

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR MAYA INDIAN WOMEN
IN SOUTHERN BELIZE

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Economic Development for Maya Indian Women in Southern Belize

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This work explores handicraft as a source of economic empowerment for Maya Indian women in southern Belize. It reviews interventions that have been made into these communities by various agencies and the extent to which they helped the women to advance. It explores alternative options for these women, especially the development of their capacity of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, which is an integral part of the Maya way of life.

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CHAPTER I
GENERAL OVERVIEW

This study focusses on Maya women and income generation in southern Belize with specific reference to interventions by local agencies. Although several anthropological studies have been done on the economic survival of households, no comprehensive review has been done on the specific participation of Maya women and handicraft in Belize. With increasing international interest in women's economic issues, particularly in developing countries, the study will hopefully contribute to a growing body of knowledge and practice about women and community based organizing.

Additional issues interwoven in the work are: the impact of international development policies on Maya women; self and organizing, using personal experience as a basis for development and action with others for social change; leadership and conflict in the movement as they relate to power, class, race, gender, and ethnicity relationships; and accountability.

In summary, the work focusses on the empowerment of Maya women in southern Belize, and the effectiveness of agencies to address their needs and expectations. It reviews the parti-

icipation of these women in community groups and the impact of this experience on their lives. Finally, this exploration searches for women's capacity to harness their creative energies to bring about social change.

An overview of the chapters is as follows:

Chapter I - gives an overview of the work.

Chapter II - reviews historical background which contributes to the socio-economic situation of Maya Indian women living in southern Belize.

Chapter III- addresses the current socio-economic situation of Maya Indian women

Chapter IV - reviews the initiatives of Maya women to cope with their socio-economic situation

Chapter V - reviews the interventions from outside agencies to the socio-economic situation through handicraft.

Chapter VI - examines the way forward through handicraft development.

Chapter VII- Summary and Conclusions

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION FOR MAYA
INDIAN WOMEN IN SOUTHERN BELIZE

Maya Indian women in Toledo, Belize are economically poor; they are traditionally subsistence producers and maintainers of their households. They are also well known as artisans. Many attempts have been made over the years beginning in the 1970's to revive indigenous crafts, by supporting women craft producers, through the Ministry of Social Services. The Ministry of Education and other non-government agencies joined along in encouraging craft production in the 1980's with the support of the United States Peace Corps. These efforts were short lived due to problems of marketing and the inability of the villagers to take hold of the business. The Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology and the Belize Rural Women's Association also made some attempts. Outsiders, who do not originate or live in Maya Indian communities often see tremendous potential in their craft, but have not been able to develop it into a viable and sustainable business. They have helped Maya artisans in promoting their work in spite of limited resources such as raw materials, and lack of technical and business skills. Transportation

problems and inaccessibility of markets due to bad roads, weather and communication difficulties make business promotion a great challenge. In addition, the Maya have not been able to develop the political clout to organize in any meaningful way.

In spite of these difficulties, the author of this work is convinced that with proper organization and infra-structural development handicraft can be a viable source of economic development for Maya Indian women. What this means, however, is that the people of Toledo must not be expected to take on the responsibilities of the state. What the women will need to do is to position themselves to negotiate with and make the state accountable for responsibilities. The Maya Indians have been treated by the state as if they do not exist. They will need to address the feeling of powerlessness.

The fact that 75% of the crafts sold locally are imported suggests tremendous potential. In addition, the Belize Tourist Board reported that 66,334 people visited Belize in 1989.

The purpose of this work is to explore ways in which the production of handicraft items by Maya Indian women can serve them as a viable source of income to address poverty and to improve their quality of life.

The study has five major objectives:

1. to review the historical background that accounts for the socio-economic situation of Maya women living in southern Belize.
2. to describe the current socio-economic situation of Maya living in southern Belize.
3. to describe and analyze economic initiatives which the women themselves have implemented in an effort to sustain and improve their own socio-economic position.
4. to describe and analyze some economic initiatives which have been directed towards Maya women by outsiders during the past 10 years, which were intended to improve the socio-economic reality of Maya women in southern Belize.
5. to present ways in which Maya women in southern Belize can make use of the handicraft industry to improve their socio-economic situation using their own initiatives and strengths.

Methodological Approaches of the Study

The methods used to gather data for this work included participant observation, case study, interviewing, ethnography, literature search and archival research. Analysis of the data was done through both the inductive and deductive processes. To aid in analysis, discussions were

also held with persons considered knowledgeable on specific issues, so as to benefit from alternative and challenging points of view.

Using participant observation, I used reactive and non-reactive observation techniques. This included monitoring and evaluation, as well as time allocation studies. Unobtrusive observation was used, such as:

- Behavior trace studies which explore factors like style of housing, clothing worn, social values, etc.
- Archival research was also important in obtaining information about culture and economic processes which evolve over time.
- Interviews using structured questionnaires, oral history and story telling method were also used in this study.

The research addressed the following issues:

- a. Maya women's involvement with handicraft without intervention.
- b. Mayan Indian women's involvement with handicraft, with intervention. and,
- c. Maya indian women consciously and independently developing handicraft for economic benefits.

The case study approach was used to document the two processes of intervention in the community in order to explore who the people were who intervened and why, how they

intervened and why, and what the outcomes of their interventions were.

A naturalistic experiment was done to determine the extent to which women benefitted economically from handicraft activities and what hurdles they needed to overcome in order to market their products effectively

This chapter reviews historical background which contributes to the socio-economic situation of Maya Indian women living in southern Belize.

Historical and physical considerations texture the lives of the Maya Indian women of southern Belize. They have been affected by the origins of this tiny country nestled in Central America, and are recent immigrants to this land. They have also been influenced by the fact that English is the official language spoken, even though their native tongue is Mopan or Kekchi. British settlement in the 17th century brought havoc to their lives.

The very location of Belize, bordered to the north by Mexico and situated east of Guatemala, is significant for Maya Indian women in exploring economic development possibilities with handicraft. Its size of 174 miles in length and 58 miles in width is important when one considers that it is twice the size of Jamaica, and larger than El Salvador.

It is also useful to note that due to settlement by the British, the country has political ties to other English speaking Caribbean countries of the British Commonwealth. At

the same time, the young nation, which became independent from Great Britain in 1981, embraces cultural and geopolitical characteristics of Spanish speaking Central America.

The country's topography and climate discouraged European settlement. The swampy mosquito ridden coastline was too much of a challenge for them to negotiate. In addition, the existence of a small population did not make it an exciting prospect for exploitation.

When the Europeans met the Maya in the 15th century, they were remarkably impressed with their magnificent buildings and aesthetic achievements, accomplished with rudimentary technology. It is significant that the Maya have existed as a people for four millennia (Benson, 1977, p. 2). The fact that they had achieved heights of civilization, including incredible stone structures, paintings and their own writing system, was overwhelming for the Europeans.

They tried to deny the Maya ownership of their heritage, and attempted to attribute the magnificence of their civilization to others. They destroyed much of the Maya culture. Bishop Landa's burning of the Maya books is an example of the repression that occurred in Maya history. Although his accounts of Maya life were incredible, it would have been valuable to have had the books. (Benson, 1977, p. 3)

The pages of Maya history during the contact period are filled with episodes of this kind; from then until now, the Maya way of life has been challenged by interventions from

outside, which have sometimes been violent and destructive. The challenge to the Maya people has been how to cope with domination, and how to recapture and preserve their capacity to overcome odds, in facing the modern world. Modern civilization has brought good as well as harmful things. Is it possible for them to select those things that they find useful from the "modern world"? And where and how is it helpful for Maya Indian women to have these two worlds meet? Do they have any control over the meeting of the worlds?

The geographic area being considered in this study is the Toledo District. The country is divided into six regions, which are called districts. The Toledo District, the most southern, is the home of the Mopan Maya and Kekchi people of Belize. It is lush with natural resources and human potential, as we shall see. The Maya were not always settled there. They were in Belize before the Europeans arrived. The boundaries of the first Maya settlement were not clearly defined by the Spaniards, since they visited Belize sporadically and never really settled there. The Maya were believed to have been in what is now known as Belize from 2000 B.C. They persisted until the 16th century when the Europeans, specifically the Spanish and British drove, them back by warfare, disease and forced settlement.

Belize was settled by the British in the 17th century for the sole purpose of exporting timber to England. The country was dominated by this activity for three centuries

(Bolland, 1977, p. 25). Agriculture was completely neglected and discouraged for many years of Belize's history. For one thing, they settled on the swampy coastline areas, where soils were poor. The places where wells for water were better were inaccessible. Agriculture was not encouraged until the 19th century, because the British and the Spaniards had signed an agreement allowing for settlement without problems, as long as agricultural plantations were not developed. In addition, climatic conditions of drought or flood made farming even more risky (Bolland, 1977, p. 2).

The settlers' approach to nature and the environment was initially an aggressive one, which involved taking control through destruction. The tropical rain forest environment made Belize a difficult place in which to settle.

The Maya who had been settled in the area for such a long time were and still are agriculturalists. They were more in harmony with nature than the Europeans. The Maya, who were already developing agriculture, were not encouraged to do so but were rather coerced into providing labour for the plantation.

The Toledo District was settled by the Mopan and Manche Chol Maya (Bolland, 1977, p. 18). They were overcome in 1603 by Spanish invasion, and were subsequently converted to Christianity. They revolted in 1633, burning churches and abandoning the towns where they had been forced to live.

The first British settlers in Belize were mostly illiterate. Initially, there was little contact between the Maya and the British (Bolland, 1977, p. 24) The Maya lived in isolated areas because, based on past experiences, they kept as far away from the British as they could. It was in the 18th and 19th centuries when the British went in search of mahogany in the forests that trouble really began. The British viewed the Maya as a serious threat to the forest reserves. In 1857, Superintendent Seymour expressed great concern that the Maya would destroy the mahogany trees (Bolland, 1977, p. 130).

The Maya were forced further into the interior and became controlled by the British. They were not allowed to own land, but had to pay a yearly rent for the land which they occupied. This was administered through the alcalde system. In 1864 the Alcalde system was developed by the British, giving them administrative control over the Maya. The alcaldes were locally selected representatives acknowledged by the government, who acted as enforcers of the government policy. Thus, the Maya reservations became defined. One contradiction was that land was made available in the south to attract Confederate refugees from the American Civil war to develop agriculture in the Toledo District. The idea was to increase the number of whites in the population.

One hundred years ago, the Mopan Maya were in the Peten Region of Guatemala and many of them still live there (Ulrich & Ulrich 1966, p. 251). The original immigrants to San Antonio, and Toledo came from San Luis, Guatemala, 20 miles west of the Belize/Guatemala border (Gregory, 1972, p. 12). They arrived in Belize, fleeing from the oppression of landlords, in the 1880's. They first settled in Pueblo Viejo and then developed San Antonio.

In 1867, Lieutenant Governor Austin declared that all Indians needed to pay rent on land which was crown land. Beginning in 1972, they were not allowed to own land; but were confined to reservations, while private landowners of vast tracts of land remained undisturbed.

The Kekchi are another group of Maya who migrated to Belize from Alta Vera Paz, Guatemala. They settled in the south and south-west of San Antonio (Rambo, 1962; Romney, 1959 p. 38). The Mopan and Kekchi ethnic groups are the focus of this study. It is, however, useful to consider them in the context of other ethnic groups in the country, as well as Belize in general, since they are affected by them.

A few observations about other ethnic groups present in the Toledo District will put Maya Indian women in perspective. The English settlers imported African slaves to work on the forest plantations. The slaves mixed with the British settlers and became known as the Creole (Waddell, 1981).

The Garifuna were originally called Black Caribs. They are a mixture of runaway African slaves and indigenous Carib Indians (Solien, 1959; Taylor, 1951). They migrated to Belize from St. Vincent in the 1800's (Burdon, 1981). They were concentrated in the southern towns of Dangriga and Punta Gorda. They are often school teachers, fishermen, and farmer, while others worked with the government and some as civil servants.

Chinese came to Belize from Amoy in 1865, to work on sugar estates for the British Honduras Company. Today, they are involved in commercial activities. The East Indians came as indentured labourers on sugar estates around the same time (Osborn, 1982). Belize has a heterogenous population. Seven of the eleven ethnic groups are represented in the Toledo District. These are: Mopan, Kekchi Maya, Creoles, Mestizo, Garifuna, East Indians, and Chinese. The Toledo district is the least populated district in Belize, having 0.38 persons per sq. km. (Osborn, 1982).

Since the British settlers did not plan to settle in Belize permanently, they did not develop appropriate infrastructure or facilities for living in the country. The country did not even become recognized as a colony until 1862, even though they had been settled there since the 17th century. Initially, they operated from temporary camps located on the coastal strip on the north. Once they went further into the interior, the camps became located in the

forests. The temporary style of living became permanent for six months at a time, usually without family and usually all male, colonial master working side by side with slave.

The logwood was conveniently transported by means of rivers and lagoons. Therefore, there was no need for the development of roads and other forms of communication until the 1930's. To this day, many parts of the country have poor communication systems as a result. (Bolland, 1977, p. 20)

Until the mid 19th century, the British settlement operated like a trading post attached to a massive timber reserve. This expanded through the years, resulting in focussing on the port at the expense of the interior. Most major commercial development continues to exist in Belize City to this day. Attempts at decentralization have been difficult. The new capital of Belmopan, built in 1972, is an attempt at coping with this reality.

The Toledo District is where the Maya are located. It is generally known that this is a difficult place to reach and to live in due to inadequate roads and communication as well as undeveloped infrastructure. The people in this region are considered isolated and backward by other Belizeans. They are, however, able to feed and sustain themselves, using the resources in their natural environment, better than most other ethnic groups. Toledo is still quite disconnected from the rest of the country, since some of the roads are only

passable during the dry season. Rather than four seasons, Belize has two: the rainy season and the dry season.

The Maya were perceived by the British as a serious threat to the settlement and the logwood business. They resented the type of farming which the Maya did, and considered it wasteful and inefficient. Milpa or swidden agriculture, which they practiced, required large tracts of land. These people were provided with limited support and facilities. In comparison, numerous development schemes have been supported in the Toledo District for people from other parts of the world.

It was not until the 1940's that the Maya in Toledo were encouraged to engage in agriculture. This coincided with the decline of the logwood industry. The idea was to cut down on imported food items (Schackt, 1986, p. 59). This policy was considered safe because Toledo did not have logging or plantation business at that time. It was only then that some money was invested in building roads, churches and schools.

The Mopan Maya have had a long history of being independent small farmers. They have never been plantation laborers (Schackt, 1986, p. 59). The traditions of the Mopan Maya in Belize have been less disrupted by colonialism than those of the Kekchi.

Agricultural production has not been supported to any great extent. Presently, 60% of the food consumed in the country is imported. A large percentage of the food produced

locally comes from the Toledo district. This is the reason why it is referred to as the "bread basket" of the country. This fact does not mean, however, that the district is supported or validated in any special way for this.

Although the Kekchi and Mopan are distinct cultural groups, for purposes of this study they will be considered together in reviewing economic opportunities for women through handicraft, since the issues for consideration will be similar.

The common feature of both Mopan and Kekchi is that they practice the milpa system of shifting agriculture. This has been central to the way of life of other people, and an integral part of their culture. Much controversy has emerged over the years around this, caused by government officials and newcomers to the area wanting to exert control over land use.

The major difference between the Kekchi and Mopan Maya is that the Kekchi have chosen in the past to live in villages on the edge of the lowland. This is in order to have access to better soils for their maize crop. The Mopan, on the other hand, live in hill areas with the choice of farming on slopes or bowls and stream sides.

The major villages being considered in this study are: San Antonio, San Jose, Crique Jute, Santa Cruz, and Laguna. These are areas where the author had contact with women of Mopan and Kekchi extraction. San Antonio will be discussed more frequently, because it is the hub, so to speak, of Maya

Indian development in the south. From 1883-1884, the Mopan Maya settled in what is now known as Pueblo Viejo (meaning Old Village) and then established San Antonio (Thompson, 1930, p. 38).

Each village has a central plaza area, where houses are clustered together. The fields, which are pivotal to survival of the communities, are within walking distance. Their location is dependent on soil fertility.

One of the distinguishing features of Maya Indian society, and the Toledo District in general, is that the people produce most of what they eat. They also use the resources of the natural vegetation, such as the trees and plants, to make calabashes, gourds, nets, string bags and baskets. Recently, they have started using the red earth clay again to make pots and other items.

The Mayas refer to their farm as the milpa. Most milpas are located close to the river. An annual land tax is paid of approximately \$3.00 U.S. The tax is usually collected by the Alcalde of the village. He is considered a village chief, and is always male.

