

12.0 NGO AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

12.1 Public and Private Stakeholder Consultations

Combined, the Toledo District possesses over thirty ± local community based organizations, local grassroots organizations and non-governmental organizations etc. Because of the amount of local organizations to be consulted that represents the interest of the Maya communities in Toledo, a single consultation was carried out with ten local organizations including the National Garifuna Council.

Overall, in terms of NGO consultations, many of the concerns and questions posed from the individuals at the meeting did not entirely speak to main issues and concerns in regards to seismic activities and purported impacts. What was stated however, was that consultations carried out to date were insufficient; and though insufficient, many of the villagers did not understand what was being presented, and that there were many unanswered questions.

The main concerns surrounded the current EIA study being carried out were that the terms of reference was changed to include only that area of the STNP and the buffer area of the STNP, the time frame for the seismic activities, future follow-up with the NGO community, time frame for completing the EIA, land owner benefit from the seismic activity and explanation of seismic impacts.

Three (3) representatives from each of the ten organizations were invited to attend the consultation and to submit at the meeting their main concerns, questions and comments. In all, 15 individuals attended the presentation. A representative from the Department of the Environment was also present at the consultation.

12.2 Stakeholders Consulted

12.2.1 SATIIM

“The Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) was established by indigenous people in southern Belize to provide technical assistance to their communities and

to strengthen their capacity for them to communicate effectively with government agencies and advocate for reform”. Because they are co-managers with the GoB for the STNP this is the most important organization in the region from the perspective of this assessment and every effort was made to properly consult them during the study.

The Goals of SATIIM include:

- to protect the ecological integrity and cultural values of the Sarstoon Temash region;
- to develop and implement a park management strategy that recognizes the historical and ongoing relationship between the Garifuna and Maya indigenous communities and the land and resources of the park;
- to develop and implement a regional land management strategy for the indigenous communities;
- to facilitate community participation in regional conservation/natural resource management and development initiatives;
- to develop alternative conservation strategies that engage and benefit indigenous people.

In all, 15 individuals which consisted of SATIIM’s staff members, a UB representative, and US interns from US and Canada associated with SATIIM attended the consultation. The consultation met its objective to formally meet with SATIIM as co-managers of the STNP.

The purpose of the consultation was to also:

- i) gather additional data for input in the EIA,
- ii) give an overview of proposed project description and
- iii) determine SATIIM’s main concerns as co-managers of the STNP.

Those main areas of concerns in terms of the EIA as noted by SATIIM include the following:

- Assessment models of dry season and the wet season with water quality data
- Specific areas of ecological importance such as the mangrove areas within the Park
- Social and gender issues in regards to newcomers to the areas
- Marginalization of community groups by newcomers
- The extent and magnitude of seismic testing in terms of controlled explosions and what will happen to the holes after use

- Monitoring issues and SATIIM's participation in select proposed activities



Plate 12a: Photo of SATIIM Consultation

12.2.2 Other Relevant NGOs

Ketchi Council of Belize

The Ketchi Council of Belize (KCB) is a grassroots non-governmental organization established to preserve and promote the Kekchi' language and cultural values; and more generally to encourage practicable and sustainable economic developmental projects for the improvement of the poor socioeconomic condition of the indigenous Kekchi' and other peoples in Belize and elsewhere. In 1992, the Ketchi Council of Belize (KCB) was incorporated and legally registered as an acknowledged organization under the Laws of Belize.

TMCC

The Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC) was formed on April 15, 1978 and registered in 1986. The TMCC is a representative body for cooperation among the Mayas of the Toledo

District set up to safeguard and promote the economic, social, and educational interests of the Mayas.

