multidimensionally poor, 8.4% of population (33,000 people) are vulnerable to multidimensional poverty ¹²
Literacy rate	79.7% (Male – 75.2%, Female – 84.1%)
Literacy rate by ethnic group:	
▪ Creole	93.5% (Male – 92.3%, Female – 94.8%)
▪ Yucatec Maya	78.3% (Male – 77.8%, Female – 78.8%)
▪ Mopan Maya	74% (Male – 77%, Female – 71.1%)
▪ Q'eqchi' Maya	65.1% (Male – 67.1%, Female – 63%)
Gender inequality index rank	0.7 (2022) ¹³
Contraceptive prevalence	51% (2023) ¹⁴
Human development index rank	0.683 (2021) ¹⁵ (Medium human development)
Median monthly income	Urban – BZE \$1,161.00, Rural – BZE \$939.00 (2016) ¹⁶
Income inequality – GINI Index	0.49/1 (2018)

⁵ Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB). (2023). Labour force survey tables, October 2022.

⁶ There are 100 males to every 100 females nationally.

⁷ There are 59 dependents per 100 persons of working age.

⁸ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). (2021). Country profile: Belize.

⁹ The World Bank (WB). (2023). Fertility rate, total (births per woman) – Belize.

¹⁰ UN Women/Women Count. (n.d.). Belize.

¹¹ The World Bank (WB). (2023). Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births) – Belize.

¹² United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2022). Multidimensional poverty index 2022: Belize.

¹³ Statista. (n.d.). Gender gap index in Belize in 2022, by category.

¹⁴ Percentage of married women (ages 15-49) who have access to any method of contraception. Source: WB. (2023). Contraceptive prevalence, any method (% of married women ages 15-49) – Belize.

¹⁵ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). (2021). Country profile: Belize.

¹⁶ Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB). (2016, September). Labour force survey: Median income by district and area, September 2016. SIB.

Overview of the Socioeconomic and Cultural Landscape of Belize

Geography and People – Belize has a population of approximately 400,000 people. Its people are diverse and comprise various ethnic groups, including Creoles (25.9%), Mestizos (52.9%), Mayas (11.3%), Garifunas (6.1%), East Indian (3.9%), Mennonite (3.6%) and others. Most of these groups have, over the course of the history of Belize, immigrated to the country and settled in various pockets allowing for geographic pre-eminence of each group, which then came to define their respective culture within the context of Belize (Premdas, 2002). Over half of the country (54.8%) reside in rural areas, while 45.2% reside in urban areas. The district of Belize accommodates the largest portion of the country's population, accounting for 30%. In contrast, Toledo district has the lowest population percentage, which is 9%. The population density, according to the latest census, was 36 individuals per square mile.

Age - The country of Belize has a fairly young population with 28% of its citizens under the age of 14, and another 21% between the ages of 14-24. Pensioners (people over 55 years) make up 12.3% of the population. The total dependency ratio is 59.1%, that is, the percentage of children and the elderly who are relying on the working age population.

Poverty – At the last country poverty assessment carried out in 2018, it was found that more than half (52%) of Belize's population were living in poverty. This is an increase from 41.3% in 2009. Of those in poverty, 9% were considered indigent or critically poor (SIB, 2018). An additional 11% of the population, while not poor, were considered vulnerable to poverty. In terms of ethnic groups, the Mayas had the highest poverty rate (77%). There are also the only group where the poverty rate was above the national average. In contrast, the Creoles had the lowest poverty rate at 47%. However, they experienced the largest increase in poverty levels since 2009, with a 15-percentage point rise. Young people, the largest group in Belize, are also more likely to be in poverty. Almost 60% of those between the ages of 0-14 were poor, while 57% of those between the ages of 15-24 were poor (SIB, 2018).

Poverty, in this instance, is defined “as not having the per capita income to afford a market basket of basic food,” whereas indigence means “falling short of being able to afford even food” (Close, 2017, p. 276).

There are several factors that contribute to poverty in Belize including:

1. *Limited economic opportunities*: Belize is a small country with a relatively small economy, which limits the number of job opportunities available to citizens. Many people work in agriculture or tourism, which can be insecure and low-paying. Many people also work in the informal sector. Further, the lack of economic diversification means that job opportunities are especially limited outside of urban areas. Many people in Belize also struggle with underemployment, where they work part-time or in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills and education.

2. *Unequal distribution of wealth:* Income inequality is a significant issue in Belize, with a Gini coefficient of 0.49, indicating that there is a large gap between the wealthiest and poorest members of society. This often leads to limited access to resources for those living in poverty.
3. *Limited education:* While Belize has made progress in increasing access to education, there are still significant disparities in educational attainment, particularly in rural areas. Many children do not attend school regularly, and dropout rates are high. This can limit their ability to find good jobs and earn a living wage as adults.
4. *Natural disasters:* Belize is prone to hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters, which can cause significant damage to the infrastructure and the economy. This can lead to job losses and displacement, particularly for those who live in vulnerable areas.
5. *Limited access to credit:* Lack of access to credit and financial services can make it difficult for individuals and families to start businesses or invest in education and other opportunities that could help them escape poverty.

Economy – Belize has a relatively small, open, and private sector-led economy. The country's economy is dominated by the services sector, particularly tourism, which accounts for approximately 40% of GDP and provides a significant portion of foreign exchange earnings. Agriculture, including forestry and fishing, is the second-largest sector, accounting for approximately 12% of GDP and 25% of employment. The industrial sector, including petroleum refining and construction, accounts for approximately 10% of GDP. The country is vulnerable to external economic shocks, particularly in the tourism sector, which has in the past been adversely affected by natural disasters and global pandemics. Natural disasters and climate change also significantly affects the agricultural industry.

Transportation

Highways and roads - Belize's transportation infrastructure is primarily supported by its four main paved highways, namely the Phillip Goldson, George Price, Hummingbird, and Thomas Vincent Ramos highways. These highways interconnect the six major towns on the mainland, along with numerous villages, to Belize City and the City of Belmopan, the two commercial centers of the country. In total, the four main highways account for 5% of Belize's total road network, which comprises approximately 8,144 miles. The majority of the road network consists of unpaved minor streets and footpaths, mainly located in communities, which constitute roughly 63% of the network.

To enhance the agricultural and tourism sectors, the government has launched extensive infrastructural upgrades, including the Coastal Highway, Caracol Road, Placencia Road, Remate Road, Jalacte Road, and Sarteneja Road. Furthermore, the four main highways are currently undergoing or have recently undergone upgrades to comply with international standards and facilitate cross-border trade.

Despite the significant investment in road infrastructure, one critical issue has been the inadequate funding for road maintenance. The roads require extensive maintenance due to

their susceptibility to floods and other adverse weather conditions. However, the upgrades prioritize the development of climate-resilient roads, such as raising roads, installing larger culverts and drains, and implementing culverts that can withstand forest fires, which are common in Belize.

Public Transport - Buses are not only a popular but also the primary mode of transportation for Belizeans. Independent bus companies provide a fairly reliable and affordable transportation service to the major towns and villages along the highways and minor roads, with daily schedules and regular routes. This makes it easy for locals and visitors to travel between different parts of the country.

Moreover, bus services in Belize are quite flexible and convenient, as most buses will stop to pick up and drop off passengers at any location along the way, provided it is safe to do so. This allows passengers to travel from one place to another without the need to reach a designated bus stop, which is particularly helpful for people living in rural areas.

Air Travel - The only international airport in Belize is located in Ladyville, northeast of Belize City. This airport, named Philip Goldson International Airport, boasts a 9,900-foot-long runway, which makes it capable of accommodating a variety of aircraft. Several airlines provide service to and from the airport, including American Airlines, Avianca, COPA, Delta, Southwest, United Airlines, WestJet, Air Canada, Maya Island Air, and Tropic Air.

In addition to international air travel, Belize has a thriving network of local airline routes. This has led to the country having the busiest skies in Central America, with Belize City serving as the hub for this network. The main local airlines, Maya Island Air and Tropic Air, operate fleets primarily composed of Cessna Caravans and Australian Airvans. These aircraft are configured to carry anywhere from three to 14 passengers, as well as their luggage. For those in need of charter services, Javier's Flying Service Ltd and Astrum Helicopters offer their assistance (Smith, 2019).

Marine Transport - Water taxis play a crucial role in Belize's transportation system, particularly for people traveling to and from popular tourist destinations like San Pedro, Caye Caulker, Tobacco Caye, and nearby cays. These public transport vessels operate on regular schedules, providing a convenient and affordable way for tourists and locals alike to travel. The primary hub for water taxis is located in Belize City, with additional embarkation points in Corozal Town and other coastal areas (Smith, 2019). In addition to serving popular tourist destinations, water taxis also provide transportation services such as between Placencia and Mango Creek.

Sea Ports - Belize has three seaport facilities that handle import and export of goods. The largest among them is the Port of Belize Ltd., which is a multi-purpose port mainly used for importing containerized goods. The Port of Big Creek, on the other hand, was developed to cater to the shipment of bananas from the southern part of the country, but it also services container ships on a weekly basis. The Commerce Bight Port located in Dangriga was upgraded in 1979 to service ships exporting orange and grapefruit juice concentrate to the Caribbean, the

United States of America, and the United Kingdom. Despite its deep waters, the Commerce Bight Port is currently inactive (Smith, 2019).

Infrastructure

Water and Sanitation – The Belize Water Services Limited (BWS) supplies potable water to urban areas in the country of Belize. Rural areas receive water from community reservoirs that are managed by a local water board. Many of the residents in rural areas also get their water supply from nearby rivers or they have their own rudimentary rainwater catchment systems.

Only a limited number of residents in Belize City and the City of Belmopan have access to a municipal sewer system which is managed and operated by the BWS. At the last census (2010), 46% of Belize City households and 39% of Belmopan households were connected to the system. Another 48% of Belize City households and 34% of Belmopan households utilized flush toilets linked to a septic tank, while the remaining households used pit latrines. Households in all other communities within the country used either septic tank linked toilets or pit latrines.

Solid Waste Management – Most households in the cities and towns utilize a municipal waste collection method, while households in all other communities in the country either burn their waste, take it themselves to mostly unofficial dump sites or utilize the services of private garbage trucks.

The process of garbage disposal can be very inefficient as many of the unofficial waste sites are directly near the roadside usually on the outskirts of the villages. Most village councils also assert that the private dump truck providers are very unreliable. The government had sought to remedy this situation through a mechanism of funneling all village garbage collection to transfers stations that would then direct the waste to a sanitary landfill managed by the Belize Solid Waste Management Authority (BSWaMA) and located at mile 24 on the George Price Highway. However, with the high cost of transportation in Belize, due to fuel prices, only the Belize City transfer station is operational.

Electricity – Electricity is supplied to residents from different sources such as the national power company, public generator, private generator/solar energy, and gas lamp. Unfortunately, there are still some areas without access to electricity. The country's electrical power transmission system is divided into three main distribution lines, with renewable local biomass and hydropower supplying about 55% of the electricity used in 2015. Mexico supplies approximately 40%, while diesel and natural gas make up about 5%. Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) services almost 90,635 accounts or 71,989 consumers, providing electricity at a Mean Electricity Rate of BZ \$0.36 per kilowatt hour of power. Much of the electricity is produced at hydroelectric power plants located on the Macal River and the Rio Grande River. Additionally, Belize Cogeneration Energy Limited (BELCOGEN) is another source of renewable energy (utilizing sugar bagasse), and there are fossil fuel generators maintained by Blair Atoll Power Company Limited (BAPCOL) and the BEL's Caye Caulker station. Finally, the imports of electricity

come from Mexico's Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE), which is supplied from power stations in Merida, with Belize connected to the Xulha Substation (Smith, 2019).

Telecommunications – Telecommunications in Belize are primarily provided by Belize Telemedia Ltd (BTL), which evolved from a government department called the Belize Telephone Authority (BTA). As the only complete service provider in the country, BTL offers wireline, wireless, and mobile (GSM) services, as well as data services and international leased circuits. The country code for Belize is 501 and the internet domain is .bz. In 2016, BTL reported a decrease in fixed lines to 21,000, but an increase in mobile users to 270,000 and internet data customers to 25,000. The company owns over 350 miles of fibre optic cables and is connected to the ARCOS-1 and Maya 1 networks. Another company that provides telecommunications services in Belize is Speednet Communications Ltd, which offers wireless services through its cellular brand Smart (Smith, 2019).

Healthcare – Belize has a public and private healthcare system. The GOB is the largest provider of healthcare in Belize. The Belize healthcare system is divided into four regions – Northern, Central, Western and Southern. Within each region there are a series of mobile clinics, health posts, health centers, poly clinics and community hospitals, that offer primary healthcare. The four regional hospitals offer secondary healthcare, while the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH) is the national referral hospital. The KMH is the only hospital in the country that offers tertiary healthcare. Belize also has a series of private healthcare options that offer both general and limited specialist services.