The remarkable use of natural resources is magnificently expressed in the style of the Maya houses. They have a thatched roof and a smoothed dirt, often mud, floor. The corner posts are made of hard woods gathered from the forest. Hammocks are tied from the beams for sleeping and resting. There are a few planks across the beams of the roof for

storage. Logs and planks placed against the wall are used as benches. It is no accident that the practice of producing traditional crafts has been progressively eroded over the years. The fact that the people continue to survive suggests that there has been some reconciliation between their world and the modern world.

The Maya in southern Belize have come in contact with people from all over the country and the world who have tried to introduce schemes or ideas under the guise of improving the Mayas' lives. They were often not consulted about these ventures, but were more frequently subjected to them " for their own good".

The opening up of the villages from being isolated to having more contact with other people came with roads, the building of schools, and the provision of social services such as health centers. The government's encouragement of intensive farming is another example of a dramatic change which affected the Mayas' lives. This wooed them into producing cash crops of rice, beans, and corn for markets which were uncertain. Many times when they produced the crops, the markets were not available, or the prices were lower than expected. In addition, it would often take the government a long time to pay the farmers, even after encouraging them to produce in certain quantities.

Historically, some of the major intervenors have been the churches. The Roman Catholic religion was the predominant

religious force in southern Belize. Although the Mopan Maya have been steadfast in their conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, the Kekchi have leaned more to the Protestant denomination. It is interesting to note that they have also kept parts of their indigenous religion (Wilk, 1981). Maya religion today is a syncretization of Christian Catholic and ancient Maya religious beliefs. This is a useful point to note in looking at intervention by outsiders for economic development purposes among the Maya.

Outsiders have managed to extract what they wanted from the Toledo District, make a profit, not develop the area or the people and leave. I refer to outsiders as not only foreigners, but also Belizeans from other ethnic groups who do not live in the community. As Wilk notes, first the source of exploitation was mahogany, then cacao and coffee, and finally rubber. Today, we can include pigs, rice, and beans. In spite of all these activities, up until the 1960's there were limited roads and infra-structure, and few formally educated Maya indian people, much less women. The government still does not invest much in roads and schools in this area, thus reinforcing the stigma of backwardness and isolation.

A Kekchi liaison officer was sent to the area in 1953 as a result of reports sent to England by a survey team about the deplorable health conditions (Wilk, 1981, p. 69). He developed a number of successful projects, such as a regular boat service and the building of an airstrip. The

introduction of roads to the region, linking Punta Gorda to Belize City in the 60's, brought increased mobility. The recent expansion of the roads makes the area even more accessible, and will affect the development of the environment (Wilk, 1984). In the 1970's, as in the 1920's, there was prospecting for oil. By the 1980's, these projects were abandoned. These schemes and speculations did provide some employment for the people in the area. They pulled out of subsistence farming to participate in them, and fortunately, were able to go back to that when the ventures failed.

The villagers resorted to marijuana production, which they perceived was a more lucrative product in the 80's for the U.S. market. This was very quickly cut short when the anti drug campaign intensified, with the spraying of the chemical paraquat to kill the plants.

The concept and practice of community development had an important impact on the Mayan concept of their world. The Roman Catholic Church played a major role in introducing this concept and practice. The priests were instrumental in establishing schools in the region, first at the primary and then at the secondary level. Interestingly, they mostly used the labour of Garifuna teachers to pioneer education in these communities. The priests can also be credited for further work beyond the saving of souls, in exploring sustainable economic options with the Maya. They introduced credit unions and cooperative development in the region.

Father Knopp, a legendary figure from the 1040's throughout the south of Belize, including the Stann Creek district, is still talked about with reverence today. He assisted the people of San Antonio in obtaining a truck. It is said that he called all the people together and discussed their problem with transportation. He helped them in getting a loan (without revealing the source). The loan would be paid back through the services provided. None of the villagers was hired to collect fares. The business was successful (Gregory, 1972, p. 58). Father Knopp wanted the villagers to learn how to run the business themselves. He did this by forming an all male alcalde's council. They went on later to establish a cooperative, called the Mayan Cooperative Ltd. (Gregory, 1972, p. 58). The driver of the truck eventually became the manager of the cooperative (Gregory, 1972, p. 60).

In 1955 a credit union was established in San Antonio. The manager of the cooperative was on the advisory committee of the credit union, which made small loans to the members. It seemed that very few villages really understood how the cooperative really worked. The younger men, it seemed, were the ones who were more attuned to its running (Gregory, 1972, p. 60). It was noted that in some transactions which required waiting for the payment of money, there was much dissatisfaction. This occurred, for example, when pigs were to be sold in Belize City.

In 1957, the manager of the cooperative resigned, and withdrew his shares which were a large amount. His friends and relatives also left along with him. He opened his own business which was similar to the coop's. At the same time, the priest who was advising the coop arranged for monies to be withdrawn to repay loans obtained from the church. Thus the cooperative crumbled (Gregory, 1972, p. 62).

By 1958, the only things functioning in the cooperative were the truck transport business, and the buying and selling of hogs. The rice mill had closed down. The new manager was incompetent. Villagers felt that the former manager had stolen their money to establish himself in business. Eventually, the assets of the cooperative had to be used to meet the loan repayment demands of the government. The church bought the building which had been used for the rice mill. A local villager bought the village ship. It is not clear what eventually happened to the poultry flock, the truck transport, or the hog buying and selling businesses. The cooperative was liquidated in 1963 (Gregory, 1972, p. 63).

In considering the development of handicraft as a business prospect, this history is chilling; in that, it suggests the need to be sensitive to underlying tensions within the community. Many lessons can be learned from this.

Gregory comments that the development of community government and participation in decisions about community welfare is shrouded in uncertainty due to the lack of

historical records (1972, p. 28). There were two types of leadership as defined by the villagers: officers of the law, and officers of the church. These were the mechanisms in place connected with the outside world. Consultation was held within the village amongst its residents prior to the arrival of the visitor or official. During a public meeting, several issues might be discussed regarding the maintenance of the church and its grounds, as well as preparing for the visit of a priest. In this case, each villager would be asked to contribute food.

The law officer tended to village legal and government matters. He was the spokesperson for the community on the rare occasions that officials visited. On a day to day basis, he heard legal cases. The alcalde was also responsible for cleaning and maintenance of the village. This was done through the fauna system, during which all men who were capable helped (Gregory, 1972, p. 28).

In 1969, the Village Council system was introduced into Maya Indian communities in the Toledo District. This was done under the Social Development Department of the government. At that time, this Department's center was located in Belize City. Eventually, other units of the department were expanded in the urban centers of other districts. Thus, the center for the Toledo District is located in Punta Gorda. Initially, the focus of this department was on social welfare development, which was

directed mostly to women and the indigent. The officials working in this department were not usually of Maya or Kekchi descent. More recently, the personnel has become more mixed. The approach to providing service was to visit the community periodically. The possibility of a visit was highly dependent on the availability of transportation. The Social Development Department for a long time has been one of the lowest budgeted government departments.

The introduction of the Village Council in the 1960's was not entirely understood by most of the villagers. Many did not join the Association as a result. There were interpersonal problems within the leadership and quite a lot of hostility emerged (Gregory, 1972, p. 73). It is important to appreciate this dismal picture, because it becomes significant and relevant when we review the attempts at developing handicraft as an economic option for women in these communities.

CARE and the Peace Corps were also working in the Toledo District in the 1960's. Initially, CARE was responding to social needs after the devastation of the country by Hurricane Hattie on October 31, 1961. After the disaster, they continued to do welfare work, by providing food for schools and hospitals. They also provided tools and equipment for economic self help activities. There was little connection between CARE and the Peace Corps (Gregory, 1972, p. 73). In fact, this was to be the pattern with

interventions from outside for a long time. There would be little interaction amongst them, even though they would be working in the same village and with the same people. It would have seemed critical to an observer of this process for the various groups and organizations wanting to "help" Maya Indian communities to arrive at some collective strategy. Except for the Peace Corps and the churches, most of these agencies provided their assistance by remote control. Of course, there was a stream of anthropologists and other researchers who descended on the people, and like development schemers, extracted what they wanted and could with little regard for more than the exotic. In many cases, their research findings, papers, thesis, and dissertations, remain in their countries, with not even a courtesy copy sent to Belize's archives.

Those documents are valuable for those interested in helping Maya to improve their quality of life, However, even when research material has been available to the country, people involved in community development have not made use of it. The arrogance and ignorance often has been due to ethnocentrism and paternalistic attitudes towards the Maya. It has also been due to the discipline of social welfare and social development, which has premised the "we" and "they" dichotomy. It is further due to the Maya themselves who buy into the "we" and "they" dichotomy.

It has generally been known among Belizean government officials that to be posted in Toledo can be similar to a posting in Siberia. This has been in contrast to the warm friendly and welcoming way in which the Maya relate to visitors, from whom they expect to get some benefits. They go through elaborate preparations when expecting a visitor to their community.

A review of the Peace Corps work in the Toledo District, and in San Antonio in particular, is useful in terms of exploring some of the issues related to community economic development among the Maya. For several years, the Peace Corps workers lived in Punta Gorda and traveled out to the villages. In 1968, the first volunteer and her husband went to live in San Antonio. She worked with the village nurse and the women. She taught the women sewing skills with the help of the village teachers. The couple also started a vegetable garden (Gregory, 1972, p. 74).

The female Peace Corps volunteer thought that it might be useful to convert the traditional embroidery skills of the girls and women into a source of income for them (Gregory, 1972, p. 74). All women in Mopan Maya Indian Villages in southern Belize have learned the traditional embroidery by the time they are 12 years old (if not before). The Peace Corps volunteer showed samples of the women's work to shops in Belize City. One shop keeper felt that the product could sell. However, the volunteer's time was up and she had to

return to the United States, at which point the effort ceased. What was needed was to have the women themselves negotiate directly in Belize City and to have someone there who would be willing to promote their work. A major concern for community economic development has been capacity building.

At that time, it was a very rare experience for Maya Indian women to travel to Belize City. There was one woman who might have been able to function in this way, but family responsibilities made it difficult for her to do so, if she even considered it (Gregory, 1972, p. 75). This first glimmer of the possibility for Maya Indian women to enter the modern world might seem short lived, but it did sow seeds of hope for a positive future.

Prior to that, the outreach to Maya Indian women had been sporadic, by the Social Development Department home economics officers who taught them cooking skills and some sewing. The attitude tended to be that these people needed to be uplifted. There was little if any acknowledgment of their cultural strengths or potential. The focus was on hygiene and health improvement.

Because health was a major area of intervention in these villages, and because most of the residents did not use latrines, the government went on an intensive campaign to remedy the situation. Its efforts turned out to be a disaster, because they did not take the time to try to be

sensitive to the needs of the people, as well as their way of life. The condescending attitude of Belizeans, in feeling that the Maya are nasty, did not help in any way; but perpetuated paternalistic approaches.

Health officials rarely made attempts to work with local healers. However, two positive initiatives were: the presence of the clinic and a Maya Indian nurse in San Antonio in improving the conditions of health in the community and the traditional birth attendants program. Since there were no doctors in these villages, there was heavy dependence on nurses and local healers including traditional birth attendants. The government had developed a national program in the 1970's which validated the work of these local midwives; in addition, they were provided training in the hospital setting for a few months, and were also supervised when they returned to their communities. This was a positive move in terms of promoting people's participation.

In 1975, the United Nations declared the International Decade for Women. During this time, governments all over the world were being asked to consider the situation of women in their countries, and to explore ways in which conditions could be improved for women. It was generally agreed by the heads of states that women were far behind men in the development process. There was much talk then about the integration of women into development, and bringing them into the mainstream.

I was invited by the Belize government at the time to review, along with community development leadership from government and non government organizations, the situation of women in Belize. A number of things emerged from this consultancy which occurred between 1978 and 1979. It is useful to note that the discussions about the consultancy started in Barbados at a conference of delegates from the English speaking Caribbean, to discuss the status of handicraft in the region, and how things could be improved. The meeting had been organized by the Women and Development Unit, Extra-Mural Department, University of the West Indies.

After listening to a litany of problems in the industry for two days, there followed detailed discussions referring to community workers' insensitivity to the needs of women, who were some of the major producers. One major critique was of social welfare and patronizing attitude of social change agents towards helping women with limited access to income.

In the 1970's, the Government of Belize had the political will to move into new directions, particularly regarding rural women, and especially Maya Indian women. Political will was not enough, however. There was no blueprint. These were pioneers floundering in the dark on a uncharted course.

Who were the players? From the government perspective, they were the Social development Department, with dynamic leadership that knew how to interact and negotiate with the

bureaucracy. Also present in the Department was an enthusiastic Peace Corps Volunteer who was anxious to see change for people, particularly women, happen fast in Belize. She wrote project proposals and raised money that matched the ideas that were fast emerging at the time. The problem is that she taught no local person.

The other players were the leadership of the non-government sector. These included the Belize Christian Council and many other social services organizations that had dabbled in crafts and other service activities over the years. Most of these organizations were either in the former Belize City or Belmopan (the new capital) and their activities had been focussed in these locations. The question of how decentralization and outreach were going to take place would puzzle them for a long time to come.

One of the positive things that emerged out of these consultations was an ad hoc committee was that formed including government and non-government leadership, to continue exploring some of the issues of community development nationally. It was to be a think tank. The committee concept broke down very quickly. For one thing, the dynamic leadership from the government side resigned and left the country. Secondly, the marriage between government and non-government organizations was an unhappy and strained one. What emerged was the Belize Organization for Women and Development, which was essentially the non-government

organization's arm, based in Belize City. The government went on to establish a woman's desk that started off by research into the conditions of women in Belize. This was later upgraded to a Woman's Bureau in 1980 and later a Woman's Department.

I would like to discuss the operations of the Social Development Department at that time, especially as related to women and handicraft development in rural communities, before exploring the implications of the shift to women and development in the 1970's and 1980's. The Social Development Department was formed as a welfare agency to respond to national uprisings in the 1940's due to the poor living conditions in the colony. The Colonial Government had formed a Royal Commission of Inquiry (under Lord Moyne) to look into the situation.

The officials of relevance to rural women in this Department were the welfare officers, who provided some financial help for women who became widows or needed child maintenance, for example. For many years, the approach was to give limited handouts. Other services directed to women were training for childbearing and rearing. Women were, for example, taught how to make baby clothes and how to care for babies. They were also taught how to cook dishes which were often alien to their culture. These skills were taught like hobbies or spare time activities, and were very British-

oriented. Later on, as locals went to study in the United States, the approaches became American-oriented.

In fairness to these well intentioned officials, their preparation for the job rarely included any historical or anthropological studies or orientation for any kind. There were occasional attempts to teach Maya Indian Women basketry or pottery, but this was not the norm.

The other major consideration is that all the home economics officers were women who limited their own potentials. Their world was limited by domesticity. They defined women including themselves in the domestic sphere, and they were paid to reinforce this mentality and practice of domestication in other women. As professionals, they were treated with less respect than their male counterparts. Since their profession was less valued, they were paid less, and got fewer benefits. They were not provided with sufficient tools and means with which to work. They therefore had great difficulty in doing their jobs. Many of them were not moved to hitch-hike to villages or to run the risk of staying in these villages overnight and suffer the inconveniences. So, it was easier to stay in Punta Gorda, which was difficult enough. What this meant was that Maya Indian women had little interaction with women from other ethnic groups and had limited opportunity to learn new skills. With the lack of entrepreneurial training or experience, how were they going to be effective?

A major responsibility of the Social Development Department was the development of handicrafts. In spite of several attempts, including restructuring, it was difficult for them to develop this into a viable business. There were many reasons for this. For one thing, the department was not structured to have the capability to do this. The staff had little or no experience in running a business.

The Cottage Industry Center was located in Belize City, and operated as a shop to sell the products of local producers, mostly of basketry, shell and wooden items for sale to the general public. It would seem that such an industry would have become vibrant with the upswing of tourism in Belize.

As far as Maya Indian Women in Toledo were concerned, the Peace Corps situated at the Social Development Department in Belmopan began promoting handicraft as an income-earning activity and an attempted major outreach to rural women. A woman of the Creole ethnic group who had lived abroad for many years, and who had returned home specifically to take up the position, was appointed and trained as director.

It is important to note that in 1981, Belize was going through dramatic political upheavals. There were at this time attempts by the British and U.S. governments to settle a longstanding dispute between Belize and Guatemala through an agreement called the "Heads of Agreement". This proposal wrought havoc throughout the nation, resulting in widespread

street demonstrations, particularly by youth. Many of them were thrown into jail and a state of emergency was declared, as well as martial law. Although the agreement was effectively derailed as a result of widespread popular discontent, the nation received political independence on September 21, 1981, wounded, unhealed and disunited.