The main objectives of the TMCC include among other things: a) to ensure unity among the Mayas of Toledo; b) to strengthen the concepts of indigenous and cultural rights based upon the principle of quality; c) to represent all Belizean indigenous Mayas of Toledo in international and national forum; d) to be a non-religious, non-governmental and non-profit making organization; e) to assist Maya communities in identifying and implementing projects with the view of creating employment, self-reliance and improvement in the quality of life; f) to take steps for recognition of the Council in Government policy decisions in matters relating to the well being of the Maya people (e.g. – Indian land rights, archeological sites, museums, etc.); g) to promote the Maya languages and to encourage cohesion among Maya through cultural activities; h) to promote activities that will strengthen the cultural base of the indigenous people in their struggle to preserve their values and identity and; i) to promote activities that will strengthen the cultural base.

The National Garifuna Council (NGC)

The National Garifuna Council (NGC) is a non-governmental organization representing the indigenous Garifuna people of Belize. Their mission is to preserve, strengthen and develop the Garinagu culture as well as to promote the economic development of the Garifuna people. In 2001, UNESCO declared the Garifuna language, music and dance a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

The Toledo Maya Women Council (TMWC)

The Toledo Maya Women Council (TMWC) was established in 1997 and registered as a Non-Government Organization in 2000. It was founded by women groups from 26 communities and supported by the TMCC and the KCB. The TMWC was formed to seek partnership in addressing issues, concerns, and needs of its members groups through training, advocacy, networking and representation.

The goals of the TMWC are to: i) strengthen the Toledo Maya Women Council and its institutional capacity and ii) develop a strategic and organizational plan. The mission of the

TMWC in partnership, “will seek to address issues, concerns and needs of its member groups through training, advocacy, networking and representation.”

The TMWC is also a member of the Southern Alliance for Grassroots Empowerment (SAGE) and is also chair of the board of Directors of the Tumul K’in Center of Learning which is a local institution established to develop the human resources of Maya Communities and has as students those young people who has fallen out of the formal education system.

Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA)

The Maya Leaders' Alliance was formed in 1999. The alliance that make up the MLA include: i) the Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC); ii) the Kekchi' Council of Belize (KCB); iii) the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) and; iv) the Toledo Maya Women's Council (TMWC). The president of each representing organization or Council makes up the Alliance.

TIDE

The Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) is a non-governmental organization that fosters community participation in resource management and sustainable use of ecosystems within the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor of southern Belize for the benefit of present and future generations. TIDE was founded in 1997 as a grassroots response to the negative environmental impacts of manatee poaching, and has since grown to become one of the leading conservation organizations in Belize.

The Maya Mountain Marine Corridor (MMMC), which stretches from the lush pristine forests of the Maya Mountains to the white sandy beaches and spectacular array of colors of the Belize Barrier Reef, is a magnificent area that covers almost one million acres of land and 1,000 square miles of sea and is also a part of the Meso-American Biological Corridor

TIDE co-manages the Port Honduras Marine Reserve and Payne’s Creek National Park with the Government of Belize’s Fisheries and Forestry Departments respectively, and manages and owns approximately 30,000 acres of private protected lands. Within the MMMC, TIDE

manages 160 square miles of Marine Reserve, a 36,780 acre National Park. Punta Negra and Monkey River Village are two of the buffer communities within which TIDE works. TIDE also monitors and analyzes data on freshwater ecosystems within the MMMC and educates local communities buffering the protected areas about important sustainable development issues affecting their livelihoods.

Punta Gorda Town Board

Consultation was carried out with the Mayor of the Punta Gorda Town Council. As Punta Gorda is the nearest commercial area, the main concerns include: increased traffic in the town, increased activities within the town limits, security, and fair or standard employment rates for all workers. Also noted was the fact that the crime rate in the Town is very low and increased economic activities may see increased crime rates. The Town Council Act and by-laws is applicable to Punta Gorda Town.

12.3 Consultation with Permitting Agencies

The main concerns highlighted by forestry personnel was that the opening of [any] new cut lines in the area would invite additional illegal activities such as illegal logging, illegal hunting, illegal harvesting of other natural resources etc., and who will monitor an already overburdened area of illegal activities. Also highlighted was that perhaps an education component be built in to educate the villagers so that after the lines have been cut, that they do not go back into these areas to cut cedar, mahogany, and other forest products such as medicinal plants.