Although Belize has a very organized system of healthcare, access to and quality of healthcare is still very low. Belize ranked 116th out of 195 countries in 2016, with a WHO, Healthcare Access and Quality (HAQ) Index of 56/100 (Fullman, et. al. 2018). The challenges Belize faces include gaps in skills and competences of health personnel, brain drain linked to migration, poor motivation of staff, and a concentration of health personnel in the central region with insufficient retention mechanisms for retaining health workers in rural areas (MOHW, 2019). To augment this shortfall, Belize relies on a supply of specialist medical doctors and nurses from Cuba, through bilateral agreements with the Government of Cuba.

Despite the low HAQ index, health outcomes in Belize have improved over the past decade with the country achieving almost 100% rate of immunization. However, there are still challenges, including high rates of non-communicable diseases and the above-mentioned limited access to healthcare services in some areas. Health disparities also exist among different socio-economic groups, with Indigenous and rural populations experiencing poorer health outcomes than their urban counterparts.

Education - Public spending on education accounted for 7.41% of GDP in 2017. The overall literacy rate in Belize is 79.7%. Approximately 96.3% of primary school aged children are enrolled in school, while 69.3% of youths, are enrolled in secondary school.

Gender – The total female population in the country is 209,596, with 113,752 (54.3%) living in rural areas. There are more women living in the rural areas of each district except for the Belize district, where urban women outnumber rural women by 2.5 times. Fourteen percent of the women in the country were born abroad, with the highest percentage residing in the Cayo district.

Gender-based violence remain a problem in the country. Reports of gender-based violence (GBV) are between 2,000 - 2,500 each year, with around 30 – 50% becoming active cases where “police have made an arrest or placed the matter under investigation” (Belize Crime Observatory, 2021). Seventy-five to eighty-five percent of the reports are made by women. GBV is more prevalent among rural women with approximately 70.34% of these women reporting having experienced episodes of intimate partner violence (Warren-Gordon, 2020).

In 2021 alone, there were 773 cases of domestic violence, 46 cases of unlawful sexual intercourse, 12 cases of rape and 11 females were murdered (Belize Crime Observatory, 2021). The Belize Crime Observatory indicates that those reports not resulting in active cases are classified as reports for “future reference”.

While the situation of abused women in Belize cannot be generalized, several qualitative studies of rural women (McClaurin, 1996; Warren-Gordon, 2020) paint a common picture where a teenage girl becomes pregnant, is kicked out of school¹⁷, cohabits with her partner and has more children, and then finds herself trapped in an abusive relationship. A few girls eventually get legally married, but many others get caught in cycles where the partner leaves and they must then rely on another “visiting” partner (McClaurin, 1996).

Gender-based abuse is compounded by male chauvinistic thinking which is particularly prevalent in rural areas where many individuals still ascribe to “traditional systems and structures rooted in patriarchy and male dominance” (Huggins, 2016, p. 1). These patriarchal ideologies reinforce traditional gender roles and posit women as minors and hence under the control of men. Many women have also internalized their own oppression to the point where at least 5.2% of women (5.4% of men), believe that a man is justified in beating or hitting his wife if she goes out without telling him; she neglects the children; she argues with him; she refuses sex with him; or she burns the food (SIB & UNICEF Belize, 2017).

Several ideological and physical factors keep women trapped in abusive relationships. For example, abuse in Belize is usually kept a secret because it comes under the purview of “private family business”. Women are usually admonished for disclosing their private business and allowing for the “gossip and sensationalism” in the community (Warren-Gordon, 2020: 236). Further, many face additional beating for making their partner “look bad” in society, thereby damaging his masculinity.

¹⁷ Most high schools in Belize had a policy of permanently expelling pregnant female students. While many have changed this policy, pregnant students are still required to leave school and wait for a year before applying for readmission.

Abused women also encounter a general lack of support. Many families are reluctant to get involved because of the prevalent machismo idea that the man is the head of the household and what he says goes (Warren-Gordon, 2020). This machismo is also carried over to the community police whom many women find untrustworthy (Warren-Gordon, 2020).¹⁸

Finally, the context of rurality in Belize affects a woman's ability to leave an abusive relationship. Many communities are in remote geographical areas with limited health care or legal resources, limited access to phone, internet or other communication device; and limited transportation options (Warren-Gordon, 2020).

Belize District

The table below presents notable demographic information about the district of Belize, and, where possible, Gales Point village.

Figure 5: Demographic data for Belize district and related target community

Belize District level data	
Percentage of country population living in district	30%
Foreign born population	9% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Age distribution of population	< 14 years = 25%, 15-54 years = 58%, 55+ = 17% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Rural sex ratio	99.8%
Literacy rate	91.4% (Male – 84.8%, Female – 97.7%)
Median monthly income	Urban – BZE \$1,176.00, Rural – BZE \$1,338.00 (SIB, 2016)
Village level data – Gales Point	
Population	297 (2010)
Males	152
Females	144
Sex ratio	105.5%
No. of households	72 (2010)
Avg. household size	4.1
Major ethnic group	Creole
Primary language/s spoken	Kriol, English
Major religions	Methodist (40.4%), Anglican (33.3%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (18.5%), Owned (70.4%), Other (11.1%)

¹⁸ There has been an initiative by the Police Department to train some police officers in dealing with intimate partner violence, but due to financial constraints, many police officers, especially in rural areas, have not yet received that training (Warren-Gordon, 2020: 239).

Gales Point Village

Characterization of Community

History – Gales Point is a small village located on a peninsula at the southern end of the Southern Lagoon in the Belize district. It was founded in the late 1700s and early 1800s by maroon Africans and their descendants, as well as logging crews based south of Belize City. The first settlers relied on small-scale farming, hunting, fishing, and other forest products from the Southern Lagoon and surrounding areas.

Land grants in the Soldier Creek area were given to members of the disbanded All Black 5th West India Regiment from Jamaica in 1817, who established small farms along the Creekside. As land tenure became more secure in the 1840s, plantations stretched along the riverbanks and through the forested karst. These plantations provided employment after the emancipation of slaves in 1833, and eventually led to the construction of the Burdon Canal in 1920 for easier transportation of crops to Belize City. Many older inhabitants of Gales Point remember the Government Landing community on the banks of the Manatee River and the move to Gales Point.

Logging became the major industry in the area again in the 1950s, with most men from Gales Point employed in logging and milling pine and mahogany. This resulted in people abandoning traditional plantations as a source of income. However, the decline of logging in the 1960s and high unemployment in the area led to seasonal work outside the community. Many were employed seasonally by orange orchards in Florida during harvesting, leading to strong ties with the United States. As a result, many younger members of the community moved away from the traditional subsistence lifestyle in favor of a less strenuous life in the United States, causing significant social changes in the community over the past sixty years.

Demographics – The village of Gales Point is composed of approximately 90% Creole, 2.4% East Indian, 0.7% white North American immigrants, 0.7% Garifuna, and 0.3% Maya. The sex ratio in the village is 105.5%, suggesting a higher number of males than females. This is likely due to the fact that fishing and agriculture, which are traditionally male-dominated activities, are the primary livelihoods in the village. The majority religion practiced in the community is Methodist, accounting for 40.4% of the population, followed by Anglican at 33.3%.

Literacy rate – Creoles experience the second highest literacy rates in the country for adults (93.5%) and tie with Garifunas for the highest youth literacy rate (96.4%). Literacy rate for Creole females is higher than that of males. The literacy rate for adult women is 94.8% and for men 92.3%, whereas for girls it is 97.4% and boys 95.3%.

Language – The Kriol language serves as the lingua franca of daily life in Belize and is indispensable (McClaurin, 1996, p. 2). According to Menjívar & Salmon (2018), Kriol is the “irrefutable national language of Belize” (p. 25). It is used by all ethnic groups in Belize and is even spoken by the many Chinese shop owners throughout the country. Menjívar & Salmon (2018), cites two other studies where the researchers noted youth of various ethnicities were code-switching between Kriol, Spanish and English, but that younger speakers were beginning to employ more Kriol at the expense of the other languages and even code switching. The author found that the Kriol vernacular rates high in solidarity and personal appeal but low in power as compared to English.

Housing – Most houses in Gales Point are built of wood, with wood flooring and sheet metal roofs. This is most likely because the Creole community, who historically had a significant presence in logging and carpentry, prefer wood structures.

Land Tenure – Out of the villagers in Gales Point, 70.4% are landowners, 18.5% have leases, and 11% have an unknown form of tenure.

Economy – Gales Point’s economy is primarily based on agriculture, fishing, and ecotourism. Agriculture is an important economic activity in Gales Point, with villagers engaging in subsistence farming and cultivating crops such as cassava, corn, and beans. They also grow fruits such as mangoes, bananas, and coconuts, which they sell in the village or nearby towns.

Fishing is another important economic activity in Gales Point, with villagers fishing for a variety of seafood such as lobsters, conch, and snapper. The fish catch is also sold locally or in other parts of Belize.

In recent years, ecotourism has become an important part of the local economy. Tourists visit Gales Point to experience the natural beauty of the surrounding area and to engage in activities such as bird watching, hiking, and kayaking. The village has also developed a reputation for its traditional drumming and dancing, which attracts visitors interested in experiencing Belizean culture.

Community Structure and Institutional Functioning

Gales Point is a small, close-knit community where relationships and social networks are important. Family relationships are highly valued in Gales Point. Many residents have large extended families and may live in multi-generational households. This type of family support is an important source of social capital to the residents of Gales Point and families often provide financial and emotional support to each other.

One of the most important values in the community is respect, which is highly valued and expected to be shown towards elders, parents, and other members of the community. Gossiping is considered a negative behavior and is avoided, and honesty is valued highly.

In terms of decision-making, the community follows a democratic process where the opinions of all members are taken into consideration. Meetings are held by the village council (p. 19) to discuss community issues and make decisions, with the goal of reaching a consensus. The village council is then responsible for implementing decisions related to the community's affairs, however, this is usually done with assistance of the community.

Gender Aspects

Traditional gender roles are still present, with women being responsible for domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing, while men are primarily responsible for activities such as fishing, hunting, and agriculture. However, there have been efforts to promote gender equality and empower women in the community through initiatives such as women's groups and leadership training programs. Additionally, there have been shifts in gender roles with more women becoming involved in non-traditional activities such as tourism and entrepreneurship.

Social Vulnerability Analysis

Poverty and inequality are major issues in Belize, particularly in rural areas like Gales Point. Poverty is higher among indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, and these groups are more likely to experience social exclusion and limited access to basic services.

In Gales Point specifically, access to healthcare and education is limited. The village has a small health clinic, but residents need to travel to Belize City for specialized care. In terms of education, Gales Point has a primary school, but students need to travel to Dangriga or Belize City for secondary school.

Economic disparities also exist in Gales Point. Fishing and agriculture are the main sources of income, but these industries are vulnerable to natural disasters and market fluctuations. Some residents may also face barriers to accessing credit or other financial services.

Cayo District

The following table highlights some significant demographics for the district of Cayo, and where available for San Antonio village.

Figure 6: Demographic data for Cayo district and related community

Cayo District level data	
Percentage of country population living in district	23%
Foreign born population	19% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Age distribution of population	< 14 yrs = 27%, 15-54 yrs = 62%, 55+ = 11% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Rural sex ratio	103.5%
Literacy rate	73.3% (Male – 69.4%, Female – 77.2%)

Median monthly income	Urban – BZE \$1,127.00, Rural – BZE \$1,062.00
Village level data – San Antonio	
Population	1,847 (2010)
Males	933
Females	914
Sex ratio	102.1%
No. of households	381 (2010)
Avg. household size	4.8
Major ethnic group	Yucatec (1,208)
Other ethnic groups	White (0.8%), Creole (1.7%), East Indian (0.3%), Garifuna (0.1%), Mestizo (24.1%)
Primary language/s spoken	Spanish, Kriol, English, Yucatec
Major religions	Pentacostal (59.4%), Roman Catholic (14.2%), None (22%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (53.2%), Owned (26%), Other (18.2%)

San Antonio

Characterization of Communities

Geography and People

San Antonio village is strategically nestled in a valley at the edge of the Maya Mountains in the Cayo district. The village is about a 20-minute drive from the twin towns of San Ignacio and Santa Elena. As with most of Belize the area was originally home to the ancient Maya. Today, San Antonio is a predominantly Yucatec-Maya community. The Yucatec Maya, specifically four families – Tzib, Mai, Chi and Pech, immigrated from the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, during the Caste Wars around 1842 (See Figure 7) (EPNP, 2022). To the locals, San Antonio is known as “Tanah”, a Yucatec word which translates to “our home” (EPNP, 2022). According to traditional oral history, the founding families had originally wanted to settle in Tanah but there was no water there, so they opted to settled higher in the mountains in a place called Privacion. However, the pine ridge soil at Privacion was not conducive to farming. One day however, when some men were hunting, an animal led them back down to the valley where they discovered wet soil. It is said that at that point, the animal mysteriously vanished, and so it is believed that the Maya God Yum Kax-Ku, had taken the form of this animal to guide the families back to where they truly wanted to live. That historical well, Pu’soon, still exist in the village today (EPNP, 2022).