During this time, discontented public officials had taken sides, mostly against the government. As a result, many citizens viewed independence with mixed feelings. The country was rife with hostility and divisions, and the the People's United Party (PUP) that had enjoyed uninterrupted rule for at least three decades was now crumbling.

It is unlikely that Maya Indian women in remote Toledo were aware of these rumblings taking place in the rest of the country. However, they became affected by them in several ways. For one thing, the desperate government was groping for ways in which to prove to the nation that it was serious about the people's welfare. Women and development became a catch theme for politicians and so did income-generating activities.

To prove how dedicated they were to this cause, the government hired a woman farmer from a village in the Belize rural area to pioneer activities with women in rural Belize. To say that this woman had not completed her primary school education is not to demean her, but to indicate that she and the other women were being set up for frustration. This woman

had very good intentions and was passionate about improving the conditions of life of rural people, and women in particular. She was then the mother of eleven children, later thirteen. She was pregnant at the time that she was working with the department. She was an unusual person, because she was very articulate about change needed in rural communities and did not hesitate to challenge anyone about it.

Working in the Toledo district, she challenged the very style of the other field officers of the department. I had met "Maureen" in the early days when the government and non government-organization leaderships were talking with each other. The University of the West Indies Extra-Mural Department and the Belize Agricultural Society had initiated some outreach sessions with rural farmers throughout the country and we had both participated in these to consider how to improve quality of farm family life. It became a glaring fact that we were the only two women present at these meetings.

Maureen was determined to equip herself to negotiate for resources and she wanted to learn how to develop organizational skills. She became an apprentice with me. At this time I was a consultant with the Council of Voluntary Social Services (CVSS), which is an umbrella network of major voluntary organizations in the country, and which was restructuring and redefining its role. It is interesting to note that the same Peace Corps woman who had been instrumental in getting the Women's Bureau established in the

Social Development Department was responsible for hiring me. She had also spearheaded the outreach by the university to small farmers.

This important Peace Corps woman was Nadia. While Maureen was trying to sharpen her skills for community development work, Nadia approached her about two jobs. One was to create and manage the Breast is Best League, which was being formed to promote breast feeding, and the other was the job which she eventually took with the Ministry of Social Services. By this time, the former Social Development Director, who had pulled Nadia and me into this stream in the first place, had resigned, and Nadia was making decisions and doing things within the department which were rubber stamped by officials; she wrote letters, called meetings and so on.

Back in the Toledo district, Maya Indian women suddenly were discovered. Maureen romanticized their way of life and creativity and went full force into exploring income-generating activities with them; she worked along with the Peace Corps workers who were living in the village, as well as with Nadia, to groom a Maya Indian woman from the village of San Antonio, whom we will call Arlene, to organize the women for business. The Director of the Women's Bureau, as it was called then, visited San Antonio. The women were interviewed on radio, which was an unusual event. These were rare moments when the voices of Maya Indian women were heard on national radio. It is possible that the women in many of these

villages did not hear this, either because they did not have radios in their households, or because the villages cannot catch the national station.

By this time, Maya Indian women from these villages had begun to get the sense that their embroidery work was considered valuable by outsiders and some had individually tried to peddle their strips. Since most women can sew the embroidery, the few visitors to a village could be swamped with these.

The young women who had formerly been trained to sew by the Peace Corps teachers of the late 60's had not forgotten the potential of their work. None of these women, however, had taken up the challenge of exploring sales in Belize City, because of the distance to travel and the anticipated problems with the women on whose behalf they would do this. In addition, it was most unusual for them to leave their village.

By the time we get to the 1980's and the entrance of Maureen, Nadia and the Women's Department, attempts were being made to market Maya crafts more aggressively. The point has been already made elsewhere that until very recently, few networking links were made between anthropologists and community workers to harness their knowledge.

Gregory (1972, p. 122) noted that for a business to emerge using Maya Indian handicraft, produced by women, there

would need to be a broker who would have working capital available to pay the women on the spot for their embroidery. This, he suggested, would avoid problems concerning ownership, pricing etc. A most appropriate person for this would be an unmarried female without dependents who would be free to travel. Another point that he made which I consider interesting is the willingness of the women themselves to break out of the traditional mold to explore economic possibilities on their own. He cites the example of a woman who learned to sew western style modern dresses. The following chapters will outline how the scenario actually unfolded.

CHAPTER III
THE CURRENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF MAYA INDIAN WOMEN IN
SOUTHERN BELIZE

This chapter addresses the present socio-economic situation of Maya Indian women. Several things within their history have reinforced low self esteem and lack of acknowledgement of their worth as human beings. History has created a cycle of abuse of the people, which has allowed poverty to persist. In order to be changed, the situation of economic deterioration needs to be understood.

The situation continues because the Maya are not able to effectively influence decision making at the State level. There is, for example, no Maya representative from the south in the National Assembly, the highest decision-making body in the country. Recently, someone from the Garifuna ethnic group from the Toledo District was elected as a Minister of Government. His election suggests strong possibilities for the Maya people since he grew up in their communities as a child and has been sensitive to their needs in the past. Previous to this, he had worked actively with non-government organizations in the south.

The challenge of improving quality of life in the Toledo District is intense, since social conditions continue

to deteriorate fast, and physical and human resources are not being developed rapidly enough to cope with this. Although some Maya villages have electricity, for example, only 24.6% of the people can afford to pay to have the service installed in their homes. Affordability has to do with access to income. Only a few business establishments in the village of San Antonio, Toledo have electricity. This influences the conditions under which children learn, particularly those who commute to the only high school in the district, which is located in Punta Gorda. Homes are lit by candle and/or kerosene lamps. Living conditions affect quality of life, as indicated by access to potable drinking water and housing conditions. The Toledo District has a very high birth rate. The infant mortality rate of 27.8% is the second highest in the country.

Houses are made of thatch, limestone and mud. Although fairly comfortable for the Maya, they can be upgraded using appropriate technology to minimize the cold and dampness of the floor during the wet season. Sanitation continues to be a problem; people do not build the houses with toilets, but use the bushes and the rivers for waste. There is an increasing threat of a cholera epidemic; in 1992 cholera cost the lives of a number of people in this district. The disease threatens the country presently, as deaths have already been reported in Guatemala. Health personnel from Belize have crossed the border to help in Guatemala in trying to stave off the

disease. All necessary precautions are being taken. However, it is sometimes difficult to convince people of the importance of boiling water, especially when it means using additional fuel, usually firewood, and fetching water from far away. Both these maintenance tasks are the responsibility of women and children. The prevalence of diarrhea in the Toledo District is an indication of this problem.

The 1991 Belize Family Health Survey Final Report of May, 1992, came up with some interesting findings.

First of all, in the relationship to knowledge of contraception, it was noted the rural women and women of low formal education and women who were Maya or Kekchi were the ones who knew the least about contraception (25% of those interviewed). This is not surprising, since the basic philosophy of the culture is that the women should have all the children they can. They have the highest fertility rate in the country. Forty-six percent of the Maya and Kekchi women reported delivering their babies at home. The cost of going to have babies in Punta Gorda, where the hospital is located, is too high. In addition, these hospitals are managed by nurses from other ethnic groups, who do not understand or appreciate Maya practices and beliefs regarding childbirth. The Maya women are used to the birthing stool and stooping during labour, while in the hospital the tendency is to lie on a bed on one's back. Many stories about this clashing of cultures have often been told within this

context. According to the study, sixty percent of all deliveries in the country were performed by nurse midwives, and 17% were delivered by physicians. It was also reported that one fifth of the deliveries were attended by traditional birth attendants. Maya and Kekchi women were noted as the lowest users of contraceptives, compared to other ethnic groups.

The survey noted that 95% of the women interviewed received prenatal care for live births. There was a correlation between low formal educational attainment and delivery of babies at home. The Maya and Kekchi women were most likely to be attended by traditional birth attendants, and they were also the ones to breastfeed their babies most.

In respect to living conditions, it is noted that the highest incidences of disease occur under poverty. The prevalence of diarrhea cases is a strong indication of this. The Maya and Kekchi experience high incidences. This is linked to the number of rooms in the house and the availability of potable drinking water.

The Maya and Kekchi interviewed in the survey were the ones with the least knowledge about AIDS.

Health services are deteriorating nationally and primary health care programs in the Toledo District are badly in need of support. Serious health problems can only be dealt with in Belmopan or in Belize City. The Belize City Hospital operating theatre was recently closed because of glaring

inadequacies. Women's health services in the country are limited to three gynecologists who work for the government, located in Belize City. Other health services are costly. Even when women are not charged they must pay for transportation, accommodations and food costs outside of the villages.

As a result of this situation, there is heavy reliance on traditional healers and birth attendants in the villages. During the period 1985 to 1989, the national primary health care program was diminished financially due to the requirements of the International Monetary Fund. More work needs to be done to support the healers who are responding to critical health needs, and who are indeed primary health care workers.

Education is provided only at the primary school level in the villages. The only high school in the district is located in Punta Gorda. Many students commute daily to school. Most parents have great difficulty meeting the cost of sending their children to high school even though the recently elected government provides free education at the high school level. School books, uniforms and transportation costs are not provided. In the Belize District, 22.9% of the people reached the secondary level; in Toledo 6.2% did so.

Vocational training opportunities are only available in the Belize District. Some 4H training is available in Belmopan, which is several miles away from the Toledo district. One needs to consider the relevance of the education and skills training available, accessibility and

how much is being provided for rural communities. The question is the extent to which these training facilities are responding to the needs of the environment, even if the people were able to make use of what is offered. The reality also is that the limited spaces are not sufficient for the number of potential students. Education presently does not fully take into consideration the needs of Maya people. Teaching is conducted in English; Maya culture, history and language is not taught in schools, nor are those of other ethnic groups in the country.

Skills training is needed in leadership, assertiveness training, management, accountability and civic awareness, particularly for women. In addition there is a need for mentoring and apprenticeship for entrepreneurial programs.

Another major consideration is cultural. Maya Indian girls get married in their teen years, and they are expected to have children early. In addition, they are expected to have as many as they can. Girls are known to marry as early as 14-16 years. Girls who reach the age of 18 and are unmarried are considered old maids. The pressure to marry, and marriage, place major constraints on women's advancement. Early reproductive responsibilities limit women's mobility. They are unable to continue formal education. In fact, preference is given to males when it comes to participation in the public sphere. Young women who have been able to break these barriers have done so with the help of nuns

and other social agents who sponsor or encourage them in other ways. These are, however, the exceptions, rather than the rule.

There are not many industries in the Toledo District. The Maya are the least employed in the district. Women are less employed than men. The Toledo District is the one where people earn the lowest wages compared to other districts. Maya Indian people are largely self-employed. Men go to the fields to work their own land, and they therefore enjoy the fruits of their labour. Women work at home taking care of children and tending to household chores. The kitchen is the place where women spend a lot of time. There is a fireplace on the floor. A comal, which is a flat iron griddle, is placed on stones around the fire for baking tortillas, a flattened bread made out of a kind of corn dough. There is also a traditional corn mill which women and young girls use in the grinding of corn. They grind corn three times a day. Lime is collected and used to prepare corn for tortillas and this is prepared from limestone outcroppings.

Women also do small gardening and tend to fruit trees, such as citrus, plantains, bananas, plums, avocado and mangoes. Almost all the food that the Maya eat is what they produce. This is a good indication of their capacity to sustain themselves without much cash. As they enter the money economy, however, their ability to earn income, save and invest becomes more critical. This is a tremendous

advantage, since it decreases dependency on others for survival. New values are appearing and consumer tastes are being influenced by media and technology entering the villages. These include videos from North America which present new cultural images. These are not balanced by local Belizean programs and certainly Maya Indian programs are limited if available at all. The local radio broadcasts are sometimes not available in the villages. The weekly news-papers which originate from Belize City hardly ever reach Maya Indian villages. Increasing travel outside the villages also affects this. The only major industry which provides jobs for the Mayas is rice cultivation.

Some young women are now leaving their communities to go and work as domestics, but these are very few. Most of their economic survival options are therefore going to be based on self-employment within their communities. It is not the norm for women to go out of their households unaccompanied. Since young boys are given priority over girls for educational opportunities and skilled training, they are better able to leave the village for further training and job opportunities. The move into the money economy has its handicaps for Maya people, in that it erodes their independence. Wealth becomes redefined in money terms only, and there is not much of a recognition of non cash resources. As these resources such as skills of women and women's work become more invisible, they are taken for granted and undervalued, even though they are

necessary and useful. People look outside of themselves for development, when the resources are around them and within them. But because they have been socialized into questioning and not recognizing their worth, it is very difficult for them to see this.

The research figures give some indication of the plight of women in the Toledo District, and specifically the Maya Indian and Kekchi women. The situation of the people in the district is much less developed than the rest of the country by standard socio-economic indicators. But if one uses other measuring indicators, such as accessibility to land space, and self-sufficiency in food, they show that they are advanced in some ways, in fulfilling some of their basic needs. The situation of the women vis 'a vis their male counterparts is weaker because males are given more freedom to explore the environment of the world at large and to choose what they wish from it. Women's options are more limited. The Maya people's situation compared to the other ethnic groups is invariably weaker. However, for purposes of this present work, the focus is on Maya Indian women.

The next chapter will consider what has been done to address the conditions of life of these communities. The work will review women's situation in the context of their relationships with men and their family. The accomplishments of Maya Indian women need to be noted in recognizing the tremendous odds that they have had to

overcome. Their ability to have so many children and to contribute to the household is remarkable. They provide support to their male partners who go to fields or seek wage labour. They subsidize the income of their household by the unpaid work that they do, as well as by the sales they make of animals they raise such as pigs, chickens, ducks and turkeys. These animals are also raised for home consumption. Men hunt animals such as deer, birds, rabbits, raccoons and antelopes. They also cultivate and harvest staple crops such as corn, coffee, yams, cassava, citrus, potatoes and cocoa.

The male-female relationship is stressed by the abuse of women, which is considered acceptable by the male culture. Physical abuse is often associated with alcohol abuse which is prevalent among men. As women get older, though, they become more assertive, and refuse to accept this type of treatment.

The cycle of abuse needs to be broken. The men have been abused by social, economic and political systems which limit their possibilities, compared to other ethnic groups. So, put in perspective, abuse is relative to the context. Men are known to consult with women on major issues even though the society is male-dominated society and men are the more visible leadership. Men also participate very much in child rearing activities, more than in other ethnic groups. They are often present with the mother during the delivery of the child, and sometimes they are the ones who help with the

delivery. Along with the Mennonite group, Maya are the ones in Belize where many men are midwives.

Essentially then, it can be seen how historically Maya people have made use of the resources in their physical environment. Throughout the pages of history, this capacity has not been fully acknowledged, if at all, nor has it been nurtured. The male sphere has been more respected, since they are recognized as farmers, heads of households and bread-winners. The alcaldes have all been male. Women have not even ventured to consider running for political office. Yet, that has also been the situation of the men in the sphere of the national assembly. In the past, it has been the men who have negotiated with the mainstream economy.

Maya Indian women in southern Belize have been affected by structures and institutions which have been legitimized historically. They are partly involved in the rural economy of the south, where the only major industry is rice. These women are rarely wage earners.

Through time Mayas have been affected by the belief that a more "civilized" and perceived "better developed" society is superior to simpler more primitive ones.

In order that the socio-economic situation of Maya Indian women may be improved, the Maya must gain an appreciation of themselves as people with tremendous potential. They must command and demand the respect of other ethnic groups in the country. The Maya leadership needs to take hold of the

future of its people by recognizing their capacity to control their environment. This recognition will help them determine ways of doing this collectively. Part of the challenge will be for them to accept that the country is fast moving into the 21st century and is being dramatically affected by rapid technological and economic changes. Can Maya indian women position themselves to be part of the cutting edge of this time? Handicraft offers one possibility through which women can validate themselves and their people, as well as earn much needed income.

CHAPTER IV
INITIATIVE OF MAYA INDIAN WOMEN OF SOUTHERN BELIZE TO IMPROVE
THEIR ECONOMIC SITUATION

In order to explore alternatives for women in rural communities, it is useful to identify and acknowledge their strengths and bargaining power. As has been mentioned before, Maya Indian people have had a long history of self-sufficiency which has been challenged by interventions through the years. What is remarkable is that in spite of this onslaught they have managed to sustain some of their cultural strengths. In the coming years, they will need to draw on all of these. Maya Indian societies were rooted in the philosophy of self-sufficiency. Their resilience has emerged as to interface with the trappings of modernity. The basis of their future will be guided by harnessing the skills and resources that they have developed over the years. These include their culture and all that that entails, such as language, food, religion, traditional healing practices, mores, crafts. The common thread running through these is their capacity to be creative and to make use of human and physical resources. They have tremendous respect for nature, the earth, the environment and what springs from it. They are environmentalists to a large extent. They depend on the

soil to live, since they are agriculturalists, planting beans, corn, plantains, pumpkins, cocoa, yams, grapefruits, cassava, oranges, potatoes, rice, annatto, mango, and vegetables. This relationship with land and earth is powerful. The Maya are one of the few ethnic groups in the country, apart from recent arrivals from neighbouring Central American countries, who can feed and sustain themselves.