Figure 7: Migration route of San Antonio Yucatec Maya



Source: Belize Yucatec Maya (2020, May)

While the village today is still predominantly Maya, members of other ethnicities also reside there, including white North American immigrants (0.8%), Creoles (1.7%), East Indians (0.3%), Garifuna (0.1%), and Mestizos (24.1%).

The majority of San Antonio's population adheres to the Pentecostal faith (59.4%), while 14.2% are Roman Catholic. Around 22% of the village's inhabitants do not follow any religion.

Housing – San Antonio's housing structures are composed of varying materials, with 37% of the houses constructed with concrete walls, 32% made with wood walls, and 26.2% consisting of a combination of both concrete and wood. The roofing material of most houses is made of sheet metal (93.2%), with thatch and concrete being used less frequently. When it comes to flooring, concrete is the most commonly used material, with 86% of houses having concrete floors. Wooden floors come in second, while only around 3.5% of houses have earthen floors.

Land Tenure – Out of the total San Antonio population, 53% hold leases for their land, 26% possess land ownership, and 18% have undisclosed arrangements for their land tenure.

Poverty – Poverty in the Cayo district has risen from 41% in 2009, to 52% 2018. The Cayo district has the 3rd highest level of poverty in the country. Although there are no concrete data on why this is the case, there are a number of possible reasons, such as those discussed above, but also the fact that the Cayo district is home to the highest number of immigrants from neighboring countries such as Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. They often settle in rural areas and engage in subsistence farming and informal labor and as such lack the resources and support to break the cycle of poverty.

Economy – The economy of the Cayo district is primarily dependent on agriculture, tourism, and services. Agriculture is the most significant sector, providing a considerable portion of the district's employment opportunities and income. The primary agricultural products in the Cayo district are grains, vegetables, citrus fruits, and livestock.

Tourism is another vital economic sector in the region, attracting visitors to the district's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and outdoor activities like hiking and canoeing. The Cayo district has several popular tourist destinations, including ancient Maya sites such as Xunantunich, Caracol, and the lesser-known Pacbitun in San Antonio. Furthermore, the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve, located near San Antonio village, is another well-known tourist attraction. San Antonio is also renowned for its artists and healers. It is home to both the renowned slate carvers, the Garcia Sisters, and the Tanah Mayan Art Museum, which showcases their work. The village was also the home of the late Don Eljio Panti, a respected shaman and herbal healer, and his legacy is celebrated through the Non Kaax Meen Eljio Panti National Park.

In recent years, the services sector has grown in importance, with the emergence of small businesses in the free zone at the Western Border with Guatemala, and the rise of new investments in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies.

Infrastructure – San Antonio, like other villages in the country, has basic infrastructure such as electricity provided by the national power company, BEL. Water is sourced locally from a river in the Maya Mountains and managed by a village water board, while telephone service is available through BTL or Speednet.

The highway that passes through the village has recently been upgraded and paved through the Caracol Road Project. This road connects the George Price Highway, one of the country's main arterial roads, with the Caracol Archaeological Site in the Mountain Pine Ridge Reserve. This improvement is expected to alleviate travel constraints and boost income generation for all communities in the area that rely heavily on agriculture and tourism.

Additionally, the village has a community center that is used to host all village events.

Healthcare – San Antonio has a health post that provides limited primary care services. For more serious health concerns villagers need to travel some 20 minutes to Santa Elena or San Ignacio Towns the Government Community Hospital or a number of smaller private hospitals and clinics. There are no pharmacies in the village, so villagers must go into the town to acquire medication. The village however, is noted for its traditional herbal remedies and Belizeans travel from all over the country to San Antonio to see the local “bush doctor.”

Education – In San Antonio, kindergarten or primary level schools are available, but students seeking high school education and beyond must travel to the nearby twin towns of San Ignacio/Santa Elena. Although there is no specific information available on education in the village, the district's average literacy rate is 77%. Furthermore, the post-primary education level

for Yucatec Maya is only 16%, indicating that the majority (84%) of Yucatec Maya people have completed only primary level education or less.

Community Structure and Institutional Functioning

The institutional functioning and community structure of San Antonio are deeply rooted in the traditional cultural practices and values of the Yucatec Maya people. Family ties, community governance, and subsistence agriculture are central to the community's way of life. The village council, composed of respected community members, plays a vital role in ensuring the well-being of the village and promoting good governance. They oversee a wide range of responsibilities, including registering births and deaths, making recommendations for judicial and administrative appointments, maintaining public properties, managing council assets, and enforcing by-laws and regulations. Additionally, the council manages village affairs, such as organizing community events and maintaining public facilities. While the village is of Maya heritage, it does not use the Alcalde system.

Gender Aspects

In traditional Yucatec Maya communities, gender roles are often divided along traditional lines, with women being responsible for domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, while men engage in farming and hunting activities and occupy leadership positions. This gendered division of labor can limit women's access to education and employment opportunities outside the home.

Yucatec Maya women in Belize also face disproportionate levels of poverty and limited access to healthcare and education when compared to non-indigenous women. Additionally, they may experience discrimination and marginalization based on both their gender and indigenous identity.

However, despite these challenges, Yucatec Maya women in San Antonio village and throughout Belize have taken an active role in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Many women have participated in cultural events and celebrations and have worked to revive traditional practices such as pottery-making and weaving. The San Antonio Women's Cooperative is one such effort, which offers education in traditional skills and promotes sustainable tourism as a means of preserving culture and generating income.

Social Vulnerability Analysis

San Antonio, like many other communities in Belize, experiences a range of social and economic challenges that impact the well-being of its inhabitants. These challenges include poverty, inequality, and limited access to services. In the Cayo District, where San Antonio is located, the poverty rate was 52% in 2018, indicating that almost half of the population lives below the poverty line. This can result in limited access to education and healthcare, as well as higher

rates of malnutrition and illness. Additionally, income inequality persists in Belize, with a Gini coefficient of 0.49 in 2019 (SIB 2021), higher than the regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean (Statista, 2023). This disparity in income and wealth can have negative social and economic effects. Finally, accessing basic services such as healthcare, education, and clean water can be a challenge for residents of San Antonio. For instance, the nearest secondary healthcare facility is located in Belmopan, which is about an hour and fifteen minutes away, making it difficult for residents to access medical care, especially for more complex or specialized services.

Stann Creek District

The following table highlights some significant demographics for the district of Stann Creek, and where available for the villages of Santa Rosa, San Roman and Red Bank.

Figure 8: Demographic data for Stann Creek district and related communities

Stann Creek District level data	
Percentage of country population living in district	11%
Foreign born population	9% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Age distribution of population	< 14 yrs = 29%, 15-54 yrs = 57%, 55+ = 14% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Rural sex ratio	113.4%
Literacy rate	81.3% (Male – 77.2%, Female – 85.9%)
Median monthly income	Urban – BZE \$1,313.00, Rural – BZE \$1,110.00
Village level data – Santa Rosa	
Population	542 (2010)
Males	284
Females	258
Sex ratio	110.1%
No. of households	90 (2010)
Avg. household size	6.1
Major ethnic group	Mopan (356), Q'eqchí (87)
Primary language/s spoken	Mopan, Q'eqchí, Kriol, English, Spanish
Major religions	Baptist (38.7%), Roman Catholic (21.6%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (98.2%), Owned (1.2%)
Village level data – San Roman	
Population	894 (2010)
Males	446
Females	448
Sex ratio	99.6%
No. of households	168 (2010)
Avg. household size	5.3
Major ethnic group	Mopan (560), Q'eqchí (168),
Primary language/s spoken	Mopan, Q'eqchí, Kriol, English, Spanish
Major religions	Roman Catholic (59.4%), Baptist (15.8%), Nazarene (15.4%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (88.2%), Owned (3.3%), Other (7.8%)
Village level data – Red Bank	

Population	1,202 (2010)
Males	621
Females	580
Sex ratio	93.4%
No. of households	200 (2010)
Avg. household size	6.0
Major ethnic group	Q'eqchí (546), Mopan (497)
Primary language/s spoken	Q'eqchí, Mopan, Kriol, English, Spanish
Major religions	Roman Catholic (16.2%), Pentacostal (13%), Nazarene (12%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (5.4%), Owned (36.6%), Other (57.5%)

Santa Rosa, San Roman and Red Bank

Characterization of Communities

Geography and People - Santa Rosa and San Roman, two neighboring communities, are situated on the Southern Highway, which passes directly through both. These villages are located approximately 15.5 miles away from the port town of Independence. As both communities have expanded in size, they have merged and now seem to form a single large village, with no clear boundaries between them. The village of Red Bank is about 5 miles south of San Roman and another few miles west of the highway nestled directly on the foothills of the Maya Mountains.

The Stann Creek district's western area is mainly occupied by the Maya Mountains, and numerous rivers stem from those mountains and run towards the coast. The Stann Creek district experiences the second-highest rainfall levels in the country, with the Toledo district experiencing the highest. The North Stann Creek River is a significant river, which has resulted in the formation of a rich valley. About 15 miles east of the highway lies the Caribbean Sea.

Primarily Mopan Mayas and to a lesser extent some Q'eqchí Maya live in the villages of Santa Rosa and San Roman; while the village of Red Bank has a near equal population of both Mopan and Q'eqchí Mayas. The Mopan and Q'eqchí Mayas are from the same family – both descendants of the Manche Chol Maya who had inhabited most of Mesoamerica, including parts of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. During the time of the Spanish conquest in the late 1500s, the Mopan Maya were living in “parts of central Belize and the adjacent Peten in Guatemala” (Shoman, 1994, p. 105). According to Shoman, by late 17th century they had been pacified and converted by the Spanish, and then were later driven out of what is now Belize by the British colonizers (18th – 19th centuries). The Mopan Maya returned to Belize around 1886 to escape forced labor and taxation in Guatemala. They originally settled in Pueblo Viejo, Toledo. Over time, young Mopan Maya men started branching off and forming their own communities near water sources, eventually moving north into the Stann Creek district.

Shoman, quoting Wilk, says “the Kekchi (sic) of southern Belize are a small splinter group from a much larger population whose homeland is the dissected plateaus and rugged mountains of the Alta Verapaz Department of Guatemala” (p. 104). During the Spanish conquest, they were proselytized by Dominican priests and forced to live in congested villages. This led to high death tolls from diseases. After Guatemala gained its independence the Q’eqchí were further dispossessed of their lands and forced into debt peonage by wealthy coffee barons. Between 1881 and 1890, many began fleeing into Belize. They too had the same nomadic custom as the Mopan Maya and eventually were forming communities in the Stann Creek district.

Poverty – Each of the communities seem to belong to the lower middle class. They consist of a combination of cement and thatched houses, with most of them being of average size. However, Red Bank stands out with several relatively large, thatched houses that are much larger than the typical thatched houses in Belize. Previously, as families became more prosperous, they would build cement houses alongside the thatch houses they lived in. But it seems that some families in Red Bank have chosen to continue living in their traditional Maya houses.

Economy - The Stann Creek district is an important agricultural region in Belize. The fertile valley created by the Stann Creek River has been used for growing bananas for export since the late 1890s. Additionally, oranges and grapefruits have been grown since the early 1900s and are processed into juices and concentrates for export. Recently, the area has seen large investments in coconut production, with processed products being exported. Small farmers such as the Mayas of this region are engaged in the production of pineapple, citrus, plantain, African palm oil, vegetables and cattle. Markets for these products are directly located in the district.

The Stann Creek district boasts a thriving coastal tourism industry that focuses on the Placencia Peninsula. Particularly, Placencia village, located at the southern tip of the lagoon, has experienced a significant increase in tourism services. In 2017, Norwegian Cruise Line launched Belize's second cruise port at Harvest Caye, situated three miles southeast of Placencia village.

The district is also well-known for its ecotourism attractions, which offer a variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, birdwatching, and wildlife spotting. One of the most popular ecotourism activities in the district is visiting the village of Red Bank to witness the annual migration of the scarlet macaws. This event occurs between January and March each year, drawing visitors from all over the world. Red Bank is a protected area where these colorful birds come to nest and can be seen flying in large flocks in the early morning.

In addition to birdwatching, the Stann Creek district offers opportunities to explore the Maya Mountains and experience traditional Maya culture. Visitors can take guided tours of Maya Mountains and its many waterfalls or hike to the top of Victoria Peak, the second highest mountain in Belize.

The district is also home to several national parks, including the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and the Mayflower Bocawina National Park, providing opportunities for hiking, camping, and swimming in waterfalls and natural pools.

Tourism plays an essential role in the Stann Creek district's economy, providing employment for local communities and promoting conservation efforts to safeguard the area's unique natural and cultural resources. For example, the Maya people in the Stann Creek district benefit from ecotourism in various ways. Ecotourism in the district is centered around the culture and traditions of the Maya people, and many tours and activities are led by Maya guides, providing employment and income for the local community. Additionally, ecotourism helps to promote the preservation of traditional Maya practices and the protection of natural resources in the area. By showcasing their traditional ways of life and their unique culture, the Maya people are able to maintain a strong cultural identity and promote greater understanding and appreciation of their heritage among visitors. In particular, the Macaw-viewing ecotourism project in Red Bank has been successful in generating income for the local Maya community and promoting the conservation of the endangered Scarlet Macaw.

Maya women in the Stann Creek district often find employment in the coastal tourism industry through a variety of roles. Some work in hotels and resorts as housekeepers, cooks, or servers. Others work in craft markets selling handmade traditional items such as textiles, baskets, and jewelry. Some women also work as tour guides, sharing their knowledge of Maya culture and history with visitors. Additionally, women may participate in community-based tourism initiatives, such as homestays, where tourists can stay in a Maya household and learn about their way of life.

Infrastructure - The infrastructure of the Stann Creek district is relatively well-developed. The Southern Highway runs through the district, connecting it to the rest of Belize and neighboring countries. Towns and villages offer basic services such as grocery stores, banks, and medical clinics.

The district also has small craft airports in the town of Dangriga and the villages of Placencia and Independence, which provides daily flights to Belize City and other destinations within Belize. These airports also serve as a hub for flights to other parts of the country, such as the popular tourist destinations of Ambergris Caye and Caye Caulker.

In terms of telecommunications, the district has mobile phone coverage and internet access in most areas. However, some remote communities may have limited or no access to these services.

The three communities in this study area all have electricity from national grid (Belize Electricity Limited).

There are also has several ports and harbors, which support the district's important agricultural and tourism industries. The Port of Big Creek is one of the largest deepwater ports in Belize and

serves as a hub for the export of agricultural products such as bananas and citrus fruits. Several marinas and docks, especially on the Placencia Peninsula, cater to the needs of the tourism industry.

Healthcare - Health care in the district is provided by the Ministry of Health, which operates a number of health clinics and hospitals throughout the district. The largest hospital in the district is the Southern Regional Hospital, located in Dangriga. It provides a range of medical services including emergency care, surgery, and maternal and child health services.

There are also several smaller health clinics located in villages and towns throughout the district. These clinics provide basic medical services such as vaccinations, family planning, and treatment for common illnesses. However, some clinics often have limited staffing and resources.

Education - The district has a number of primary and secondary schools, both public and private, which provide education to local children. The Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing the education system in the district. Most villages have primary schools or where a village does not have a primary school, children are bussed to a nearby village. Secondary schools however, are not available in every village. The district has five secondary schools. Students in the communities of Santa Rosa, San Roman and Red Bank have the option of going either to nearby Georgetown Technical Highschool or Independence Highschool. Both the Georgetown Technical Highschool and the Stann Creek Center for Employment Training provide vocational and technical training in fields such as welding, plumbing, and electrical work.

Despite these efforts, the Stann Creek district faces challenges in providing adequate education to all of its residents. Some schools in the more remote areas of the district may lack resources and face staffing shortages, and there are disparities in educational outcomes between urban and rural areas. Additionally, some families may face financial barriers to accessing education, particularly at the tertiary level.

Community Structure and Institutional Functioning

There are two institutions that have responsibility for development in Indigenous Maya communities, these are the Village councils (p. 19) and Alcaldes (p. 19). All villages have a village council, however not all villages have an Alcalde. For example, the villages of Santa Rosa, San Roman and Red Bank currently have no Alcaldes.

Gender Aspects

Gender roles and relationships in three Maya communities tend to be traditional and patriarchal. Men are typically viewed as the heads of households and have more decision-making power, while women are responsible for domestic work, child-rearing, and sometimes

agricultural work. However, women also play important roles in the community, such as managing small businesses or selling goods in local markets.

There has been progress in recent years towards promoting gender equality and empowering women in the district. Several organizations, both local and international, have been working to support women's economic and political empowerment. For example, the Women's Department of Belize provides training and resources to women entrepreneurs. Additionally, there are efforts to increase access to education for girls and women in the district.

Social Vulnerability Analysis

An analysis of the Maya people in the Stann Creek district has revealed several critical areas of concern regarding their social vulnerability. One significant issue is economic vulnerability, as the community mainly depends on subsistence farming and traditional crafts with little access to formal employment opportunities, leading to higher poverty rates. Health vulnerability is also a problem, with limited access to healthcare facilities and services resulting in higher rates of preventable diseases and health conditions like malnutrition, parasitic infections, and respiratory illnesses. Educational vulnerability is another challenge, with Maya children having lower school attendance and educational achievement levels than other groups in the region, leading to limited social mobility and economic prospects. Environmental vulnerability is also a concern, with many Maya communities located in remote areas with limited infrastructure and services, making them more susceptible to environmental hazards such as hurricanes, flooding, and soil erosion that can harm crops and homes. Finally, cultural vulnerability is a significant issue, with Maya people facing challenges in preserving their cultural traditions and practices, often experiencing discrimination and marginalization due to their language, customs, and beliefs, impacting their overall well-being and sense of identity.

Toledo District

The following table highlights some significant demographics for the district of Toledo, and where available for Golden Stream, Indian Creek, Big Falls, San Pedro Columbia, San Jose and Na Luum Ca villages.

Figure 9: Demographic data for Toledo district and related communities

Toledo District level data	
Percentage of country population living in district	9%
Foreign born population	15% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Age distribution of population	< 14 yrs = 30%, 15-54 yrs = 59%, 55+ = 11% (SIB, Oct. 2022)
Rural sex ratio	102.9%
Literacy rate	69.2% (Male – 67.4%, Female – 71.0%)
Median monthly income	Urban – BZE \$1,293.00, Rural – BZE \$530.00
Village level data – Golden Stream	
Population	349 (2010)

Males	176
Females	173
Sex ratio	101.7%
No. of households	52 (2010)
Avg. household size	6.7
Major ethnic group	Mopan (196), Q'eqchí (150)
Primary language/s spoken	Mopan, Q'eqchí, Kriol, English, Spanish
Major religions	Baptist (81.1%), Roman Catholic (5.4%), None (7.4%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (2%), Owned (2%), Other (95.9%)
Village level data – Indian Creek	
Population	722 (2010)
Males	377
Females	344
Sex ratio	109.6%
No. of households	134 (2010)
Avg. household size	5.4
Major ethnic group	Q'eqchí (666)
Primary language/s spoken	Q'eqchí, Kriol, English
Major religions	Roman Catholic (24.1%), Pentacostal (26.6%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (48%), Owned (9.4%), Other (42.5%)
Village level data – Big Falls	
Population	845 (2010)
Males	412
Females	433
Sex ratio	95.2%
No. of households	169 (2010)
Avg. household size	5.0
Major ethnic group	Q'eqchí (494), Mopan (89)
Primary language/s spoken	Q'eqchí, Mopan, Kriol, English
Major religions	Roman Catholic (58.6%), Nazarene (20.6%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (23.9%), Owned (67.9%), Other (6%)
Village level data – San Pedro Columbia	
Population	1,703 (2010)
Males	875
Females	828
Sex ratio	105.7%
No. of households	317 (2010)
Avg. household size	5.4
Major ethnic group	Q'eqchí (1,149), Mopan (113)
Primary language/s spoken	Q'eqchí, Mopan, Kriol, English
Major religions	Roman Catholic (54.8%), Nazarene (13.9%), Baptist (8.3%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (12.2%), Owned (79.3%), Other (8.2%)
Village level data – San Jose	
Population	849 (2010)
Males	403
Females	446
Sex ratio	90.4%
No. of households	175 (2010)
Avg. household size	4.9

Major ethnic group	Mopan (752), Q'eqchí (46)
Primary language/s spoken	Mopan, Q'eqchí, Kriol, English
Major religions	Roman Catholic (32.7%), Nazarene (28.7%), Baptist (15%), None (12.5%)
Land tenure	Leasehold (2.3%), Owned (6.4%), Other (90.7%)
Village level data – Na Luum Ca	
Population	66 (2010)
Males	29
Females	38
Sex ratio	76.3%
No. of households	unknown
Avg. household size	unknown
Major ethnic group	Mopan (63)
Primary language/s spoken	Mopan, Kriol, English
Major religions	No data available
Land tenure	No data available

Golden Stream, Indian Creek, Big Falls and San Pedro Columbia, San Jose and Na Luum Ca

Characterization of Communities

Demographics – There are slightly more Q'eqchí males than Q'eqchí females (1:0.99 M/F ratio), whereas in the Mopan community the reverse is true with a male to female ratio of 1:1.02. Approximately 73% of the Q'eqchí population and 69% of the Mopan population is below the age of 30 years, while 3.5% and 5% of Q'eqchí and Mopan respectively, is over 60 years.

Literacy rate – Q'eqchí and Mopan Mayas have some of the lowest literacy rates in the country. Persons who have completed at least the standard five level of primary school (US grade 7) are considered literate. Q'eqchí Mayas have the second lowest adult literacy rate among all ethnic groups in the country (65.1%), with the rate of literacy for males being 67.1% and females 63%. While the literacy rate among youths have increased, it is still the second lowest rate in the country after the literacy rate of the Mennonites. And here too, the literacy rate of females is slightly lower than that of males. The trend for the Mopan Mayas is similar, except that they have the third lowest literacy rates in the country, both for adults and youth.

Schooling - In the Toledo district, much of the population (72%) who are 14 years and older, have completed no more than a primary school level education, whereas 16.1% have completed secondary or above.

Language - Maya peoples have to a large extent tried to maintain their linguistic heritage. There has nonetheless still been some erosion. Indeed, the Mopan Maya language is now considered endangered (Menjivar & Salmon, 2018a). This is evidenced by the fact that between the 1980-2010 census, Mopan language speakers decreased by 3.6% to 86% of the Maya population, whereas Q'eqchí language speakers increased by 6% to 96% of the Maya population (Menjivar & Salmon, 2018a). The researchers noted that the primary languages spoken in Toledo among the Maya were Mopan, Q'eqchí, Kriol and English. They assert that

young Mopan Mayas were finding increased economic value in learning Kriol especially since it allowed them to easily go into the growing tourism industry. One way the Maya has sought to maintain their linguistic heritage is by developing schools and introducing curriculum that focus on their indigenous language, for example, the Tumul K'in Center of Learning.

Religion - The majority of Maya are Catholic due to the influence of Spanish colonization. Often, Mopan Mayas will fondly tell of the founding of San Antonio, Toledo in which community members had briefly return to their original home in San Luis, Petén, Guatemala to retrieve a statue of San Antonio and church bells, which they installed in the Catholic church they had built in their new home, San Antonio.

Economic Activities - The indigenous peoples of Belize have all traditionally been farmers. The Maya employ the milpa system or “slash and burn” agriculture. This involves clearing and burning an area of land and cultivating it for a period of one to three years depending on the natural fertility of the soil (Wainwright, Siguo & Liu, 2013). During this period, farmers will usually plant beans during the rainy season, to replenish the soil (Wainwright, Siguo & Liu, 2013). Once the soil becomes “dead” the farmer will leave the land to fallow (rejuvenate) for a period of 7 – 10 years before returning to it (Binford, 2007). According to Binford (2007) however, increased population pressures could reduce the fallow time. In her research, Binford also noted that the milpa system of agriculture contributes to migration patterns in Maya communities. Often, younger men will leave their community in search of available land for farming. Once good farmland is found, these men would settle the area with their families. Over time new members arrive until there is a small new community.

The Maya are generally subsistence farmers, that is, they typically grow crops such as corn, beans, and squash (for pepitos) or rear pigs for their home consumption and sell their surplus for income. The surplus is usually sold at the farmers’ market in Punta Gorda town or to buying houses at the Jalacte border with Guatemala (J. Tush, personal communication). Some Mayas grow additional cash crops such as rice or cacao. Rice can be sold to the rice mill in Big Falls, the Mennonite of Spanish Lookout or Blue Creek, Orange Walk, or the buying houses at Jalacte. Cacao that meets quality standards is usually sold to the Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA) for export to the United Kingdom or the United States of America. Smaller farmers who have a few trees in their yard would sell their cacao to the buying houses. These do not need to meet the strict quality standards of the TCGA.

Of recent, several Maya farmers in what the Ministry of Agriculture terms the adjacency zone (Machkilha, Graham Creek, San Benito Poite, Jalacte and San Vicente) have begun fattening feeder cattle from Guatemala on their land in Belize. These animals are then sold back into Guatemala.

Many traditional Maya also engage in hunting and the collection of forest products such as the xate palm, leaf for thatch, various seeds, the jippi jappa palm for basket and purse (cux’tal) weaving and slate stones for the carving of souvenirs. The increase of tourism in Toledo has also opened new opportunities for the Mayas. Basket weavers are now selling their crafts at

the local Mayan sites such as Lubaantun and Nim Li Punit, while some women even travel as far as Placencia to sell their products. Several women's groups have also formed with the purpose of catering food to tourists particularly from the cruise ships. Others do overnight hosting. Finally, many Maya men have become tour guides or are providing ecotourism packages.

Finally, as young people increase their education, many are venturing into the wage labor market across the country, including in the hotel industry, the public service and several young men have joined the Belize Defense Force.

Community Structure and Institutional Functioning

There are two institutions that have responsibility for development in Indigenous Maya communities, these are the Village councils (p. 16) and Alcaldes (p. 17). All villages have a village council, however not all villages have an Alcalde.