Women support the men and make it possible for them to go into the fields by preparing food and taking care that household tasks are attended to. The domestic tasks are the sole responsibility of women. Market days are Wednesday and Saturday in Punta Gorda and women accompany men to sell the fruits of their labour. If she has a small child, the woman takes the child along with her slung on her back with a piece of cloth tied over her forehead. Money from sale of produce at the market is used to buy items that are not produced within the village. These items include cloth, thread, kerosene, matches, candles and axes.

These traditions are the basis on which to build. The process of acknowledging these strengths itself can be empowering in to the women, as it helps in eroding the attitude that they are victims. Instead they are participants in their own destiny, working out practical solutions to coping and negotiating with changing times. Maya Indians are not strangers to sustainable development. They are probably the creators of the knowledge and practice. The irony is

that interveners have introduced this development and practice as if they are new, and have appropriated it as if it were their own.

Maya did not initiate the practice of fundraising or income-generating projects. They had no need to. They produced almost everything they needed to live; they had to in order to survive. Women and men have many survival skills within their communities which have more meaning than data on unemployment, income, fertility, etc. These are static concepts which do not capture the richness of life in these communities. By itemizing the latter, one may explore the potential of goods and services available in the community rather than looking to outside, often unreliable sources. In addition, a look at the goods and services coming into the community gives an indication of possible new potential.

When women have kept their focus and not allowed outsiders to erode the wisdom of some of their practices, they have been successful. Take for example the experience of breastfeeding. In the 1970's women were being encouraged to use infant formula. Maya Indian women usually breastfed, which was more nutritious for the infants. Later, they were seduced in to bottle feeding babies, which had disastrous effects. In the 1980's, the benefits of breastfeeding were suddenly discovered by international programmers, and women were being encouraged to do what they had been doing long ago, which was breastfeeding their babies.

Another positive skill in Maya Indian communities is that of traditional healers and birth attendants. The most interesting aspect is the ability to search for balance, which has been facilitated by the Ministry of Health, working along with them to upgrade the quality of the health care being provided, as well as to provide the healers with support. This is particularly important when access to health care is limited.

Women's networks in the villages are also sources of strength which interconnect with ways in which the community nurtures itself. Food production and processing is the centerpiece of female participation within the household, next to her biological, reproductive function. Corn is the essence of life and sustenance for the Maya, and they view it with reverence. Women are responsible for processing the corn, which is often served three times a day. It is first cooked with white lime. When it softens it is cooled and taken out of the pot and put in a calabash drainer and washed and drained. It is then ground in a corn mill or on a traditional grinding stone. The masa that comes out of all this is converted into tortillas, tamales and other by-products. Women also process cacao into a chocolate drink. They make coffee and seasonings as well. When the males clear land collectively in the "faena" system, women provide the food for them. Other collective food contribution events are fiestas, celebrations and house building.

These, then, are some examples of the real wealth of Maya Indian women in southern Belize. To say Maya Indian women in Belize is to say many things. She is mother, wife, healer, community provider, household maintainer, water carrier and artisan (just to name a few). She deals with basic needs issues. It is evident from this that women have had many tangible experiences in self-management. Development programs need to pay more attention to these strengths that women have and build on them. This review of women's work as artisans suggests this as a foundation on which the rural economy can be revitalized, with handicraft as the springboard, though not necessarily the focal point. In addition, the preservation of culture and the environment is important in allowing these positive aspects to blossom.

In order to focus in more depth on handicraft as means of improving the socio-economic situation of Maya Indian women in southern Belize, I held structured interviews with fifty Maya Indian and Kekchi women about their involvement with handicraft. In addition, I conducted several meetings, workshops, retreats, and conferences with these women. Some meetings were with one ethnic groups, while others were held with others. Some meetings were with women only and others included men. The meetings on average had 100 participants at a time. In addition, we organized exhibitions of crafts and promotions at various public functions nationally and internationally.

As we went through each step along the way, we tried to make connections, exploring areas which could be the basis for revitalizing Maya communities. The beginning of the process was for women to determine what was important to them. What was their understanding of the social and economic situation they found themselves in? These were systematically recorded, and collectively shared, to pull out common threads of women's experiences. Each activity in the research sought to build on the others, to explore the connections, and to challenge participants to take ownership of the process of discovery. As a researcher, I tried not to objectify the research but to invite the participants to use the information for their own benefit. It was a process of validation, where women were challenged to explore and take command of their own environment.

Time was taken for each woman to tell her story. The women were also trained in basic interviewing techniques, as well as in the use of the tape recorder, so that they could interview each other in their own language. The research was taken further by having women bring in artifacts and things that were important to them. These included herbs, bushes, plants and crafts. For the first time, this was a validation of themselves. A woman shared some information about some craft work that she liked doing and indicated how she had started to do the work and how she felt doing it. Her work was then labelled and described by her for exhibit purposes,

along with the work of other women. Each piece honored a woman's experiences, by revealing her name, place of birth and the importance of the work to her. For many of them, their creative skills had never been respected in this way.

It was very important for women to see their work validated in this way, connected with other women, and acknowledged by a wide cross-section of people. They began to see their individual, micro situation in relation to that of others. There is controversy raging about the involvement of women in producing handicraft in developing countries. Many crafts have failed to provide women with economic remuneration compatible with their efforts. The pros and cons of the debate will be discussed elsewhere in terms of its relevance to this study.

Maya Indian women have always worked as artisans. They have produced various items which preserve the cultural tradition. Although items which they have made have not necessarily brought them much remuneration, they have received some benefits and continue to produce. The various items produced include those developed out of vegetable fiber, such as jipijapa. This fiber which is found in the forest, is boiled, stripped and fried and then woven into table mats, glass coasters, pot mats, and various basket containers of all sizes, designs and varieties. These are woven together with needles. Other items woven with jipijapa fiber include incense holders that are interwoven

with different coloured threads. The woven items are attractive for the producer, because the raw material cost is lower than for other types of products. Handicraft can also be viewed as those creative items which women produce for artistic purposes, even when they are for utilitarian purposes. Many of the elements of the culture connect in this way. It also becomes the common thread through which they can connect with other cultures in order to learn skills which can allow them to move into new dimensions.

One of the major handicraft works in southern Belize is with fabric. The embroidered blouse and long skirt are the traditional wear of the Maya women. Since only women wear the traditional dress, they are the ones who are viewed as embodying the culture and what is unique about being Maya. It is mostly the older women who are still wearing the dress. The blouse is made of cloth bought from the store, and is embroidered at the neck and armholes. Both the neck and the armholes are rounded, and the design of the blouse is peasant style. The embroidery and cotton thread, white and black, has been the traditional combination colours for the blouses.

Maya families have a ritual of teaching young girls the traditional embroidery. The older women of the community have most of the standard designs of the village on a sampler. There are some designs which are unique to certain women. From the village of San Antonio, for example, there is one woman who does a design based on the pattern of the wowler

snake skin. The colour combinations are black, gold and green. This has been one of the most popular designs. Designs of flowers and leaves are actually taken from samples in the environment. The women press plants from the village on a sheet of paper or on a corn tortilla and place the imprint on the cloth.

The female dress of the Mopan Maya and the Kekchi differ. Kekchi women usually wear a dark coloured skirt slightly that reaches below the knee and a brightly coloured blouse. The Mopan Maya wear a brightly coloured skirt that flows on the ground. The blouse is embroidered on the neck and sleeves. All the clothes worn by men are Western style. Women wear beaded necklaces and bracelets which they make themselves, using various colour combinations. Older women often wear a white shawl or towel over their head.

Embroidery is done more by the Mopan Maya women than the Kekchi. The type of sewing which is used for putting the embroidery together is called "hilo contado" . This is a very time consuming method since the location of each piece of thread has to be counted and marked while it is being embroidered. It takes about three to four weeks to complete an embroidered blouse.

Much thought is now being given to designing new products which will creatively explore the rich potential of Maya embroidery. This has required fashion designers who are prepared to teach new skills to Maya women. Although there is

limited market for traditional dress, it be further explored. The women are also experimenting with designs from other cultures, as well as producing new items such as hand towels, tablecloths, wall hangings and pillow cases.

Harnessing of the women's potential within the household is the challenge, since presently the household is her reality. It is for the women themselves to be able to negotiate and work within this context. Part of developing the competitive edge vis-a-vis other ethnic groups and nationally is for the women to equip themselves to take charge of this before it is taken away from them and they are made into wage labourers. Presently, the Maya do not need much to survive and that is a competitive edge which they have.

CHAPTER V

INTERVENTIONS FROM OUTSIDE AGENCIES ADDRESSING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF MAYA INDIAN WOMEN THROUGH HANDICRAFT

This chapter addresses the attempts by various groups and organizations outside of the Maya Indian communities to bring about some economic development changes through handicraft. Although the emphasis of the review is on economic development, it is being done with an appreciation that there are many other factors which affect the lives of the Maya people. Adopting the 'blame the victim' approach would surely be too simplistic in doing a review of various interventions. Generally speaking, most of the people who intervened had a narrow way of viewing the Maya. There was little appreciation of their cultural strengths and capacity to take responsibility for their own lives. Their view of the Maya was that they were underdeveloped and backward and needed to be developed according to Western standards. They went into villages and did not see toilets, schools, churches, roads or health services, nor did they see much cash circulating. They went about trying to remedy the situation, viewing the Maya as helpless victims, even though self-sufficiency and self-help are principles which are rooted in the Maya way of life.

Change agents were social workers or government officials from various government ministries, such as social services, health, cooperatives and agriculture. In addition, there were non-government representatives from the Development Finance Corporation, Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology, Help for Progress, and The Belize Rural Women's Association, to name a few. The Peace Corps, which was a United States initiated body of volunteers from that country, was also actively working in the area. In addition, there were various church and voluntary groups. For purposes of this work, the focus will be on the Ministry of Social Services, and the work of the Belize Organization for Women and Development and the Belize Rural Women's Association, since they were the key players in the development of handicraft with Maya Indian women.

It is significant to note that, except for the Peace Corps and some church organizations, all the change agents lived outside the communities. A few anthropological researchers also lived in the Maya communities for brief periods, and did have some influence on promoting Maya handicrafts.

In 1985, the end of the United Nations Decade for Women, I accidentally met a Maya woman whom we have called Arlene, from the village of San Antonio, Toledo. She was standing in the broiling sun outside the Belmopan fruit and vegetable market at the Central Plaza. She presented a pathetic but

proud picture as she stood, seven months pregnant, with a heavy load on her head and an infant on her arm. Maureen, a colleague working with the Belize Organization for Women and Development, had drawn her to my attention. She had known Arlene well, since the days when she had been working with women in the Toledo District during the days of Women and Development. Arlene had stopped in Belmopan, on her way to Belize City and possibly to the Cayes where tourists flock, to sell craft products for the women of San Antonio. Her visit to the Social Development Department in Belmopan had proved fruitless, since they did not buy any of her crafts. In days gone by, they might have helped her by getting the crafts sold in Belize City or elsewhere, minimizing the hassle that she otherwise had to endure.

By 1985, the former director of the Women's Bureau had resigned in frustration, and the acting director had taken on her responsibilities. Arlene told us about her frustrations of going it alone. At the time, she was the only Maya Indian woman who had ventured out of her village to market crafts. She was unaccompanied. Even though she had gone through many hardships on rough roads and traveled long distances, she was severely criticized by both men and women in her community. She was called a prostitute, and the very women for whom she was selling the crafts were accusing her of stealing their money. She also became a victim of envy, jealousy and greed, which is not unique to the Maya experience, but is more

pronounced than with other ethnic groups because Maya in the south tend to be fairly egalitarian. It was virtually unheard of for a Maya Indian woman to venture out of the village on her own. There were a few women who had left the community to work in Punta Gorda as domestic workers. There was a sprinkling of women who trained to be teachers or nurses. Intermarriages or liaisons with people other than Maya were severely sanctioned by the community. A woman just did not return to the community after that, unless she was prepared to face the onslaught of ostracism. Sometimes when she took the craft to business places, they would give her less money than she had asked for, because of the poor quality of the work. In addition, some of the business places wanted to keep the products on consignment, that is, they would place the products on display in the shops and then the producer would be paid when they were sold.

The women in San Antonio could not understand this. They wanted to see a return on their investment quickly. When Arlene presented her expenses to the women back in the village for travel, food and accommodations, they did not believe her, even though they did not have any experience in doing this type of travelling. This resulted in a lot of conflict amongst the women.

To travel from San Antonio in 1985, Arlene had to go by truck to Punta Gorda. From there she would travel by bus to Belmopan. In order to do this, she had to make many domestic

arrangements for herself and her family. In addition, she had to take time to label, list and price each craft item she received from the women and then pack them securely to protect them from bad weather and road conditions. When it was dry, the roads were very dusty, and when it was rainy they were very muddy, since they were not paved.

The journey was long and was a hassle all the way. The vehicles were, to say the least, uncomfortable. The paved roads from Dangriga, which was about four hours drive from Belmopan, went through mountains and had many potholes. Since Arlene lived San Antonio, which was about 23 miles from Punta Gorda, she would need to arrive there ahead of time to be guaranteed a seat on the bus. Not being from Punta Gorda, she had difficulty in finding a place to stay. The roads in the Toledo District are dry weather roads. This means that they are very rough and often the rains make some rivers impassable. Vehicles often park by the rivers for hours on end until the waters subside. During this wait, in the heart of the jungle, mosquitoes and flies are numerous due to the season. And, once again, when Arlene arrived in Belmopan, she had nowhere else to stay but at the market.

An obvious question would be, why did she take on so much responsibility? For one thing, she was genuinely interested in obtaining increased opportunity for herself and for other women in her village. Once she had made that commitment, it was difficult for her to let go even though

the situation had become stressful for her. As we listened to her, it was clear to us that mistakes had been made all around. Maureen and I felt moved to help because it was clear that Arlene had tried very hard to make things work in spite of many difficulties, and was in need of support. So we joined a string of interveners into the Maya reality.

Some interesting events were taking place in the country around this time. The government had changed in 1984, and the opposition party was experiencing its first opportunity in the history of the country to prove itself. As noted earlier, there had been a national controversy over the 'Heads of Agreement,' a proposed agreement to settle the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute between Belize and Guatemala. This country has laid territorial claim to Belize for years. Much chaos had emerged nationwide as a result of this proposed agreement, and a state of emergency was eventually declared. It was in this context that the government had changed. At the time of the difficulties, a group of concerned citizens had come together to address the issues. When the anguish subsided somewhat, the association was dissolved, but the networking links were maintained.

The network had been made up of non-government organizations that were dissatisfied with the quality of life in the country and the inefficiency of the government, and wanted to see changes. It was frightening, in their view, that there had been need at the time for the British soldiers --

who were supposedly to defend Belize from a threatened invasion by Guatemala -- on the streets to control civilians.

By the 1980's when there was an increased influx of refugees from Central American neighbours, there was increasing emigration, particularly by the Black, Creole and Garifuna ethnic groups, to the United States. So it is not surprising that by 1991, the largest ethnic group in the country is Mestizo. The entire nation is vulnerable because of the geopolitical considerations and international economic situations which affect it. Belizean leadership and institutions are weak in all spheres. This was not helped by the disturbances leading up to independence in 1981. There is low level of participation by Belizeans in running the affairs of the country, and this is particularly the case for Maya Indian women. First Belize City, and now Belmopan, is the hub of decision making power.

Women were among the key players concerned about change in the 80's. An ad hoc committee formed developed into the Belize Organization for Women and Development. They worked along with the University of the West Indies and the Belize Agricultural Society to explore what were the major concerns of rural people nationwide. This had been done through a series of meetings with communities themselves over a period of a year, in 1982.

It was through this outreach that the Belize Organization for Women and Development recognized the need

for specific discussions about the condition of rural women. I was a founding member of this organization and had, along with Maureen, organized a meeting on June 27, 1982 in Mango Creek which was about women's health. To foster goodwill, which was strained at the time between non-government organizations and the government, the government was invited to co-sponsor the meeting. Twenty-seven men and fifty women attended from various villages. The twenty-seven men who attended were Maya. No Maya Indian women attended.

Some of the expectations articulated by the people attending the workshop were the following:

1. To meet and discuss with persons from other parts of the Districts, so that we can unite.
2. To find out if there is some special help we can get for our problems.
3. To get more ideas and share ideas with women.
4. To get improvement in life.
5. To meet people.
6. To know how we can communicate in our village.
7. To learn how to approach problems.
8. To discuss problems facing rural people with reference to post-primary education.
9. To discuss matters of mutual interest, such as health, water supply, transportation and employment.
10. To see how the young girls and women could get together to do craft and sewing for a living.
11. To see what other things women can do.
12. To learn more about the work of other women.

[Belize Organization for Women and Development
(BOWAND), 1982]

One of the discussion points of the workshop focussed on the concern of the Belize Agricultural Society that the farmer was usually being considered as a production unit divorced from a household and family. These workshops became

a series, attempting to remedy this gap, and to include women in these discussions.

Naturally, government viewed all this activity by non-government organizations with suspicion, and even started telling communities not to have anything to do with certain individuals and organizations that were involved in this way. BOWAND was considered one of these undesirable organizations. Many rural people were confused about what to do, since some of them were affiliated to the ruling party and did not want to appear disloyal. They also felt the need for improvement in their quality of life. This was the first time that they had been invited to participate in a process which was ripe with possibilities.

BOWAND was initially made up of middle class Belizean women living in Belize City who wanted to help improve living conditions of less fortunate women in the country. This was a voluntary group of women who took time off from work to address issues of poverty. They were lawyers, nurses, teachers and housewives. Many of them made the resources of their offices available to the cause, since at the outset BOWAND had no funding or paid staff. One of the things that emerged out of the outreach sessions with rural communities was that marketing of produce was a major problem for women farmers.

Thinking that this was an issue that needed serious attention, BOWAND organized what was called Cultural Market

Day in 1984. The women had been moved by observing that many times farmers who brought fruits and vegetables to the Belize City market had to throw them away because of spoilage, or give them away because they were not sold. In addition, there was limited transportation that left at a certain time from the villages and had to return at a specific time as well. If one missed that transport, which was a truck, they would need to overnight in Belize City. Many times, they would stand in the rain waiting to catch transportation.

Maureen was a member of BOWAND and had, along with me, spearheaded this event in March, on International Women's Day. The purpose was to place issues of rural people, and women in particular, on the national agenda. The idea was that people from rural communities had common problems and strengths, and that they needed to connect with each other in order to be able to highlight and share these, in an attempt to get support. The purpose of Cultural Market Day was also to bring together women from various ethnic groups, and particularly rural areas, to celebrate that they were a valuable part of Belize and that they deserved acknowledgement and support.

For many years, the country had been geographically fragmented along, ethnic, religious and political lines, and it was felt that it was time for a coming together and healing of the nation. Women and men from rural communities were invited to bring food and crafts from all over the

country in a spirit of validation of their efforts. The process of pulling together such an event required tremendous networking skills. There were over 200 delegates represented from different parts of the country. The event was held at the historical Central Park in Belize City. It was indeed a historic, unforgettable event, since it was the first national recognition of rural women presented in this way.

The event was successfully repeated in Belize City on March 8, 1985, this time with two international guests. Billie Jean Young, Director of the Southern Rural Women's Network of the United States and a MacArthur awardee, joined the gathering, along with the Hon. Louise Bennett Coverley of Jamaica, to give standing ovation performances. Belize City was chosen for the event because of the need to sensitize people who were in the hub of social, economic and political power. The major banks and commercial institutions are located there.

In planning both events, Maureen and I raised approximately \$10,000 locally in cash and in kind. Organizing and implementing this event laid the foundation for a wider outreach to rural women. The one radio station at the time came out and interviewed women from rural communities live and spontaneously. Popular cultural bands performed free of charge during the course of the day. There was music, dance, and bubbling festivity which has to date not been repeated. In addition, various women displayed and

processed their ethnic foods and crafts on site. There was a tremendous response from the public, and it gave women a good feeling about themselves as they answered numerous questions. They also learned a lot about marketing and about consumer tastes and interests. They were also able to get new ideas from other producers.

Cultural Market Day received official government sanction and participation, and was launched by the Minister of Women's Affairs. On this occasion, however, rural women attending the event asked that the network go beyond a one-day event, to more ongoing support. And so the seeds were sown for the formation of the Belize Rural Women's Association (BRWA).

One of the main purposes of the Association was to take part in the efforts of BOWAND to focus on the processing and use of local raw materials and resources, in particular food and crafts. BRWA captured the momentum of Cultural Market Day.

Other purposes were:

1. to follow up concretely from Cultural Market Day with the development of project and program ideas which would promote the use of local materials.
2. to explore innovative economic projects which have the potential for development in Belize.
3. to develop a network among women within the country with the resources which exist in their environment.

4. to develop the leadership potential of rural women.
5. to encourage and support economic self-sufficiency among rural women.

Maureen was appointed coordinator of this effort, and I was advising and supporting her. So, when we met Arlene in Belmopan, we were working on the formation of the Belize Rural Women's Association. Of course, telling Arlene about this was not going to help her immediate needs. What we did do was to buy all the crafts that she had with our limited funds. And so, the problem was temporarily resolved.

It is important to note that until then, neither the Association nor BOWAND had any reliable budget or paid staff. We had just obtained a small grant from Church Women United in the United States and had been promised some small amounts from the National Churches of Christ, as well as Agricultural Missions Inc. The operations of the Association were taking place at my home. In 1986, we acquired some additional funds and operated from a small house in Belmopan. In that initial period, the focus was on formation and building of the network. What this meant, was that we would have regional meetings and visits to communities to discuss with women the way in which the Association should develop. Of course, there was tremendous pressure by women from their male partners and other members of the community to obtain cash. This was the measuring rod of how beneficial belonging to an organization was. Money was the tangible evidence needed for attending

meetings, especially those that took women outside of their communities. We planned to have an annual general meeting to review our progress.

By 1987, word had spread far and wide about this unique resource center for women in the country. What I had not realized was that Maureen had been taking embroidery strips from women in the Maya Indian villages, with a promise to have them sold by the center staff. Soon we were flooded at the small center with more craft products than we could handle, and we certainly had very little money to pay for them.

Arlene had returned to the village of San Antonio and had spread the good news about her fortunes through us in Belmopan. BRWA therefore became involved with handicraft production without thinking through the implications, and without allowing time for its institutional growth.

The personal and family life of BRWA leadership was becoming strained, with individuals and sometimes families from various villages in the south showing up unannounced on weekends, with nowhere else to go, at the home of staff, laden with crafts of all descriptions. Things had gotten out of hand and dependency was being created.

By 1988, the Association had received some money from the United Nations to develop craft and other businesses with rural women. During the United Nations Decade for Women, non-government agencies were under tremendous pressure from national and international policy agents to whip up tangible

models, pilot projects, or success stories about what they were doing for women. The catch-all phrase was income-generating activities and projects for women.

These initiatives forged ahead, whether or not basic infrastructure was in place. Many well-intentioned people, like BOWAND and BRWA, succumbed to the pressure brought by this wave for women, without thinking through many of the implications, or questioning the feasibility of some of the income-earning ideas. Fortunately, we were able to move into a bigger resource center, further from our homes. In addition, we were able to hire more staff. By then, Maureen who was failing in health, had had her 13th child and had decided to concentrate on working in the Belize Rural area. These events made me agree to assume the leadership of the network. We had raised so many expectations in the communities which were difficult to fulfill, and had certainly built up a euphoria, which had been fueled by the intense interest in 'women and development' at the time. It was interesting to see policy makers make a shift from viewing women as welfare recipients, to people with productive potential.

The problem with that, however, was, that women's productive and reproductive capacities in the household and subsistence economy were not acknowledged or valued. The sincerity of people jumping on the bandwagon of 'women and development' was also being questioned by Belizean women,

since there was so much funding available for women's programs. The feeling was that policy makers were being opportunistic and were more interested in the money and resources available internationally than in the cause. Zelma Edgell's novel In Times Like These (Edgell, 1991) speaks of this. Edgell was the first director of the Women's Bureau in Belize.

Handicraft became a major focus of the work of the Association, because everywhere we visited women indicated this as an area of interest. Although this was not a sufficient reason to pursue handicraft as a business opportunity, we did not feel that it should be ruled out either, since it was something that came from the women themselves. In addition, it was compatible with their childbearing and domestic responsibilities. BRWA became a membership association of approximately 200 men and women throughout the country, concerned about improving the quality of life in rural communities. There are also 26 groups included in the Association that exist countrywide. One of the hallmarks of BRWA's efforts is the philosophy that more can be achieved by working collectively. For example, in the case of handicraft, raw materials can be bought in bulk.

The resource center, staff and activities are supported and financed by several international agencies and some local ones. Among these have been: Oxfam UK, Canadian International Development Agency, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women, UNESCO, the World Council of Churches, National

Churches of Christ, Bread for the World and the Global Fund for Women. The membership elects representatives to a Board of Directors at its annual general meeting. The Board of Directors includes women from all regions of the country. They meet quarterly to follow through on policies and programs agreed on at the annual general meeting. The Management Committee are executives of the board, and they meet monthly. Except for four professional, paid fulltime staff, the director, health coordinator, and the administrative assistant, the Association is made up entirely of rural poor. The programs are designed based on the specific needs of the communities in consultation with advisors from various disciplines within and outside the country, such as health, economic development, leadership, group development, and business management. The staff conducts the day to day business of running the organization. All the programs are being developed with an appreciation of ethnic strengths, i.e., skills existing in the community. The assumption made is that all communities have wealth and that members need to acknowledge this and systematically match wealth with problems. BRWA provides help in going through this process.

The aim is for members to become prime decision makers in their lives and in the life of the Association, through consultation with others and becoming skilled in learning how to access resources within and outside their communities. It

is the needs of the members that guide policy and program formation. Members from all over the country meet in order to review progress and problems. For purposes of this discussion, the focus is on handicraft production programming by BRWA, with Maya Indian women in the south. Some of the concerns of other programs do affect handicraft development-- for example, through training programs, discussions and exercises that are conducted with the women to develop their leadership potential. During the quarterly retreats, Maya Indian women get a chance to interact with women and people from other ethnic groups. This in itself is a tremendous learning experience for them. So too is travelling outside their village to visit and observe other people's way of life.

In the early days, when handicraft was a being developed as a viable alternative for rural people, particularly women, a number of mistakes were made. The first mistake was to reinforce the dependency syndrome, because of feeling pressured into action without being sufficiently organized. The 1980's saw a radical shift in the national approach to economic development. There was a renaissance of nationalistic spirit and a fierce pride in being Belizean, without necessarily understanding what that meant. Not being able to say 'no' graciously when people came with samples of their craft was part of this euphoria of just appreciating things Belizean, without having a business plan. The enthusiasm was

commendable, but, uncomplemented by managerial and organizational expertise, caused the Association much grief. Thus, when the staff visited the communities, expectations were raised which could not be fulfilled. One of the requirements for joining the association was to pay an annual membership fee of \$5.00 BZE which is equivalent to \$2.50 US. At the first meeting in San Antonio, Toledo, 150 people joined the association. The expectation was that this would be an opportunity to sell crafts. BRWA membership saw the annual fee as a small commitment by each person to invest in the process of change. Contributions by members could be in cash or kind.

Because the Association was viewed mostly by the Maya Indian women as playing a brokerage role for crafts, the other less tangible benefits such as health, leadership and group development were hardly acknowledged at all. These women were also under tremendous pressure from their husbands. For the first time, they started to earn an income. In 1988 alone, BRWA purchased approximately \$25,000 worth of crafts, mostly from Maya Indian communities. That is a lot of money going into a small village. The situation became so chaotic in 1989 that we had to revise our strategy.

Pouring thousands of dollars into the community without other types of training and development was not empowerment. Some good things emerged. Initially, women were not allowed to leave their villages without their husbands, and many of our meetings were attended by Maya men. In one instance, I

clearly remember conducting a meeting in a Maya Indian community where only men were present. This was in 1983. By 1989, women were leaving their villages alone, in large numbers, to attend meetings of the association.

One of the steps taken in restructuring the approach to handicraft development was to collaborate with other agencies whom we assumed were better equipped to cope with such a venture. To our surprise, our assumption was wrong. In spite of all our problems, no other organization, group or individual in the country had been so effective in out-reaching to develop handicraft with Maya Indian women.

With this discovery, we decided to hire a consultant, Barrington Brown, from the Commonwealth Caribbean, to do an assessment of our situation, as well as to review the status of handicraft development in the country. His recommendations strongly suggested that BRWA take the leadership in developing the national program. In 1989, we felt that that was too much for us to cope with. Our focus was with Maya Indian women for the time being, since we felt that they were the ones most in need and with the most potential for development.

In 1989, the Association was working with Maya Indian women in the villages of San Antonio, Crique Jute, San Jose, Laguna and Santa Cruz. We had been supporting two excellent leaders from the area. One woman, who was East Indian, had lived in San Antonio for some years, even though she was not

living in Punta Gorda. We will call her Ixchel. She helped the women with communication with the resource center, in organizing regional meetings, and by travelling to different parts of the country. Although she taught them some new craft skills as well as advised them on improving the quality of their craft work, she also tried to show the other benefits of meeting with other women.

The other very important woman was from San Antonio. She was a mother of 11 children, and was the first Maya woman who had attended our annual general meeting held in Dangriga, which is about 130 miles from San Antonio. Let us call this woman Nora. It was only emergencies of sickness and death which kept her away from meetings. In fact, it was while attending one of the meetings in Belmopan that she had her baby at the hospital, and she named the baby Modesta. Modesta was the leader of one of the women's groups in Dangriga called Lu Fuluri Dangriga. This means flowers of Dangriga. This group, which is of Garifuna ethnicity, has selected the Maya embroidery blouse as their uniform in true, cross-cultural fashion.

Nora saw the benefits of the Association far beyond the crafts. At the first meeting she attended, she was excited and moved at being in the presence of people from so many different ethnic groups in this way. It was for her like being in another world. She apologetically told us that she was not used to speaking in public and that this was her

first time out of her village. However, she was determined to return to her community and share what she had experienced with other women, and encourage them to join the Association.

Because she spoke English fluently, Nora became the spokesperson for the women. Our meetings were conducted using all the languages of the ethnic groups present. In 1988, at the first meeting held in San Antonio, I had been invited to explain the work of the Association, I was seated at the head table with the Village Council members, and Nora proudly introduced me. This was one of the rare moments that a Maya woman was allowed to address a public gathering in this way. Many times, as she translated, I felt the inadequacy of the English language to communicate certain concepts. In fact, I knew that there were English words that could not be translated into Maya, because the concepts were different, or it was not part of their orientation.

Working with women whose world was defined in one way, it was extremely difficult to communicate concepts such as management, marketing efficiency and self sufficiency in very simple terms. Many times, Nora, who was translating, would shake her head and say that it was very difficult to communicate. It was very difficult for the women to understand. It is true that many of them had attended primary school. But it was also true that many of them had not completed school and were not functionally literate in English.

We felt very inadequate in not being able to speak Maya. Although this was somewhat true in working with other ethnic groups, each of which had a language other than English, it was more difficult working with Maya in the south. Probably this was because they were so isolated geographically and culturally.

The Garifuna teachers who had lived in Maya communities had been forced to learn the language. The BRWA staff did not live in Maya communities. We too worked by remote control through certain designated leadership in the villages. Many times we could not clearly understand the community dynamics at play, but were quite aware that they were going on. This was a big disadvantage for us and probably to the community too. Belize needs development anthropologists and community activists who have been exposed to anthropology.

The Association had allocated one staff person who would manage the development of handicraft. Guided by the recommendation of the Caribbean consultant, we took stock of all the craft skills of the Maya communities done by both men and women and decided to explore which of these was marketable. We had been doing this slowly over a period of three years, since 1986. Once we got a sense of market demand, we obtained orders from buyers in Belize City and sent these requests to the women.

We found out that only a few women owned sewing machines, and that slowed down the process of production. In

addition, most women only knew how to do the embroidery strips with traditional designs. Along with Nora, we encouraged the women to collect all the designs together and to tell the story of each one for packaging and selling purposes. We framed and preserved most of the designs at the center, as well as the stories. Maya handicraft is being developed by BRWA because with or without intervention from outsiders, the women will continue producing certain craft anyway. The interventions from the Ministry of Social Services and the Peace corps were for the women to earn income.