Gender Aspects

Traditionally Maya women assisted their husbands on the farm. The husband would clear the land and the woman would help with the planting, watering, spraying, pruning, harvesting, and processing. Women generally have their own farms only when they are widowed or divorced and, in those cases, they tend to hold the farm in trust until their eldest son can manage it.

In Maya culture women only own property such as furniture, plants, chickens, and ducks that are gifted to her by her mother or mother-in-law when she marries (Murray, 2012). This is slowly changing, and we now see more women being given land by their fathers or acquiring their own lease. Since most women still don't own their own land however and they still have the primary responsibility of caretaker, they are forced to find suitable means of production near their home. This involves engaging in chicken and duck rearing, vegetable gardening, or planting high value crops such as cardamom and ginger. A few women partake in groups that own aviaries.

A major concern of Maya women is the ability to make an income to pay for their children's education. Although primary education is free in Belize most schools charge additional fees for such things as registration, maintenance, physical education, and ID card. Further, there is the cost of books, uniform, and supplies. Based on Voorend, Anker & Anker's (2021) research, the estimated total education cost per child is \$5,756.00¹⁹ (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). With slightly larger than the average household size and incomes well below a living wage for rural Belize (\$890.00)²⁰, it is no wonder that women are seeking additional sources of income.

¹⁹ Voorend et. al. actual calculation was \$5,046.00, however we note that they under count the number of years of primary school (Std. 1-6) by 2 years.

²⁰ Voorend et. al. calculate a conservative monthly family expenses for rural Belize at \$1,382.00 for a reference family of 4. With father working full time and mother working 59% of the time (based on labour force figures for female), the researchers estimate that the father would need to be making \$890.00 monthly to afford a decent living.

Several Maya women have expressed the desire to acquire land to pass down to their children. In Maya Center, the Village Council had bought land for village expansion, and many women had supposedly gotten pieces for themselves (Murray, 2012).

Maya Communal Lands

Many Maya communities have a system of collective land ownership in which each village “hold land collectively, while individuals and families enjoy derivative, subsidiary rights of use and occupancy” (Murray, 2012, p. 667). The land is organized in a “tripartite geography” where the village center is surrounded by an agriculture and forest zone, which in turn is surrounded by a peripheral zone used for hunting, some agriculture, and the collection of forest products (Wainwright, Siguo & Liu, 2013). The land is managed and distributed by an elected village leader, the Alcalde, in consultation with the villagers. The individuals of the community have only usufruct rights. In this way a farmer could clear any land within the agriculture zone that is available, if he intended to work it. This land could be lent, inherited or rented; however, it could not be sold (Murray, 2012). Land that was no longer being used reverts to the community. The men from the village usually form work groups called *fajinas*²¹ to work the communal lands together.

The communal land system appears to be practiced in Golden Stream and San Jose, while Indian Creek only partially practices it with about 42% of residents having alternative forms of tenure. There is no available data for Na Luum Ca, but given its remoteness, small size, and location, it is highly probable that the community also practices the communal land system.

Social Impact Assessment

Potential Positive Impacts

The implementation of the onsite generated mixed oxidant or sodium hypochlorite water disinfection system is an important step towards providing safe drinking water to the Maya and Creole communities. With the use of these systems, there will be a significant reduction in the risk of waterborne diseases, which is a major health concern in all communities where consistent water disinfection is not taking place. The introduction of the new systems is not intended to replace the existing water treatment processes but rather to enhance and augment what is already there. This will ensure that the water quality meets the required standards, thus reducing the risk of water-related illnesses.

The implementation of the water disinfection system in vulnerable communities can have further positive impacts. Women, who are usually responsible for collecting and boiling water for their families, will have more time for other productive activities as they will no longer need

²¹ Fajina means “coming together in one place to work for the good of the community” (Murray, 2012, p. 678).

to boil water for their children. This can translate into economic empowerment such as increased time to engage in other activities and also a reduction in the requirement of fuel for boiling water and increased participation in community decision-making. Furthermore, the availability of safe water in schools will benefit the students who usually drink tap water, which can often be contaminated. The implementation of this system can lead to improved health outcomes for children, as they will no longer be exposed to waterborne diseases.

Potential Negative Impacts

Outside Construction Workers – In terms of potential negative social impacts, the presence of construction workers is not expected to create significant disruptions. Since the rehabilitation project is small-scale, there will be no need for construction camps. This means that the construction workers will not be residing within the community, which reduces the potential for social issues such as crime and harassment. The project may also provide employment opportunities for some members of the community, thus boosting the local economy. Nonetheless, mitigation measures have been developed to ensure that outside workers do not harass or create any conflict with local Indigenous Peoples.

Mitigation Measures for Outside Construction Workers – The following mitigation measures must be applied when dealing with outside construction workers:

- Prior to hiring non-local construction workers, all efforts must be made to first source labor from local Indigenous communities.
- All workers must receive and sign a Worker Code of Conduct developed and provided to workers by BSIF.
- Community members must be well informed of the Grievance Redress Mechanism and how to use it in order to register their complaints and concerns.
- All complaints and concerns of worker misbehavior must be taken seriously and addressed promptly (if required).

Community Health and Safety – In many of the remote villages, children are not taught how to cross the roads safely as there are seldom any vehicles driving around, further to this, children often play on the village roads themselves. This was especially visible in San Antonio village where children will dart from behind parked vehicles unto the street without regard to oncoming traffic.

Mitigation for Community Health and Safety – The following mitigation measures must be applied to ensure that project vehicles maintain the safety of children in each community:

- Work with the community to provide education and awareness programs to children and parents about road safety and the dangers of playing near roads.
- Ensure that drivers of project vehicles are trained in defensive driving techniques and are aware of the risks posed by children playing near roads.

- Implement strict speed limits for drivers in areas where children are likely to be present and enforce them rigorously.
- Ensure that project vehicles are well-maintained.

Indigenous Peoples Plan

Introduction

The IDB's Environmental and Social Performance Standard 7 sets out to safeguard and advance the rights of indigenous peoples in IDB-funded projects. This involves IDB borrowers involving indigenous peoples in all project stages, respecting their cultural heritage and property rights, and mitigating any negative impacts on their livelihoods. The standard also aims to ensure sustainable development and culturally appropriate consultation processes while maintaining an ongoing relationship with indigenous communities. The Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) is designed to ensure that the Belize water and sanitation program for rural areas is implemented in a way that upholds the rights of Indigenous Peoples and minimizes any negative impacts on them. Moreover, the IPP is committed to ensuring that Indigenous communities derive benefits from the program.

Informed Consultation and Participation

Legislative consideration

According to guideline number 5 of the IDB's ESPS 7, the Borrower must engage in informed consultation and participation (ICP) with indigenous communities during the project design phase, in a culturally appropriate manner. In certain circumstances, the Borrower is required to obtain Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), which goes beyond ICP to ensure good faith negotiations and actual consent from Indigenous Peoples regarding the proposed project or program. FPIC is required in three situations: 1) when the project or program will impact lands and natural resources that are traditionally owned or under customary use, 2) when it involves the relocation of Indigenous Peoples from lands and natural resources subject to traditional ownership or customary use, and 3) when it will significantly impact Indigenous Peoples' cultural heritage.

As per the IDB's policy, the Belize Water and Sanitation for Rural Areas program does not require FPIC since none of the above three special circumstances apply. Additionally, the program has not triggered the Government of Belize's MSBFPIC Protocol (see Annex A below) as none of the activities listed in Schedule 1 of the Protocol apply.

Measures to Date

In April, community leaders such as village councils, water boards, Alcaldes, local cooperatives, community-based organizations, local NGOs, local women's groups, schools, religious leaders,

and representatives from central government were consulted through initial public meetings.²² The objective of these meetings was to introduce the preliminary design of the program, including budget, timeline, and project components, and present the findings of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and proposed Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). Additionally, environmental and social impacts and mitigation were discussed, and questions and feedback were solicited to direct the program's progression. It was agreed during these meetings that once the individual projects were tailored to the corresponding village, another round of public consultations would be held, including the entire village.

Culturally Appropriate Consultation

Engaging with Indigenous Maya peoples in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner involves adhering to the following principles. These principles are based on the IDB's commitment to maintaining an ongoing relationship with the community throughout the project's duration.

1. Understand the history and context: To engage with Indigenous Maya peoples in a respectful and culturally appropriate way, it is essential to have an understanding of their history, culture, and the context in which they live. This involves gaining knowledge about their traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and worldview. The SCA conducted has provided a fundamental understanding of the history and context of the Maya peoples of Belize.
2. Build relationships: The second principle for engaging with Indigenous Maya peoples is to establish relationships that are based on respect and collaboration. It is crucial to take the time to build relationships founded on trust, mutual respect, and comprehension. Listening to their perspectives and involving them in decision-making processes are essential components of respectful engagement.
 - a. There are two institutions responsible for the development of Indigenous Maya communities: Village councils (p. 19) and Alcaldes (p. 19). While all villages have a village council, not all of them have an Alcalde. For instance, the villages of Santa Rosa, San Roman, and Red Bank currently lack Alcaldes. It is important to note that the Village Councils and Alcaldes serve as the primary point of contact for any meetings with the Mayas and should be contacted first. Additionally, for this program, the Chairperson of the village Water Board must be contacted simultaneously as they will work together.
3. Use culturally appropriate communication: Use language that is respectful and culturally appropriate and avoid cultural appropriation or stereotypes. It is important to use the appropriate titles and honorifics when addressing elders or community leaders.

²² The Public Consultation Report (BL-L1045) can be found online at <https://www.iadb.org/en/project/BL-L1045>

- a. *Schedule meetings in advance* – Meetings should be organized at least two weeks in advance to allow sufficient time for the Village Councils, Alcaldes, and community members to prepare.
 - b. *Language* – Meetings can be conducted in English as all Indigenous communities in the program speak English.
 - c. *Engage with vulnerable groups* – Efforts will be made to be gender and intergenerationally inclusive according to the customs of the community.
 - i. Meeting with women – Women can be engaged through the Village Councils and Alcaldes, who can facilitate meetings with them. Since women often manage their children's school life, meetings can be conducted through the school, and on weekends, the leaders should be consulted to determine when most women are available.
 - ii. Meeting with youths – The village councils and Alcaldes can also facilitate meeting with youths.
 - d. *Use appropriate resources* – Printed and visual resources, such as PowerPoint presentations, can be used in all villages, but it is necessary to verify beforehand that the venue has access to electricity. Handouts should be provided, and these resources should be culturally appropriate. Technical jargon should be avoided, and simple and effective use of pictures should be used where necessary.
- 4. Respect traditional knowledge and practices: Respect Indigenous Maya peoples' traditional knowledge, practices, and ways of life. This includes recognizing the value and importance of their cultural heritage and respecting their spiritual and ceremonial practices.
- 5. Foster broad community support: Although the Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation/Consent (FPIC) protocol is not required for this project, obtaining broad community support is still highly recommended when working with vulnerable populations. This is especially important since communities are not always homogenous and conflicts of interest can arise, hindering beneficial changes. Therefore, as best practice, evidence of broad community support can be obtained by proposing a simple majority of community members sign a consent form in support of the project.
- 6. Support self-determination: Support Indigenous Maya peoples' right to self-determination and respect their decisions on matters affecting their own development. This includes acknowledging their agency in deciding whether or not to participate in activities or initiatives that may have an impact on them.

Grievance Redress Mechanism

Purpose

A grievance redress mechanism (GRM) is important in preventing and managing environmental and social risk. It is therefore necessary and good practice to address the questions, concerns and grievances of project affected individuals as well as stakeholders in a transparent, fair and equitable manner. The GRM shall therefore include:

- Provision for the establishment of a grievance redress body that is socially inclusive
- A reporting and recording system
- Procedure for the assessment of the grievance
- A timeframe for responding to the grievances received
- The mechanisms for adjudicating grievances and appealing judgments

Guiding Principles of a GRM

The following are the IDB's guiding principles for the development of a GRM:

- The grievance mechanism is expected to address concern promptly and effectively, in a transparent manner that is culturally appropriate and readily accessible to all project-affected parties, at no cost and without retribution.
- The mechanism, process, or procedure will not prevent access to judicial or administrative remedies or to the IDB's Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism.
- The Borrower will inform the project-affected parties about the grievance process, including access to the IDB's Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism, during its community engagement activities and will make publicly available a record documenting the responses to all grievances received.
- Grievances will be handled in a culturally appropriate manner and be discreet, objective, sensitive, and responsive to the needs and concerns of the project-affected parties. The mechanism will also allow for confidential or anonymous complaints to be raised and addressed.
- The Borrower will address allegations of retaliation, abuse, or discrimination and take appropriate remedial measures.

Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of the GRM is the direct responsibility of the BSIF. It is being recommended that a Project Steering Committee be established at kickoff, with responsibility for overseeing the GRM.

The Project Steering Committee will be responsible for receiving and resolving all concerns and complaints, raised by Project Affected Persons (PAPs), in a fair, objective and constructive manner. More specifically, the committee will:

- Fine tune and publicize the grievance redress procedures
- Receive, review, investigate and keep track of grievances
- Adjudicate grievances
- Monitor and evaluate the decisions for action taken by the committee

A Project Coordinator/BSIF designate will act as the point of contact for PAPs, inhabitants of the project area and project employees to register their concerns/complaints. The Project Coordinator/BSIF designate is responsible for taking grievances to the Steering Committee and for ensuring that the recommendations of the committee are implemented.

Grievance Redress Procedures

A complaint or grievance can be submitted via a grievance form (provided to each community) or verbally.

A grievance form may be submitted in any of the following ways:

- To the Project Coordinator/BSIF designate
- To any of the BSIF's offices
- Directly to the Project Steering Committee

Verbal complaints may be made to the Project Coordinator or directly to the Steering Committee, via telephone or face-to-face. All contact information will be provided to stakeholders.

Grievances and complaints will be dealt with in the following manner:

- All grievances received will be recorded in a register by the Project Coordinator (who also sits on the Steering Committee).
- If grievance can be corrected with an immediate action or there is no action required, complainant will be immediately informed, action will be taken, date and action will be recorded in the register, and the case will be closed.

- If grievance requires long term action, complainant will be informed of proposed action (within 7 days), the action will be implemented, follow-up will be carried through, complainant will once again be informed, the date will be recorded, and the case will be closed.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Grievances

Monitoring and evaluation of the GRM is the direct responsibility of each Project Coordinator who will provide monthly reports to the Steering Committee. Semi-annual reports will be made available to the public. The reports will provide the following information:

- Number of grievances
- Issues raised
- Common trends
- Causes of grievances
- Remedial Actions
- Redress provided
- Recommendations to prevent future recurrences

Monitoring and Evaluation of Indigenous Peoples Plan

Introduction

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) aims to assess the implementation of the plan's various components, track progress towards objectives, and provide feedback for continuous improvement. The M&E plan outlines the indicators, methods, tools, and frequency of monitoring and evaluation activities.

Objectives

The objectives of the M&E plan for the IPP are:

1. To assess the extent to which the IPP is achieving its intended goals and objectives.
2. To identify and address any unforeseen or unintended negative impacts on indigenous communities resulting from the project implementation.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the grievance mechanism in addressing the complaints and concerns of indigenous communities.
4. To identify areas where adjustments and improvements can be made to ensure that the project meets its intended outcomes.

Indicators

The M&E plan will use the following indicators to track progress towards the IPP's objectives:

- The level of participation of indigenous communities in project activities and decision-making processes.
- The number and nature of complaints or grievances received by the company and how they were resolved.
- The extent to which the project has contributed to improving the economic, social, and cultural well-being of indigenous communities.
- The level of satisfaction expressed by indigenous communities with the project's implementation.

Methods and Tools

To gather information and data for the M&E plan, the following methods and tools will be used:

- Surveys and questionnaires to assess the level of participation, satisfaction, and perceptions of indigenous communities towards the project.
- Interviews with project stakeholders, including community members, project staff, and representatives from indigenous organizations.
- Field visits and observations to assess the project's implementation and identify any unintended impacts.
- Review of project documents, reports, and other relevant materials.

Frequency

The M&E plan will be implemented throughout the project's lifecycle and will involve regular monitoring and evaluation activities. The frequency of monitoring and evaluation activities will depend on the specific project activities and objectives. Monthly, quarterly, and annual reviews will be conducted to track progress and provide feedback to project stakeholders.

Conclusion

The M&E plan for the IPP is a crucial component of the project's success. It will provide valuable insights into the project's effectiveness and contribute to continuous improvement. The plan's implementation will ensure that the project meets its intended outcomes and has a positive impact on indigenous communities.

Conclusion

Based on the successful sociocultural analysis and stakeholder engagement conducted for the IPP, it has been determined that the proposed water disinfectant system will not have any adverse impacts on the Maya and Creole communities' cultural heritage or social practices. The communities have expressed their interest and support for the system, recognizing its benefits in enhancing the existing water system, reducing women's labor, and benefiting school

children. However, it is important to recognize that the sociocultural context of the communities may change over time, and ongoing stakeholder engagement is necessary to ensure that the system's implementation remains respectful and beneficial. To achieve this, regular monitoring and evaluation of the system's performance and its social impacts should be conducted. Ongoing community engagement and participation are also crucial to ensure the project's long-term sustainability and contribution to the community's development.

References

- Amandala. (2022, January 29). Maya leaders reject GOB's FPIC protocol. Amandala Newspaper. Retrieved from <https://amandala.com.bz/news/maya-leaders-reject-gobs-fpic-protocol/>
- Belize Crime Observatory. (2021). *Gender-based violence 2021*. <https://bco.gov.bz/gender-based-violence/gender-based-violence-2021/>
- Belize Yucatec Maya. (2020, May 13). Migration and settlement of San Antonio, Cayo. Facebook. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/Belizeyucatecmaya/posts/migration-and-settlement-of-san-antonio-cayos-an-antonio-cayo-is-a-yucatec-maya-d/3061166100606442/>
- Binford, E. M. (2007). *Dynamics of land use among Maya of southern Belize* [Master's thesis, University of Florida]. CiteSeer^x. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.468.5327&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Channel Five Belize. (2022, December 1). Christina Coc accuses G.O.B. unilaterally implementing FPIC. Great Belize Productions Limited. Retrieved from <https://edition.channel5belize.com/archives/244690>
- Channel Five Belize. (2022, August 23). San Jose signs FPIC Protocol for Resilient Rural Belize Program. Great Belize Productions Limited. Retrieved from <https://edition.channel5belize.com/archives/239740>
- Elijio Panti National Park (EPNP). (2022). A village within the park: Tanah village San Antonio. Retrieved from <https://www.epnp.org/villages>.
- Fullman, N., Yearwood, J., Abay, S. M., Abbafati, C., Abd-Allah, F., Abdela, J., Abdelalim, A., Bazargan-Hejazi, S., Bedi, N., & Beghi, E. (2018). Measuring performance on the Healthcare Access and Quality Index for 195 countries and territories and selected subnational locations: a systematic analysis from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet*, 391(10136), 2236-2271. Retrieved from <https://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/237404/1/S0140-6736%2818%2930994-2.pdf>
- Government of Belize Press Office. (2022, November 29). Ministry of Economic Development signs FPIC agreement with leaders in Santa Rosa village. Retrieved from <https://www.pressoffice.gov.bz/ministry-of-economic-development-signs-fpic-agreement-with-leaders-in-santa-rosa-village/>
- Government of Belize Press Office. (2022, January 28). Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs on FPIC. Retrieved from

<https://www.pressoffice.gov.bz/ministry-of-human-development-families-and-indigenous-peoples-affairs-on-fpic/>

Grau, J. & Rihm, A. (2013, May). Water and sanitation in Belize: Technical note. Inter-American Development Bank. Retrieved from https://edc.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/IDBDOCS-_37765152-v1-BL_Policy_Note_Water__Sanitation_and_Waste.pdf

Howard, S. (2015). IPLP wins landmark human rights case in Belize. Retrieved from <https://law.arizona.edu/iplp-wins-landmark-human-rights-case-belize>

McClaurin, I. (1996). *Women of Belize: Gender and change in Central America*. Rutgers University Press.

Menjivar, J. C. G., & Salmon, M. (2018a). Mopan in context: Mayan Identity, Belizean citizenship, and the future of a language. *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, 5(2), 70-90.

Menjivar, J. C. G., & Salmon, M. (2018b). *Tropical tongues: Language ideologies, endangerment, and minority languages in Belize*. University of North Carolina: Institute for the Study of the Americas.

Ministry of Health and Wellness. (2019). Belize human resources for universal health strategic plan 2019–2024. Belmopan: MoHW Belize.

Morrison, C. D. (2017). *The CCJ decision in the Maya Leaders Alliance v The Attorney General of Belize [2015] CCJ 15* (Report of lecture by the Hon. Mr. Justice C. Dennis Morrison QC).

Murray, M. (2012, April). As ye sow, so shall ye reap: Granting Maya women land rights to gain Maya land rights. *William and Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice*, 18(3), 651-687.

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). (2021). Country profile: Belize. Retrieved from <https://hia.paho.org/en/countries-22/belize-country-profile>

Scodelaro, M. S., Kuntz, M., Gossio, J., & Balsari, V. (2023, March). Belize water and sanitation program for rural areas (BL-L1045): Environmental and social analysis. PlanEHS

Seven News Belize. (2023, April 3). Satiim demands Accountability. Belize: Naturalight Productions Limited. Retrieved from <https://www.7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=65676>

Shoman, A. (1994). *Thirteen chapters of a history of Belize*. Belize: The Angelus Press Ltd.

Smith, F. (2019). Belize: Facts and figures (2nd ed.). Belize: InterLogic Publishers.

Statista. (2023). Income distribution inequality based on Gini coefficient in Latin America and the Caribbean region from 1995 to 2018. Retrieved from

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1267706/income-distribution-gini-coefficient-latin-america-caribbean/>

Statista. (n.d.). Gender gap index in Belize in 2022, by category. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/802689/belize-gender-gap-index-area/>

Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB). (2023). Labour force survey tables, October 2022. Retrieved from <https://sib.org.bz/statistics/labour-force/>

Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB). (2021, June). Poverty study 2018/19. SIB.

Statistical Institute of Belize & UNICEF Belize. (2017). *Belize multiple indicator cluster survey, 2015-2016*. SIB. http://sib.org.bz/wp-content/uploads/MICS5_Report_2015.pdf

Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB). (2016, September). Labour force survey: Median income by district and area, September 2016. SIB.

Statistical Institute of Belize. (2010). Belize population and housing census: Country report, 2010. http://sib.org.bz/wp-content/uploads/2010_Census_Report.pdf

United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2022). Multidimensional poverty index 2022: Belize. Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MPI/BLZ.pdf>

United Nations Women/Women Count. (n.d.). Belize. Retrieved from <https://data.unwomen.org/country/belize>

Voorend, K., Anker, R. & Anker, M. (2021, June). *Living wage report: Rural Belize*. Anker Research Institute.

Wainwright, J., Jiang, S., & Liu, D. (2013). Deforestation and the world-as-representation: The Maya forest of Southern Belize. In C. Brannstrom, & J. M. Vadjunec (Eds.), *Land change science, political ecology and sustainability: Synergies and divergences* (pp. 169-190). Routledge. <https://www.albany.edu/spatial/publications/maya-forest/2013.Deforestation%20and%20world%20as%20representation%20-%20The%20Maya%20forest%20of%20Southern%20Belize.pdf>

Walker, Z. & Walker, P. (2006). Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent areas biodiversity assessment. Retrieved from <https://rris.biopama.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Biodiversity%20Assessment%20of%20Southern%20Lagoon%202006.pdf>

Warren-Gordon, K. (2020, September). Violence against women of Belize in rural communities. *International Journal of Rural Criminology*, 5(2), 228-243. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/334416163>

World Bank (WB). (2023). Fertility rate, total (births per woman) – Belize. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?end=2020&locations=BZ&start=1960&view=chart>

World Bank (WB). (2023). Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births) – Belize. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN?end=2020&locations=BZ&start=1960&view=chart>

World Bank (WB). (2023). Contraceptive prevalence, any method (% of married women ages 15-49) – Belize. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CONU.ZS?end=2020&locations=BZ&start=1960&view=chart>

Annex A: Maya of Southern Belize Free Prior and Informed Consultation Protocol

**MAYA OF SOUTHERN BELIZE FREE PRIOR AND INFORMED
CONSULTATION PROTOCOL**

The Government of Belize

Pursuant to their joint commitment to collaborate to faithfully implement the Orders of the Caribbean Court of Justice, including as expressed in the Consent Order, restated in paragraph 9 of its judgment (CCJ 15 (AJ) 2015), and the undertakings of the State therein;

Cognizant of the judgment of the Belize Court of Appeal, affirmed in paragraph 1 of said Consent Order, as well as the ruling of the CCJ (para. 52) that Section 3(a) of the Belize Constitution Act "... encompasses the international obligations of the State to recognize and protect the rights of indigenous peoples;"

Acknowledging that the CCJ understands (para. 10) the undertakings of the State in the Consent Order to include: recognizing and protecting the rights arising from the Maya customary land tenure system, engaging in agreed consultations to develop the appropriate legal mechanisms, and ceasing and abstaining from measures that adversely affect Maya land interests;

Further acknowledging that the Consent Order contains an implied obligation to comply with the various orders, undertakings and agreements within a reasonable time;

Further Acknowledging the need for consultation and constructive dialogue between the Maya people and the Government of Belize with a view to bring the terms of the consent order and all other matters connected thereto;

Now therefore, the Government of Belize adopts this **MAYA OF SOUTHERN BELIZE FREE PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSULTATION PROTOCOL**, which shall govern the Free Prior and Informed Consultation process.