BRWA has built on these efforts for three reasons:

1. to continue to increase earnings.
2. to validate women's creative and productive potential through handicraft and acknowledge concrete ways that women are already making contributions to Belize's development.
3. to develop women's self esteem and support confidence and leadership capability building through business.

We were inspired by Ann Osborne's work, through the Toledo Rural Development Project (TRDP), where she had classified some of the embroidery designs of Maya women in the district. We also organized visits by the women to the Department of Archaeology in Belmopan. There they could view designs that they could copy for other products, as well as get some new insights about Maya heritage. The Maya in Toledo were quickly losing knowledge about their crafts and culture.

The other products we experimented with were pottery, clay beads and basketry. Of the three, basketry was the most successful. We could not get adequate training facilities for pottery making. Some women also tried to do stone carvings using Maya designs. The women also produced embroidered calendars, using Maya symbols.

Another major hurdle was maintaining quality control. Some women felt that simply by getting an order, their payment was guaranteed. It was difficult to communicate that we could not pay for shabby work. Another hurdle was sizing, since the build of the Maya people is very different from other ethnic groups. We also experimented with various clothing designs and colours. Even though some women obtained loans for sewing machines from the Association, others needed to learn how to use the machines first.

Another component linked to the handicraft program is the revolving loan fund program, which is now evolving into the community banking program. The revolving loan fund, as its name suggests, is a pool of funds managed by the Association, which is disbursed to members for business purposes. Maya Indian women were the most frequent users of this fund. They often used it for buying raw materials or developing new products. The community banking program is operational with groups in the north of the country. The major difference is that the starting funds for the program are provided by the Association, and are administered by the

community within the community. They go through a series of training sessions in the beginning in basic accounting and operational procedures.

Ixchel helped in tackling many of these problems, since she lived nearby. She helped the women in getting the sewing machines in Punta Gorda, for example. Whenever we visited the Toledo District, she made all the arrangements for accommodation and transportation. She met staff at the airstrip when we took flights down that way, in the interest of time.

The proudest moment of the Association was when our 3rd Annual General meeting was hosted by the women of San Antonio. They have made great strides and have come a long way. One of the major successes has been the process of self validation through handicraft. In 1988 the Association held an Oral History Symposium in San Ignacio, Cayo District. One of the components of the symposium was to highlight the work that women do with their hands as works of art. Many of the Maya women shared with a delegation of 150 people what embroidery and basketry meant for them. We mounted their work along with their stories, to be used for permanent exhibit at the resource center. This is a means of validating women's creative efforts, as well as marketing their products. Through this process, the Association locates samples of women's work and interviews the women for preparing displays summarizing background information about them and their community. Important aspects of quality of life are reflected

in handicraft and particularly through fabric arts, through the stories which are conveyed.

One of the purposes of the Symposium was to explore the significance of traditional fabric arts for various ethnic groups of women in the Association. This had been preceded by a UNESCO funded research project which I had completed on the impact of food, traditional healing and crafts among Maya Indian women in Toledo, Mestizo women in the north, and Garifuna women in Dangriga. Some of the findings of the research were shared through the Symposium. We found that handicraft was very significant in all cultures and that fabric craft was the most common to all, particularly women. Women are involved in knitting, embroidery, quilting and weaving. Some of the products are functional and some hold the values of the particular community to which they belong. Therefore, they are a means of passing on values from one generation to the other, and for building a sense of pride in community. Along with the women, we explored what the traditional fabric crafts reflect and communicate. We also examined the processes and values of fabric craft. This symposium was another stepping stone in developing a meaningful approach to handicraft with Maya Indian women, using the skills of history, anthropology and literature.

Nora faced similar frustrations Arlene when she attempted to be the go-between for the women in the villages. Unlike Arlene, however, she had a network and support base of

an organization. Now when Nora travels, she has a place to stay in Punta Gorda, in Dangriga, in Belmopan and in Belize City. In fact, through the network of the Association members have gained friends all over the country.

Following the craft consultant's review, a National Craft Symposium was organized by BRWA in Belize City to discuss some of the concerns of marketing, pricing and quality control. Many of the Maya Indian women who attended displayed and sold their craft items. They also had a chance to interact with local and potential buyers directly. In this process of operationalizing their networks, women learned about access to raw materials , and new designs as well. The fact that craft production in Belize is disorganized meant that women needed to organize themselves bearing this in mind, since there weren't many support networks available to help. These needed to be built. In addition, the Association made it possible for some women to attend the annual national agricultural and trade show held in May. Almost every year, BRWA has won prizes for the best booth display of craft. They also attend the Festival Grand Market, which is held on the occasion of celebrating Belize's independence in September. Women's enthusiastic response to these initiatives made the Association see that they were committed craft producers who, with adequate training, could be successful.

In attending each of these events, the women get repeated practice in learning the steps of how to market their

products. The direct interaction with the public strengthens them in learning how to negotiate at various levels, for example, with store owners and hoteliers, as well as to find out what they want. In Belize City, they also learn how to move around with the hustle and bustle atmosphere.

When there was no central crafts market in the country, selling was done by going from place to place, or attending functions which would allow the women to sell their products as effortlessly as possible. There were a few gift shops in Belize City and Belmopan that buy crafts. Punta Gorda has limited potential in terms of buyers passing through. Since the cost of travelling from San Antonio to Belize City is very high, it is more efficient to have on person visit Belize City, which provides the greatest marketing opportunities, or to have a broker visit the villages.

The National Handicraft Centre was established in 1992 as an implementation of one of the recommendations of consultant Barrington Brown. Its staff goes out into the villages to buy crafts. BRWA plays much less of a brokerage role now that the Centre has been established, and the Association sits on the board. The BRWA center still has a small craft display area. In addition, the Association displays crafts at every function it organizes or attends, whenever it is appropriate and convenient. Initially, this was done overseas as well, but it was difficult to sustain and has since been put on hold until the local handicraft

program becomes better organized. In addition, the aim is that the women themselves need to refine their organizational skills in understanding every step of the process of handicraft marketing.

When Nora attended an Oral History conference in Barbados for example, she sold all the craft items she took, which were quite numerous. Although the efforts have been quite successful, the Association has decided to focus on fully exploring the local market which, though small is lucrative. Craft producers are also being challenged to create products which are uniquely Belizean and which are competitive with other products in the country. The creations of neighbouring Central American countries are of wider variety and cheaper. Therefore, initiatives in Belize have a better chance if they are specific to Belize. What the Association was not prepared for was taking a leading role in the development of handicraft in the country.

A craft center was built by BRWA with the support of the Department of Archaeology at the Maya site of Altun Ha in the Belize District. This was done with a grant from Barclays Bank. The assumption was that the location beside a Maya site would help sales. The venture has so far proved unsuccessful, because the Association did not have reliable members in the area who could manage the business. In addition, the logistics of getting products to the shop have proven cumbersome. The building has been leased to a villager in the area. The

good news is that discussions are now taking place with the Handicraft Centre staff in Belize City to make use of those facilities, and to stock up the shop with some of their crafts.

Women are provided with as many opportunities as possible to become aware of new products that they can try to produce. A burning question is always: to what extent should they keep the traditions and values of their own culture? In my view, a comfortable balance needs to be found which marries pragmatism with cultural heritage. Some societies have been able to live with modernity without losing their cultural identity. The Indians in Mexico and Guatemala seem to have been quite successful, particularly when it came to handicraft development. The Caribbean craft consultant worked with the major producers in the Association in identifying new products as well as improving on old ones. Nora quickly went about learning basketry. The women in San Antonio now produce beautiful baskets out of jippi jappa straw. One of the men from the village of Crique Jute taught the Maya women basketry skills. They then experimented with designs using pots and other household items. They also dry and make gourds off the calabash tree.

The San Antonio women's group, which now numbers fifty, visited the Guatemalan border town of Melchor de Mencos on a field visit organized by BRWA. They were able to conduct their own marketing intelligence and observe the quality

variety and organization of crafts there. Through interaction with women from other communities in the Association, the group has learnt other craft skills, such as quilting.

In developing handicraft, the Association has tried to encourage women to produce crafts that are marketable, and which also make use of accessible raw materials in their environment. Even when quality control needs to be a consideration, this is done respectfully and with sensitivity. Once the women obtain orders for items, for example, they check each product themselves, based on guidelines which have been agreed on and discussed. This process is time consuming and initially was filled with conflict. Many women interpreted rejection of shabby work as rejection of them and their efforts. Much time had to be spent by staff, especially the craft coordinator, using samples to explain why certain products could not be accepted.

The Association continues to network with other agencies and individuals in the country in order to provide support for the efforts of the women. The challenge is to reinforce community strengths, as well as to explore new options. Agencies such as the Department of Forestry, Tourism and Environment and the Department of Archaeology will be important in this next phase of the 1990's. Outreach to Guatemala and Mexico is also important in trying to benefit from their experiences.

CHAPTER VI

THE WAY FORWARD FOR MAYA INDIAN WOMEN THROUGH HANDICRAFT DEVELOPMENT

Blossoms and Echoes through Time:

Some Promotional Strategies

Unfortunately, few craft producers have been able to profit from their work. Recognizing this, several organizations such as the Belize Export Promotion Unit, Chamber of Commerce, The Belize Rural Women's Association and the Ministry of Social Services joined to make a concerted effort to address this situation. Consultant Barrington Brown's findings provided the guide for many of the decisions which followed. In his study he noted that 80% of the artisans were women who lived outside of the urban area. However, he noted that the bulk of the trading was done in the urban areas, and was produced exclusively by me (Brown, 1989). The richness of flora and fauna, particularly in the Toledo district, combined with the rich cultural mosaic of Belize suggests rich potential for the development of handicraft.

The National Handicraft Board, has the backing of the Chamber of Commerce, The Belize Tourism Association, and the Belize Rural Women's Association, as well as the Ministry of

Tourism, just to name a few. But what does this really mean for the women of southern Belize? There has been some outreach by the staff of the Handicraft Centre to the rural communities, but it was through the existing Social Development Ministry, and therefore faced the difficulties that that institution has always had in its outreach to the people.

When the Centre was established, the Belize Rural Women's Association decided to scale down its operations in handicraft by 80% deciding to channel its outreach through the efforts of the Centre. There have been difficulties with this. For one thing, the distance from the Toledo District to Belize City is much further than to Belmopan, making it difficult for the women to get their products there. The Association, therefore, still takes on the responsibility to help the women get their products to Belize City.

The Handicraft Centre is operated by staff who are new to the handicraft outreach business. They did not piggy back on the experiences of organizations such as the Belize Rural Women's Association and the Ministry of Social Services sufficiently. There is the need to make better use of this rich wealth of experience to avoid reinventing the wheel. There are no simple answers to issues which have been deeply rooted for centuries.

Maya indian women and people will need to understand the workings of mainstream development agents to improve their

situation. They need to be empowered to be able to do this. Organizations such as the Belize Rural Women's Association need to help in providing them with the support to do this. The issues are more than just about handicraft. They are about inequalities and equity development and weak national institutions and processes which invalidate Belizeans and Maya indian women in particular. The situation of these women, despite their isolation, is a frame of reference for consideration of the rest of the country and other women.

In searching for viable mechanisms for social change, collective action is important. It is clear that dependence on existing government machinery and outside non-government organizations is not enough for the rural women of Belize. Rural development problems are produced by many complex processes which are interconnected. These include economical, political, cultural and natural processes. Efforts of cooperatives and associations such as the BRWA and the work of the Peace Corps show that community economic development through handicraft is possible. More work needs to be done through evaluation and readjustment. The first step could be the celebration of successes to date. This could give impetus for planning the future. In addition, continued assertiveness training of Maya women is important in helping them to break through. Role models such as the Garcia sisters, known for marketing of Maya slate carvings could, visit Maya indian communities to speak of their successes.

The Maya Cultural Council could be encouraged in doing promotional crafts work in the media and other forums. Success stories of Maya Indian women in business can be promoted. Maya Indian women need to understand that it is their right to take ownership and control of their lives. Through consultation with various leaders, locally and nationally, Maya women need to create a blueprint for community development based on their dreams, with economic self sufficiency as the cornerstone.

In an unpublished paper, Satya Gabriel (1989, p. 46) defines community economic development as "expansion in the wealth-creating capacity of the community". The basis of wealth, he notes, are the people, their talents and creativity. He goes on further to note that, "unlike the community that seeks to develop by wooing outside investment, the community that develops by building upon its existing wealth is more likely to encourage greater participation in political and economic decision-making by the citizens of that community, and to provide employment opportunities that are more sustainable".

However, in order to do this, the women will need to be supported. There are some aspects of economic development which are the responsibility of the State. Agencies like the Belize Rural Women's Association can help in ensuring that basic infra-structure is put in place. The improvement of roads and bridges is an important aspect of communication and

accessibility. It is also critical that more young women and men become formally educated so that they can obtain the skills to negotiate much needed resources. Agencies such as BRWA should not let go of support of the women at this time, just because a National Handicraft Centre is in place.

BRWA's track record of outreaching in the south is valuable in guiding the future development of the industry. In fact, a mid point outlet in Belmopan should be developed by BRWA and the National Handicraft Centre, to facilitate crafts reaching Belize City and to respond to the market demand of tourists visiting the west of the country. Much work needs to be done, but a lot of solid groundwork has been laid.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Many needs exist in Maya Indian communities, and particularly with women. Sometimes the resources for income-earning activities are meagre. People now want to earn more money. They reach out to various agencies for help, that have been unable to sustain their outreach. This study suggests that leadership and capacity building within community is important for any ventures to succeed.

Maya Indian women have always produced handicraft; it is not being introduced from outside. They will continue to produce handi-craft, especially fabric craft, for a very long time. Craft production is empowering because it encourages self reliance and promotes community participation, as has been described in this work.

Handicraft is a good way in which to expand on self-reliance, because it is a familiar area for women. Developing wealth creation capacity, is a way in which women can work through the steps to empowerment which could prepare them for bigger things. It is worth while for the community to explore and match its resources before someone from outside does it. This is the very point. If someone from outside can make use of the wealth, isn't it better for the community

members to do so? Handicraft is an incubator type of project which is made up of self employed producers.

Although many development people have warned against handicraft as an income-earning activity, in the case of Maya Indian women in southern Belize, it is one of the few outlets that they have for savings and investment. For example, they still wear the clothes that they produce. The aspect of familiarity is a plus in exploring this option. As they continue to network with other people throughout the country, they will become stronger in this venture.

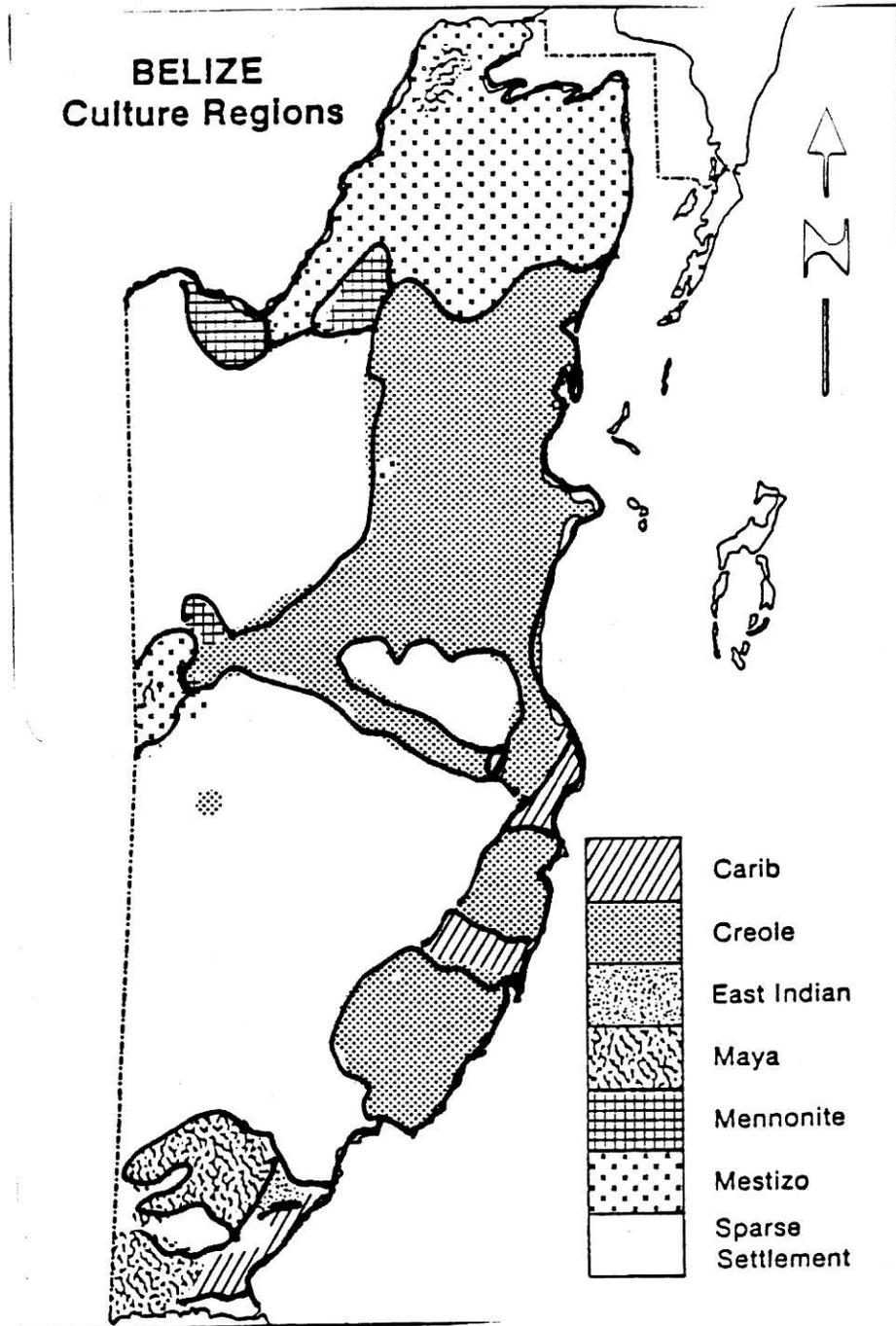
I do not deny that the development of the business of handicraft is a risky one. There has been a high failure rate of such projects internationally. However, Belize's case is unique because it is just being discovered by tourists, especially from North America and Europe. And, finally, it is an integral part of the lives of Maya Indian women.