1. In this Protocol, the following definitions shall apply –

- 1 "Administrative measure" comprises any Project, activity, investment or action which approval might affect the Maya peoples' rights on their lands, territories and resources, including but not limited to issuing or renewing any authorizations for resource exploitation, including concessions, permits or contracts authorizing logging, prospecting or exploration, mining or similar activity under the Forests Act, the Mines and Minerals Act, the Petroleum Act, or any other Act. This includes those listed in Schedule 1.
- 2 "Alcalde system" means the traditional governance system of the Maya people of the Southern Belize, which functions within the jurisdiction of each autonomous Maya village in accordance with Maya customary law and practice.

- 3 "Affected Area" is the area identified by the Maya village(s) as the area that will be affected by measures and/or activities that have an impact or threaten the rights and interests on the Maya people from their territorial, cultural, social, spiritual and/or economic view. The identification of the Maya village(s) to be consulted must be made by the Office of the Commissioner for Indigenous Affairs of the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs in conjunction with the traditional village Alcaldes and Village Council and supporting organization based on the content of the proposed measure and its territorial scope.
- 4 "Consultation" means the duty of the State to foster and ensure transparent and good faith engagement with the Maya people who are affected by any administrative measure that will affect Maya traditional rights to their lands, territories and resources.
- 5 "Environmental, Social, Cultural, and Economic Impact Assessment(s)" or "ESCEIA" means a detailed study(ies) of the potential impacts, including the positive and negative impacts, of a proposed activity on the environment, society, culture, and economy of the affected Maya village(s).
- 6 "First and Second Alcalde", "Alcaldes" mean the traditional leaders of an autonomous Maya village who are elected by village members, in accordance with Maya customary practices, to administer the Akakle System and are the arbiters of Maya customary law and practices and civil and criminal jurisdiction in accordance with Part VII of the Inferior Courts Act CAP 94.
- 7 "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" means the manifestation of the Maya peoples' right to self-determine their political, social, economic and cultural priorities. It constitutes three interrelated and cumulative rights of the Maya people: the right to be consulted; the right to participate; and the right to their lands, territories and resources. Free, prior and informed consent cannot be achieved if one of these components is missing.

"Free, Prior and Informed Consent" materializes as a "Yes", a "No", or a "Yes with conditions", including the option to reconsider if the proposed activities change or if new information relevant to the proposed activities emerges;

 - (a) "Free" means the process is self-directed by the affected Maya village(s) and is unencumbered by coercion, duress, threats, bribery or rewards, and externally imposed expectations or unreasonable timelines.
 - (b) "Prior" means that Maya village(s) should be given culturally appropriate time to meet to discuss and understand the proposed investment or development before making a decision. Consultation is sought before the approval of any administrative measure and sufficiently in advance that any input received can be considered and incorporated into it.

- (c) "Informed" means that the Government and Proponent shall seek to validate that the affected Maya village(s) understand information presented, available options and decisions sought. The affected Maya village(s) do receive, understand, and analyze information, which in turn depends on, among other factors, the complexity of the information, the affected Maya village's (s') capacity and decision-making processes.

The information provided to the affected Maya village (s) shall be –

- (i) accessible, clear, consistent, accurate, constant, and transparent;
 - (ii) presented in a manner and form understandable to the affected Maya village(s), using appropriate language and culturally appropriate format or a format requested by either the Alcaldes, Village Council, or their chosen supporting organization;
 - (iii) objective, covering both the positive and negative potential impacts of a particular decision or activity requiring free, informed and prior consent;
 - (iv) complete, covering all relevant information, specifically covering the nature, size, pace, reversibility and scope of any proposed project or activity; the reasons for the project; the areas to be affected; social, environmental and cultural impact assessments; the kind of compensation or benefit-sharing schemes involved; and all the potential harm and impacts that could result from the proposed activity;
 - (v) designed to reach the maximum number of the affected Maya village(s) and villagers, and shall include women, elders and young people; and
 - (vi) provided on a continuous basis throughout the consultation process, including where issues identified in consultations require clarification.
- (d) "Consent" means the collective decision made by the rights-holders and reached through the customary decision-making processes of the affected Maya village(s). Consent must be sought and granted or withheld according to the unique formal or informal political-administrative dynamic of each community. Maya village(s) must be able to participate through their own freely chosen representatives, while ensuring the diverse and inclusive participation.
- 8 "Good Faith" means transparent consultation process oriented to obtain the Maya peoples' FPIC before the approval of any administrative measure that might affect their rights to land, territories and resources. Specifically means the process is unencumbered by coercion, duress, threats, and externally imposed expectations or unreasonable timelines.

Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to:

- (i) attempts to negotiate, coerce, bribe, threaten, intimidate, or induce the Alcaldes, Village Council members or village members on any issue under consultation or to be consulted;
 - (ii) hasty decision-making; and;
 - (iii) arbitrary stipulations that seek to pressure the individual Alcaldes, Village council members, Supporting organization or Maya village members, including women, elders and young people. Arbitrary stipulations include assertions that funds or services may not be available if the individual alcaldes, village council members, or village members do not endorse the proposed action, or seek additional information or time for decision-making.
- 9 "Government" means the Minister with responsibility for Indigenous Peoples' Affairs.
- 10 "Grievance Redress Mechanism" means the process described in Part 20 and refers to a mechanism intended to assist the Government of Belize and the Maya village(s) in a consultation process to re-establish good relations and to reconcile their differences, in the event that there is a breakdown of trust or consultations reach an impasse.
- 11 "Maya village" refers to a settlement of Maya people who self-identify as a Maya village, and choose their First and Second Alcaldes according to their traditional process, and who collectively use and occupy land in accordance with Maya customary land tenure system.
- 12 "Maya customary land tenure" is communal, and proprietary in nature entitling the members of the community to occupy, use the lands for farming, hunting, fishing and utilizing the resources thereon as well as for other cultural and spiritual purposes, in accordance with Maya customary law and usage.
- 13 "Outcome Document" means a report produced by the Government and verified by the affected Maya village(s) that details the results of an FPIC process when an agreement was not reached.
- 14 "Proponent" means the person, entity, investor, association(s) or the Government of Belize proposing a project or activity to be approved by an administrative measure that may affect the Maya Village's rights to their land, territory and resources.
- 15 "Supporting Organization" means an organization that is authorized by a Maya Village to provide and/or seek technical or legal support which the Maya village(s) may require to meaningfully participate in the Free Prior and Informed consultation process or for any other matter a village deems necessary to have support.

- 16 "Village Council" means village leaders elected in accordance with the Village Councils Act.
- 17 "Village meeting" means the fundamental authority and primary decision-making body in a Maya village. All decisions taken at a Village Meeting shall be made by consensus of village members in attendance at a Village Meeting. For the purpose herein, a consensus of village members in attendance is 60%.
- (i) The Alcaldes shall ensure that the Village Police provide notice of village meetings and purpose of such meeting to all adult village members, especially where important decisions will be taken, before the Village Meeting.
- (ii) A Village decision shall be documented at the village meeting using form in Schedule II.
- 18 "Village member" means a person recognized by a Maya village to be a member of the village and who also self-recognizes as such. This may include a person either resident in the village according to custom or temporarily not resident in the village but recognized by the village as resident. A member does not cease to be a member of the Maya village simply because he or she is temporarily away from the village provided that such member complies with customary obligations as agreed with his/her village.
- 19 "Village Police" means the traditional Maya law enforcement officer elected to enforce village Alcaldes' rulings made under Maya customary law and the Inferior Court Act CAP 94 and assist the Alcaldes with administering the Alcalde system.

PART II

PRINCIPLES, CRITERIA, and PROCEDURES of CONSULTATION

2. Principles

In the application of this Protocol, the following principles shall be observed, adhered to, and otherwise given effect –

1. The Government of Belize has a Constitutional obligation to uphold the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, and in particular in such a way as to "protect the identity, dignity and social and cultural values of Belizeans, including Belize's Maya peoples"¹;
2. The Maya people are entitled to the human rights enshrined in the international treaties and declarations which the Government of Belize has ratified or adopted²;

¹ Belize Constitution, Preamble, para. (e).

² These treaties and declarations include, but are not limited to, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the

3. The Maya people have rights³ to the lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally used and occupied in accordance with Maya customary law and land tenure practices. Those rights are protected by the Constitution and International Law;
4. The Government and any other third party shall respect all customary practices of the Maya people;
5. The processes and criteria in this Protocol shall be implemented in a manner that is culturally appropriate, timely, meaningful, in good faith, and accords with international normative standards; and
6. The constitutional authority of the Government of Belize remains over all territory of Belize.

3. Requirement to consult on Administrative Measures

1. The Government shall follow the requirements of this Protocol to consult with the affected Maya village before authorizing any administrative measures, including those provided under Schedule I that might affect Maya rights on their land, territory or resources;
2. When the purpose of the administrative measure is to address unforeseen and urgent circumstances such as natural disasters, health epidemic, or national security issues or is otherwise considered a public emergency under the Constitution of Belize, the Government of Belize may not be required to consult.

4. Notice

1. Except for the circumstances identified under section 3(2), the Government shall notify, in writing, the Alcaldes and Village Council of any affected Maya village(s) of its intention to approve an administrative measure that may affect the Maya villager's rights.

International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man and the American and United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

³ These rights, in addition to being protected in treaties ratified by the State, are also enumerated in the decisions of the Caribbean Court of Justice, the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. See *MLA-TAA et al. v. AG of Belize*, [2015] CCJ 15 (AJ), Judgment of 30 October 2015; *AG of Belize et al. v. MLA-TAA et al.*, Civil Appeal No. 27 of 2010, Court of Appeal of Belize, Judgment of 25 July 2013; *Cal et al. v. AG of Belize et al. and Coy et al. v. AG of Belize et al.*, Consolidated Claims No. 171 & 172 of 2007, Supreme Court of Belize, Judgment of 18 October 2007 (C.J. Abdulai Conteh); Report No. 40/04 on the Merits, Case 12.053: *Maya Indigenous Communities of the Toledo District v. Belize*, 12 October 2004. ⁴ These are rights to occupy, use the lands for farming, hunting and fishing; utilizing the resources thereon i.e., collect medicinal plants, construction materials and other forest resources; and engage in Ceremonies (cultural and spiritual) and other activities on land within and around their communities; and that these practices have evolved over centuries from patterns of land use and occupancy of the Maya people which are critical to their physical and cultural survival *Maya Land Right Case claim 171&172 of 2007*

2. The Government shall include in its notification a request for a preliminary meeting and consultation plan in accordance with section (3).
3. Along with the notification, the Government shall submit the following:
 - (a) A description of the administrative measure being proposed, including its nature, scope, timelines and duration;
 - (b) Disclosure of the proposal to be approved by the administrative measure;
 - (c) A preliminary analysis of the risks and benefits, including environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts, to the affected Maya village(s);
 - (d) A Description of the proponent and its background experiences in the particular field of project/activity being proposed to the Maya villages(s);
 - (e) Identification of the person authorized to conduct the preliminary meeting and persons to liaise with the Alcaldes and Village Council of the Maya village, and the supporting organization throughout the consultation and negotiation process.
4. All documents submitted by the Proponent to the affected Maya village(s) shall be translated in the appropriate language of the village(s).
5. Upon receipt of the notification, the Alcaldes and Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) shall convene a village meeting to present to the village members the request for a preliminary meeting, and to determine the appropriate date for a meeting, and thereafter, the Alcaldes and Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) shall notify the Government, in writing, of its supporting organization(s), if any.
6. The Alcaldes and Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) shall respond to the Government in writing within twenty-one (21) days from the date of receipt of the Government's request to present the proposed date of the preliminary meeting.

5. Preliminary Meeting and Consultation Plan

1. The purpose of the preliminary meeting is for the village members to be informed of the proposed administrative measure, their right to a consultation process, and their right to consent or refuse to be consulted about the proposed administrative measure. If they agree to be consulted, the meeting will also be used to define the appropriate consultation plan that must be further followed by the Government and the Proponent.
2. The preliminary meeting shall not be for the purpose of arriving at a final consent agreement.
3. At the preliminary meeting, the Government, the Alcaldes and the Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) with the assistance of the supporting organization must be authorized to develop a mutually acceptable consultation plan. The Plan shall include particulars regarding:

- (i) The village(s) consent for including of the Proponent, if any, in subsequent consultation process;
 - (ii) The preliminary schedule for consultation meetings, to be updated with changes agreed upon by the parties;
 - (iii) The venues for the consultation meetings, which shall be selected to allow for maximum participation by members of the affected Maya village(s);
 - (iv) The extent of the environmental, social, cultural, and/or economic impact assessments required by the parties, and where required, the timeline for the conducting of the assessments; and
 - (v) The needs and measures to be implemented for effective communication, as identified by the Alcaldes and Village Council and the supporting organization of the affected Maya village, including but not limited to:
 - (a) Which of the Maya languages - Mopan and or Q'eqchi- is to be used during consultation meetings;
 - (b) Persons identified to translate written documents into the language(s) preferred by the village to be consulted;
 - (c) Persons identified as interpreter and translator during the village meetings;
 - (d) The need for technical or legal assistance to facilitate Villager's understanding the proposed plan and all related documents and to otherwise provide advice or counsel;
 - (e) The need for oral summaries for complex technical information; and
 - (f) Village protocols, customs or practices related to information sharing, negotiation and/or decision making that may affect consultation, including access to vulnerable populations, protocols for engaging certain individuals, or discussing sensitive topics.
4. The persons responsible for making a written record of each consultation, including the time, location, attendees, signed minutes and any other relevant documents, and the mechanism by which such records shall be verified by each party.