APPENDIX A

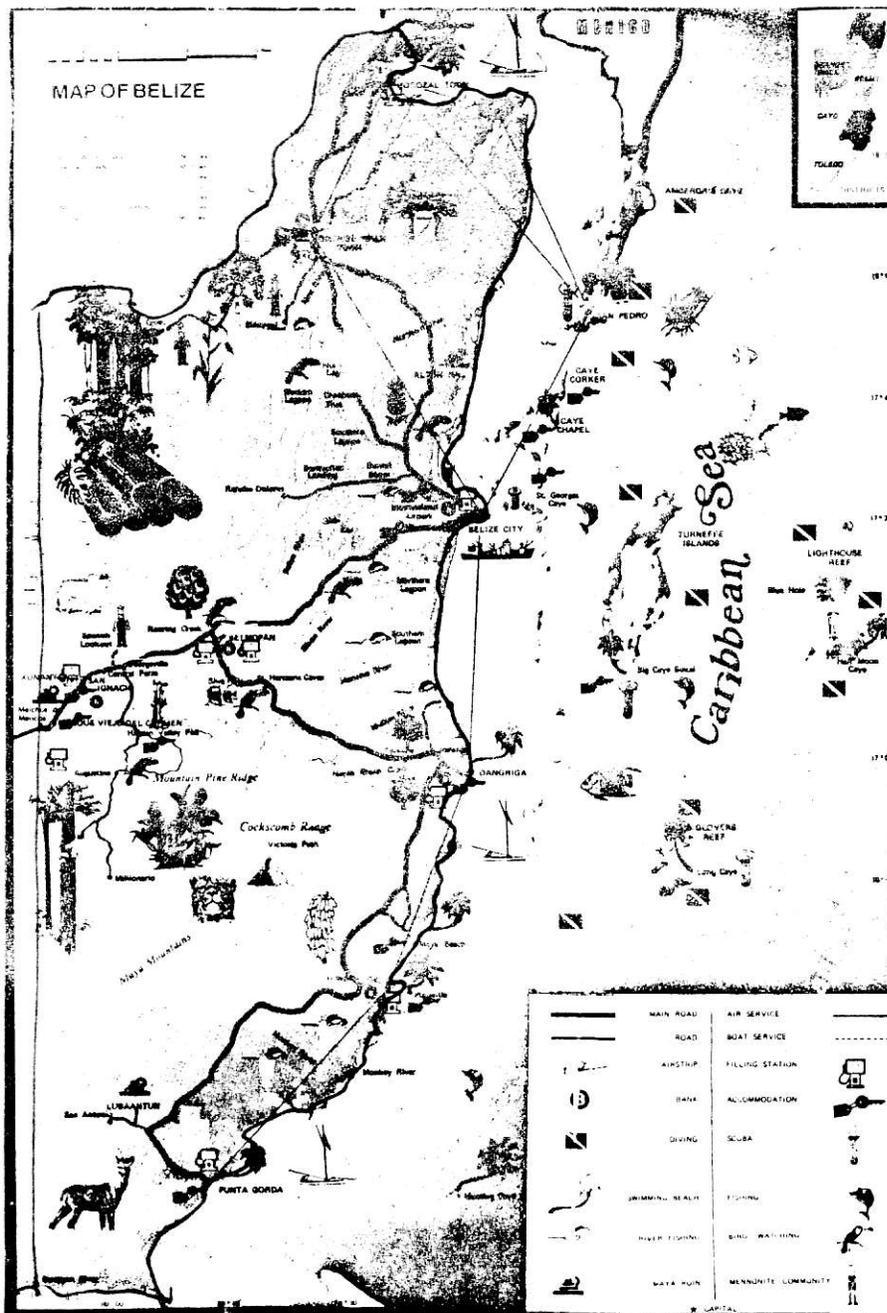
MAPS

MAPS

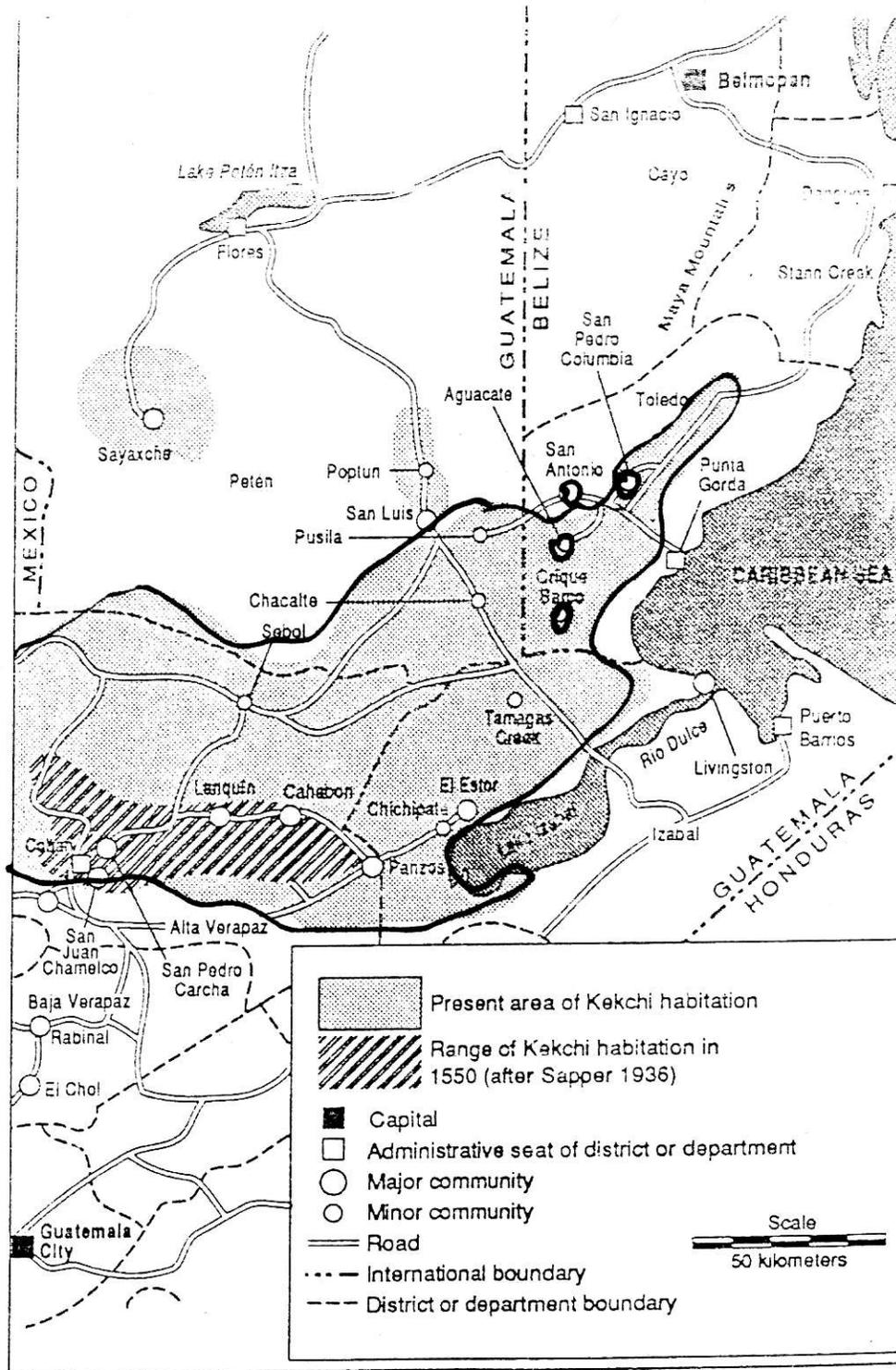
- A) Map showing the location of various ethnic groups.
- B) Map showing Belize natural resources and major tourist attractions
- C) Map showing Maya and Kekchi habitation in Belize and other parts of Central America
- D) Belize location in the Maya area
- E) Toledo District: Central and Southern parts
- F) Map of Belize, showing its location in Central America, and major Maya archaeological sites
- G) Southern Toledo, showing major Mayan villages



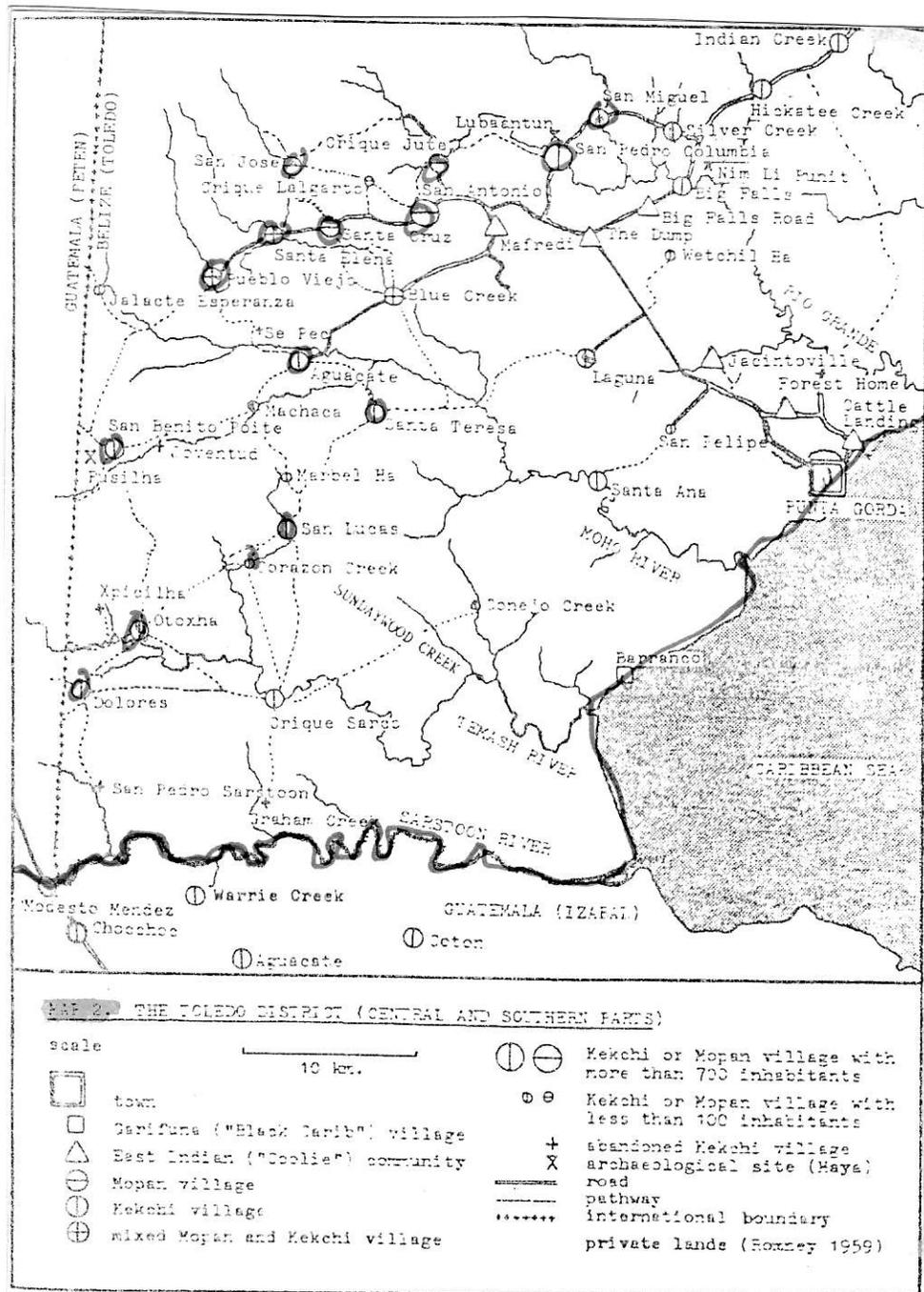
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B) Map showing Belize natural resources and major tourist attractions



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E) Toledo District: Central and Southern parts



F) Map of Belize, showing its location in Central America and major Maya archaeological sites

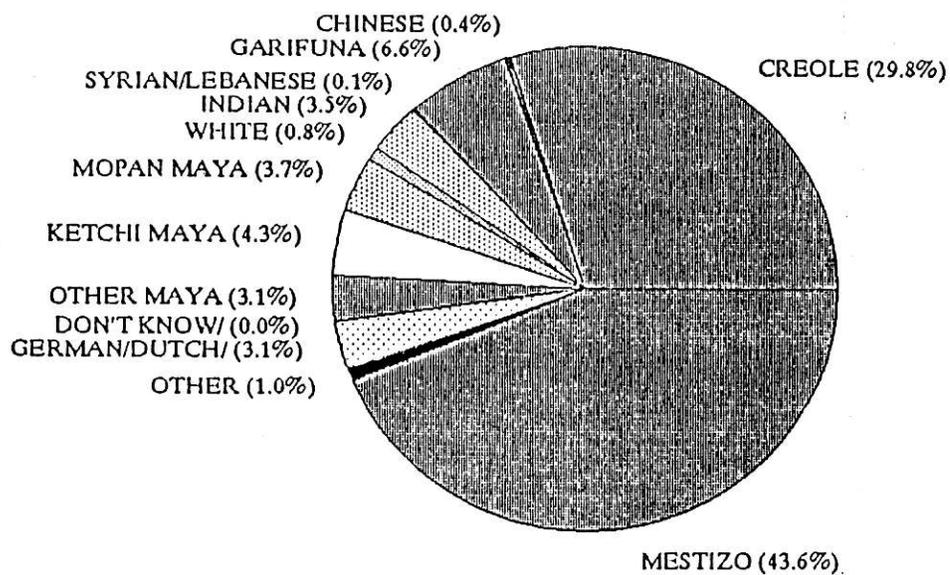
APPENDIX B

FACTS AND FIGURES

LIST OF FACTS AND FIGURES

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A) Population by ethnicity for Belize 1991



Source: Dept. of Statistics
Government of Belize Census 1991

B) Male-female population and households
by district and rural/urban areas

1990				
	Total	Male	Female	No. of H/holdr
Country Total	184,340	93,940	90,400	38,439
Urban	87,279	42,816	44,463	19,286
Rural	97,061	51,124	45,937	19,153
Corozal	28,217	14,546	13,671	5,560
Corozal Town	7,268	3,599	3,669	1,605
Corozal Rural	20,949	10,947	10,002	3,955
Orange Walk	29,462	15,306	14,156	5,588
Orange Walk Town	10,410	5,182	5,228	2,125
Orange Walk Rural	19,052	10,124	8,928	3,463
Belize	56,131	27,824	28,307	13,048
Belize City	43,621	21,345	22,276	10,156
Belize Rural	12,510	6,479	6,031	2,892
Cayo	35,194	17,903	17,291	6,695
San Ignacio/Santa Elena	7,989	3,911	4,078	1,543
Benque Viejo del Carmen	3,312	1,633	1,679	636
Belmopan	5,256	2,655	2,601	1,132
Cayo Rural	18,637	9,704	8,933	3,384
Stann Creek	18,061	9,385	8,676	4,009
Dangriga Town	6,838	3,259	3,579	1,551
Stann Creek Rural	11,223	6,126	5,097	2,458
<u>Toledo</u>	<u>17,275</u>	<u>8,976</u>	<u>8,299</u>	<u>3,539</u>
Punta Gorda Town	2,585	1,232	1,353	538
Toledo Rural	14,690	7,744	6,946	3,001

Source: CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

C) Visit to out-patient clinics and dental clinics

DISTRICT	Visit to out-patient Clinics		Visit to Dental Clinic					
	Total		Total		Children		Adults	
	1989	1990	1988	1989	1988	1989	1988	1989
Belize	47,196	70,684	5,463	5,541	1,682	1,797	3,781	744
Belmopan	11,446	15,713	623	1,318	190	487	433	831
Cayo	12,254	14,097	805	920	300	373	505	547
Corozal	13,267	14,470	1,365	750	407	375	958	375
O/Walk	17,208	13,350	1,378	1,448	608	664	770	784
S/Creek	18,258	39,006	1,932	1,247	517	272	1,415	975
Toledo	13,268	13,512	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
TOTAL	132,897	190,832	11,566	11,224	3,704	3,968	7,862	7,256

Source: Medical Statistics
Government of Belize

D) Total population, 1970, 1980, 1991 censuses by sex for major divisions.