6. Engagement of Proponent

1. After the preliminary meeting, and with the village's (s') consent, the Government will attend further meetings together with the Proponent, who will be responsible for negotiating Compensation, Mitigation, benefit agreements with the village(s).

7. Proactive disclosure of information

1. The Government and any Proponent shall agree on the mechanism and frequency with which they shall provide regular updates to the Alcaldes, Village Councils and supporting organization of the affected Maya village regarding the status of activities related to the consultations.
2. The Government and any Proponent shall ensure, in a transparent manner, that all relevant information is made available to the Alcaldes and Village Council and supporting organization of the affected Maya village(s) as soon as possible and no later than within two (2) weeks of learning of the information. The Government and/or Proponent shall not provide misinformation to the affected Maya village and shall ensure that the information complies with Paragraph 4(4) and 5(3)(v).

8. Independent Technical Advice

1. The Alcaldes and Village Council may at any point seek independent technical and/or legal advisers. These advisers may participate at any or all stages of the consultation process.

9. Cost of Consultation

1. The Government and/or the Proponent shall bear the reasonable costs of the consultation process, such as the logistics of consultation meetings with the Maya village(s), the costs of the environmental, socio-economic and cultural impact assessments, the logistics of decision-making meetings at the affected Maya village level, and the costs of translation and interpretation services.

10. Environmental, Social, Cultural, and Economic Impact Assessments (ESCEIA)

1. To determine the impact of a proposed administrative measure on the livelihood, traditional way of life, and customary practices of the Maya village(s), a detailed study and transparent analysis of the environmental impact shall be executed in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act, Chapter 328 and Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, or any law enacted to protect Maya land rights. This assessment shall include an assessment of the social, cultural and/or economic impacts the Project will have on the affected Maya village. The ESCEIA shall be conducted:
 1. by independent and technically qualified consultant selected after consultation with the Alcaldes and Village Council and the supporting organization of the affected Maya village; and
 2. with the effective, inclusive and diverse participation of the affected Maya village, including by following this Protocol in the conduct of the ESCEIA.

2. The consultant conducting the ESCEIAs shall additionally: –
 - b) Develop Prevention and Mitigation Plans for different measures of prevention or mitigation of any negative impacts;
 - c) Assess compensation for the damages that might result from the proposed activity;
 - d) If necessary, to develop a Relocation and Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) and Livelihood Restoration Plan (LRP). The affected Maya village(s) shall effectively participate in the development of the RAP and LRP; and
 - e) Develop a Monitoring Plan for monitoring the impacts of the proposed activity and the implementation of prevention and mitigation measures, following the procedures in Section 14.
3. The consultant conducting the ESCEIA shall:
 - (a) consolidate the ESCEIA into a single technical report and shall include at least one version in plain language in order to facilitate adequate understanding of the results by the affected Maya village; and
 - (b) schedule meetings with the affected Maya village(s) to present the preliminary results of the ESCEIA. The results shall be presented in the languages of the affected Maya village(s), and in accordance with Paragraphs 4(4) and 5(3)(v).
4. The ESCEIA shall be revised and shall incorporate the inputs of the affected Maya village so that final reports can be used by the affected Maya Village(s) to make informed decisions.
5. The affected Maya village(s) has the right to conduct independent ESCEIAs at any time.
6. This section is subject to section 3(2).

11. Benefit Sharing

1. Where a proposed administrative measure involves either direct or indirect economic exploitation of the affected Maya village's environment, lands, territories or resources, the Village and the Proponent shall agree upon and determine a proposed Benefit Sharing Plan, and any Consent Agreement shall include a Benefit Sharing Plan.
2. The benefits in the plan may be agreed upon by the Proponent and the affected Maya village and may involve multiple forms of benefit sharing, including but not limited to: provision of goods and services, payment of funds and rent, establishment of social services, and other benefits as agreed between the parties.
3. The Benefit Sharing Plan may include provisions to accommodate particular hardships experienced by individual village residents or families, but the Plan shall otherwise share the benefits based on the degree of impact of the affected villages.

4. The Benefit Sharing Plan shall include a schedule for the disbursement of the planned benefits.
5. The Government will supervise the negotiation and implementation of the Benefit Sharing Plan to observe that the Proponent is following the rules of this Protocol.

12. Customary Decision-Making

1. Upon completion of the ESCEIA as required under 10, the Government and Proponent, along with the Alcaldes and Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) and the supporting organization, shall agree on a date for the presentation of the ESCEIA to the Maya village(s).
2. After the presentation of the final ESCEIA, the Government, the Proponent, the Alcaldes, and the Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) shall agree on a time by which the affected Maya village(s) shall make a decision regarding the proposed administrative measure. The time shall not be more than twenty-one (21) days after the presentation of the final ESCEIA.
3. The Alcaldes and the Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) shall convene a Village Meeting to discuss and take a decision on the proposed administrative measure.
4. Any decision taken at a village meeting shall be in accordance with 1(17).
5. During the consultation process, the Government and/or Proponent shall not begin any action related to the implementation of the administrative measure without consent of the Maya village(s).
6. If consent is withheld and Maya village(s) are clear that they do not consent to the proposed administrative measure, then the consultation process is over and no administrative action may be taken.
7. If no consent can be reached, then subject to section 3(2) and where the proposed administrative measure concerns the interests of public health, public order, public safety, national security and defence and is carried out in conformity with the rights of the Maya people and the safeguards of the Belize Constitution, the proposed administrative measure may proceed.

13. Agreement and Outcome Document

1. If consent is obtained, in accordance with section 1(17) and 12(4), the Alcaldes and Village Council shall request authorization at the village meeting to negotiate an agreement with the Proponent.

The agreement shall set out:

- I. The activities to which the affected Maya villages consents; and
 - II. Any and all conditions upon consent is based, including but not limited to any plans agreed.
2. A village meeting shall then be convened for the village members to take a decision in accordance with 1(17) on the final agreement after which, it shall be signed by Government, the Proponent, and the Alcaldes and Village Council of the Maya village. The agreement shall be signed in front of a witness identified and agreed by the villagers at a village meeting, who shall also sign the agreement.
 3. If no consent is given, and no agreement is not reached, then the affected Alcaldes and Village council, with the assistance of their Supporting organization, shall draft an Outcome Document and present it to the Government, which shall clearly state the reasons for disagreement and lack of consent to the proposed administrative measure.

14. Prevention and Mitigation Costs

1. The Proponent shall bear all costs of implementing the Compensation, Prevention and Mitigation Plan recommended by the ESCEIA and agreed upon by the Proponent and affected Maya village(s).

15. Monitoring Plan

1. The Agreement shall include a Monitoring Plan and the establishment of an Implementation and Impact Monitoring Team. Any agreement shall include a Monitoring Plan.
2. The affected Maya village(s) shall together with the Proponent and the government, develop the Monitoring Plan.
3. The Proponent of the project shall provide financial and technical resources to the Alcaldes and Village Council of the affected Maya village(s) to train village elected representatives to conduct monitoring of the proposed activities based on the monitoring plan.
4. The Implementation and Impact Monitoring Team shall be a 5-member team comprised of 2 members appointed by the Proponent, 2 members appointed by the Alcaldes and Village Council and the supporting organization of the affected Maya village, and 1 member agreed upon by both the Proponent and the affected Maya village.
5. The Monitoring Plan shall provide for the monitoring of the implementation of the Prevention and Mitigation Plan, including a schedule of monitoring activities and reporting mechanisms.
6. The Monitoring Plan shall include a clear list of consequences that will occur should the Implementation and Impact Monitoring Team determine that the

Prevention and Mitigation Plan is not being followed, including time periods for rectification and possible suspension of the investment or activity.

16. Continuing Consultation

1. The Maya village(s') consent to the proposed measure does not exempt the Government of Belize duty to implement other consultations processes should there be any major changes to the agreed plan which may cause additional or unforeseen impacts to those already assessed in the agreed-upon plan. No such major changes shall take place without the consent of the affected Maya village(s).

17. Grievance Redress Mechanism

1. Where the Government or Proponent and the affected Maya village has breached provisions of this Protocol, any party may invoke the following Grievance Redress Mechanism:
 - i. The Proponent, the Alcalde(s) and Village Council(s) of the affected Maya village may agree on a mediator and attend a mediation session to attempt to resolve their differences.
 - ii. If that is unsuccessful, the Proponent, the Alcalde(s) and Village Council(s) of the affected Maya village may enter into a non-binding arbitration process consisting of a three-member panel:
 - (a) One member shall be appointed by the Proponent, or in cases where there is more than one Proponent, through mutual agreement between the Proponents.
 - (b) One member shall be appointed by the Alcaldes and Village Council of the affected Maya village.
 - (c) Those two members shall then select a third member to act as chair of the panel. Where the disagreement involves technical issues, the two members shall endeavor to select a chair with expertise in the technical area.
2. The panel shall receive information and submissions from the parties and may compel information from any third parties it deems necessary. The panel may consider any information it deems relevant and useful, notwithstanding rules of evidence that govern court proceedings.
3. The panel shall provide each party with the information and submissions it has received from the other party and permit each party to respond.
4. Any in-person hearing or session by the panel shall take place at a location to be agreed by the Proponent, Alcaldes, Village Council and in the supporting organization of the affected Maya village.

5. An interpreter agreed by the Proponent, the Alcaldes and Village Council of the affected village(s) shall be present at all times. The cost of such interpreter's services will be borne by the Proponent.
6. All members of the panel shall take into consideration the Maya village's communal property rights and the safeguards of the Belize Constitution.
7. Upon review of the information and submissions of the parties, any other information it has obtained, and any interviews or hearing it has chosen to hold, the panel shall make specific recommendations to the parties on how concerns of the parties can be addressed, and if possible, suggest specific language that might or should be acceptable to both parties in a consent agreement.
8. The Parties to the arbitration shall make a good faith effort to consider using the panel's recommendations.
9. This non-binding mediation or arbitration process is without prejudice to the Maya village's right to withhold consent until it is satisfied that the consultation process has satisfied the provisions of this Protocol and a final consent agreement has been reached between the Government Proponent and the affected Maya village.
10. The consulted Maya village(s) may decide to leave the arbitration process at any time.
11. All parties may access the Courts to resolve any dispute for which there is a lawful cause of action.

18. Amendment

- * ~~The Government~~, in consultation with the Maya of Southern Belize or designated organization(s), may amend this Protocol.

19. Effective Date and Duration

This Protocol comes into effect when it is filed with the Caribbean Court of Justice and remains in effect until the Government adopts and develops legislative, administrative and or other affirmative measures to identify and protect the rights of the Maya people arising from Maya customary tenure.

Schedule 1- Activities which trigger consultation process

The requirement for community consultations shall apply before the approval of governmental administrative measures related to any activity which may significantly

cause environmental, social, and/or cultural impacts to the Maya people. Activities which trigger the consultation process include:

- Extractive activities
 - Mineral extractions
 - Oil exploration/refineries
 - forestry
 - quarries
 - Abstraction of groundwater
- Building of dams/reservoirs, large-scale drainage projects
- Infrastructure projects
 - Building of bridges and roads
 - Designation of parks/recreation/housing areas
 - Solid waste processing facilities
- Power plants/Renewable Energy Industries
- Electrification and Water-supply projects
- Industrial plants
- Designation of burial sites
- Projects which may impede access to areas regularly utilized by the community (i.e. rivers, dump sites, hunting areas, access paths, etc.)
- Projects involving the conservation of ecosystem/land-use types, destruction of critical habitats, excluding subsistent customary land and resource-use practices
- Projects which may generate significant amounts of pollutants, greenhouse gases, noise
- Projects involving the generation/disposal of dangerous, hazardous, toxic, sanitary waste
- Projects involving the generation of chemical/thermal waste
- Projects which may involve displacement and/or resettlement
- Projects which may result in significant adverse impacts to sacred sites and/or cultural heritage.
- The creation of conservation areas.

Schedule 2

COMMUNITY RESOLUTION

ON

[PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION]

Village: _____

(INSERT PREAMBLE DESCRIBING THE PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION)

Instruction: Where a village member is unable to write in block letters her/his name and signature, she/he may seek the assistance of another villager to write her/his name and thereafter affix her/his thumbprint in the appropriate column which best reflects her/his decision.

No.	Name of Villager (Print Name)	<u>Yes</u> , I consent (Signature/Thumbprint)	<u>No</u> , I do not consent (Signature/Thumbprint)	Date

Total				

Total number of Villagers who are eligible to participate in decision-making:

Total Number of eligible villagers who participated: _____

Total Number of eligible villagers who provided YES consent _____

Total Number of villagers who provided NO consent _____

I, _____, (Alcalde) of the village above, hereby
certify the outcome of the consultation to [PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION].

Signature

Date

I, _____, (Chairperson) of the village above, hereby
certify the outcome of the consultation to [PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION].

Signature

Date