AREA	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
COUNTRY									
TOTAL	119,645	60,082	59,563	145,353	73,817	71,736	189,392	96,325	93,067
URBAN									
TOTAL	64,815	31,032	33,883	75,152	36,543	38,609	90,005	44,412	45,593
RURAL									
TOTAL	54,730	29,050	25,670	70,201	37,074	33,127	99,387	51,913	47,474
COROZAL									
TOTAL	15,403	8,081	7,322	22,902	12,000	10,902	28,464	14,545	13,919
ORANGE WALK									
TOTAL	16,638	8,744	7,894	22,870	12,004	10,866	30,681	16,027	14,654
BELIZE									
TOTAL	49,615	24,116	25,499	50,801	25,005	25,796	57,000	28,402	28,628
CAYO									
TOTAL	18,023	8,422	7,601	22,837	11,549	11,288	37,693	19,149	18,544
STANN CREEK									
TOTAL	13,012	6,343	6,669	14,181	7,140	7,041	18,085	9,334	8,751
TOLEDO									
TOTAL	8,954	4,386	4,568	11,762	5,919	5,843	17,439	8,868	8,571

TABLE 2: TOTAL POPULATION AND PERCENT CHANGE 1980 AND 1991 CENSUSES BY AREA

AREA	1980	1991	% CHANGE 1980 - 91
COUNTRY			
TOTAL	145,353	189,392	30.30
URBAN	75,152	90,005	18.00
RURAL	69,076	99,387	43.84
COROZAL			
TOTAL	22,902	28,464	24.29
Corozal Town	6,899	7,062	2.36
Rural	16,003	21,402	33.74
ORANGE WALK			
TOTAL	22,870	30,681	34.15
Orange Walk Town	8,439	11,014	30.51
Rural	14,431	19,667	36.28
BELIZE			
TOTAL	50,801	57,000	12.20
Belize City	39,771	44,087	10.85
San Pedro Town	1,125	1,849	64.36
Rural	9,905	11,064	12.00
CAYO			
TOTAL	22,837	37,693	65.05
Brimpan	2,835	3,558	21.23
Benque	2,435	3,569	47.02
San Ignacio/ Santa Elena	5,616	8,669	52.98
Rural	11,851	21,593	82.00
STANN CREEK			
TOTAL	14,181	18,085	27.53
Dangriga	6,661	6,435	-3.39
Rural	7,520	11,650	54.92
TOLEDO			
TOTAL	11,762	17,439	48.27
St. George's	3,304	3,438	4.03
Rural	8,458	13,991	49.27

TABLE 3: NON-INSTITUTIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL POPULATION 1991 CENSUS BY AREA

AREA	TOTAL POP.	NON-INST. POP.	INST. POP.
COUNTRY			
TOTAL	189,392	188,341	1,051
URBAN	90,005	89,427	578
RURAL	99,387	98,914	473
COROZAL			
TOTAL	28,464	28,440	24
Corozal Town	7,062	7,050	12
Rural	21,402	21,390	12
ORANGE WALK			
TOTAL	30,681	30,626	55
Orange Walk Town	11,014	10,966	48
Rural	19,667	19,660	7
BELIZE			
TOTAL	57,000	56,469	561
Belize City	44,087	43,710	377
San Pedro Town	1,849	1,842	7
Rural	11,064	10,917	177
CAYO			
TOTAL	37,693	37,389	304
Brimpan	3,558	3,553	5
Benque	3,569	3,569	11
San Ignacio/ Santa Elena	8,669	8,669	93
Rural	21,593	21,398	195
STANN CREEK			
TOTAL	18,085	18,014	71
Dangriga	6,435	6,429	6
Rural	11,650	11,585	65
TOLEDO			
TOTAL	17,439	17,403	36
St. George's	3,438	3,438	19
Rural	13,991	13,964	17

Source: Government of Belize, Census 1991 Department of Statistics

E) Deaths and death rate by district and sex 1989 and 1990

Table 1.18: DEATHS AND DEATH RATES: BY DISTRICT AND SEX - 1989 & 1990

1989 ^p						
District	D E A T H S			DEATH RATES		
	Total Deaths	Male	Female	Infant Deaths	Total Death Rate	Infant Mortality Rate
Belize	375	206	169	55	6.2	25.3
Cayo	88	50	38	19	2.9	13.2
Corozal	74	45	29	17	2.4	20.8
Orange Walk	79	47	32	14	2.7	13.4
Stann Creek	81	37	44	12	4.5	18.5
Toledo	65	29	36	15	4.3	21.8
TOTAL	762	414	348	132	4.2	19.4
1990 ⁺						
District	D E A T H S			DEATH RATES		
	Total Deaths	Male	Female	Infant Deaths	Total Death Rate	Infant Mortality Rate
Belize	450	247	203	66	8.0	29.5
Cayo	106	60	46	23	3.0	15.6
Corozal	89	54	35	20	3.2	23.1
Orange Walk	95	56	39	17	3.2	15.4
Stann Creek	97	44	53	14	5.4	20.2
Toledo	78	35	43	18	4.5	27.8
TOTAL	915	496	419	158	5.0	22.5

* (Rates are per 1,000 population of specified group)

+ Adjusted

p - provisional

Source: Medical Statistics
Government of Belize

F) Population by ethnicity and sex, 1991 and 1980

ETHNICITY	1991				ETHNICITY	1990							
	TOTAL	%	MALE	% FEMALE		TOTAL	%	MALE	% FEMALE				
DELIZE TOTAL	54,212	100.0	26,767	100.0	27,545	100.0	DELIZE TOTAL	48,831	100.0	24,418	100.0	25,413	100.0
CREOLE	36,475	67.9	18,093	67.6	18,782	68.2	NEGRO/BLACK	37,692	75.8	18,333	75.1	18,359	78.2
INDIAN	1,743	3.3	804	3.2	919	3.3	EAST INDIAN	783	1.6	389	1.5	414	1.6
QARIFUNA	2,852	5.3	1,361	5.1	1,491	5.4	CHINESE	138	0.3	71	0.3	63	0.3
MAYA MOPAN	280	0.5	134	0.5	128	0.5	AMERINDIAN	328	0.7	159	0.7	169	0.7
KETCHI MAYA	171	0.3	82	0.3	78	0.3	PORTUGUESE	53	0.1	27	0.1	26	0.1
OTHER MAYA	240	0.4	120	0.4	120	0.4	SYRIAN/LEBANESE	1,617	3.2	807	3.3	810	3.2
GERMAN/DUTCH	37	0.1	22	0.1	15	0.1	WHITE	550	1.1	316	1.3	234	0.9
MENNONITE							MIXED	6,385	13.2	3228	13.2	3367	13.2
MESTIZO	10,170	18.7	5,012	18.7	5,158	18.7	OTHER RACES	338	0.7	169	0.7	167	0.7
CHINESE	408	0.8	278	1.0	191	0.7	NOT STATED	1,741	3.5	939	3.8	802	3.2
SYRIAN/LEBANESE	98	0.2	52	0.2	27	0.1							
WHITE	545	1.0	304	1.1	241	0.9							
OTHER	810	1.5	424	1.6	388	1.4							
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	1	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0							
CAYO TOTAL	36,523	100.0	18,485	100.0	18,038	100.0	CAYO TOTAL	22,697	100.0	11,398	100.0	11,299	100.0
CREOLE	8,390	23.0	4,200	22.7	4,190	23.2	NEGRO/BLACK	7,065	31.1	3,555	31.2	3,510	31.1
INDIAN	608	1.7	319	1.7	287	1.6	EAST INDIAN	243	1.1	137	1.2	106	0.9
QARIFUNA	819	1.7	320	1.7	299	1.7	CHINESE	8	0.0	6	0.1	2	0.0
MAYA MOPAN	1,288	3.5	642	3.5	628	3.5	AMERINDIAN	1,061	4.7	514	4.5	547	4.8
KETCHI MAYA	280	0.8	138	0.7	142	0.8	PORTUGUESE	96	0.4	44	0.4	52	0.5
OTHER MAYA	1,613	4.4	812	4.4	801	4.4	SYRIAN/LEBANESE	435	1.9	233	2.0	202	1.8
GERMAN/DUTCH	1,671	4.6	856	4.6	785	4.4	MIXED	11,141	49.1	5374	48.9	5367	48.3
MENNONITE							OTHER RACES	289	1.3	165	1.4	134	1.2
MESTIZO	21,170	58.0	10,682	57.8	10,488	58.1	NOT STATED	538	2.4	252	2.2	284	2.5
CHINESE	51	0.1	29	0.2	22	0.1							
SYRIAN/LEBANESE	51	0.1	30	0.2	21	0.1							
WHITE	434	1.2	238	1.3	198	1.1							
OTHER	354	1.0	185	1.0	169	0.9							
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	18	0.0	8	0.0	10	0.1							
STANN CREEK TOTAL	17,477	100.0	8,992	100.0	8,485	100.0	STANN CREEK TOTAL	13,921	100.0	6,947	100.0	6,974	100.0
CREOLE	4,389	25.1	2,248	25.0	2,141	25.2	NEGRO/BLACK	4,818	33.2	2,408	34.7	2,210	31.7
INDIAN	665	3.8	333	3.7	332	3.9	EAST INDIAN	289	2.1	138	2.0	150	2.1
QARIFUNA	8,323	47.2	2,871	31.0	3,352	39.5	CHINESE	19	0.1	8	0.1	10	0.1
MAYA MOPAN	1,190	6.8	615	6.8	575	6.8	AMERINDIAN	781	5.6	393	5.7	388	5.6
KETCHI MAYA	199	1.1	105	1.2	94	1.1	PORTUGUESE	32	0.2	16	0.2	16	0.2
OTHER MAYA	23	0.1	11	0.1	10	0.1	SYRIAN/LEBANESE	6,314	45.4	2951	42.5	3363	48.2
GERMAN/DUTCH	11	0.1	6	0.1	5	0.1	WHITE	65	0.5	40	0.6	25	0.4
MENNONITE							MIXED	1,482	10.6	838	12.0	646	9.3
MESTIZO	4,142	23.7	2,407	26.6	1,735	20.4	OTHER RACES	80	0.6	44	0.6	36	0.5
CHINESE	27	0.2	15	0.2	12	0.1	NOT STATED	241	1.7	111	1.6	130	1.9
SYRIAN/LEBANESE	3	0.0	3	0.0	0	0.0							
WHITE	124	0.7	78	0.9	46	0.5							
OTHER	361	2.2	200	2.2	181	2.1							
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0							
TOLEDO TOTAL	17,486	100.0	8,812	100.0	8,674	100.0	TOLEDO TOTAL	11,449	100.0	5,715	100.0	5,734	100.0
CREOLE	1,003	5.7	543	6.2	460	5.3	NEGRO/BLACK	1,360	11.9	708	12.4	652	11.4
INDIAN	1,381	7.9	697	7.9	684	7.9	EAST INDIAN	994	8.7	508	8.9	486	8.5
QARIFUNA	1,751	10.0	789	8.9	865	10.1	CHINESE	10	0.1	8	0.1	4	0.1
MAYA MOPAN	3,825	21.9	1,978	21.3	1,899	22.1	AMERINDIAN	2,939	25.7	1477	25.8	1462	25.3
KETCHI MAYA	7,123	40.7	3,801	40.9	3,521	40.6	PORTUGUESE	3,663	32.0	1841	32.2	1822	31.8
OTHER MAYA	41	0.2	23	0.3	18	0.2	SYRIAN/LEBANESE	1,417	12.4	635	11.1	782	13.6
GERMAN/DUTCH	15	0.1	8	0.1	7	0.1	WHITE	112	1.0	61	1.1	51	0.9
MENNONITE							MIXED	865	8.0	384	6.4	321	5.6
MESTIZO	2,080	11.9	1,137	12.9	943	10.9	OTHER RACES	13	0.1	8	0.1	7	0.1
CHINESE	8	0.0	7	0.1	1	0.0	NOT STATED	258	2.2	111	1.9	148	2.5
SYRIAN/LEBANESE	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0							
WHITE	143	0.8	78	0.9	65	0.7							
OTHER	117	0.7	55	0.6	62	0.7							
DON'T KNOW/NOT STATED	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0							

Source: Department of Statistics
Government of Belize

G) Figure: Total population: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991 censuses, by rural/ urban divisions

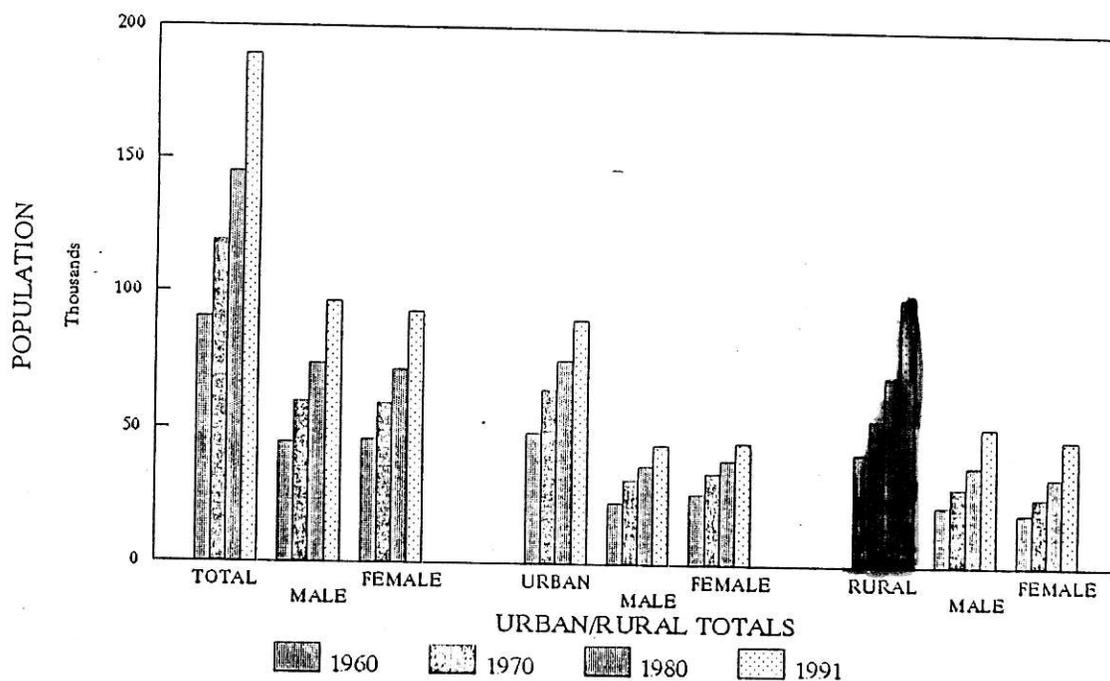


TABLE
TOTAL POPULATION BY URBAN/RURAL DIVISIONS

AREA	1960	1970	1980	1991
TOTAL	90565	119645	145353	189392
MALE	44659	60092	73617	96325
FEMALE	45906	59553	71736	93067
URBAN	48768	64915	75152	90005
MALE	22572	31032	36543	44412
FEMALE	26196	33883	38609	45593
RURAL	41797	54730	70201	99387
MALE	22087	29060	37074	51913
FEMALE	19710	25670	33127	47474

H) Population by district
1921, 1931, 1946, 1960, 1970, 1980

District and Sub-Divisions	1921	1931	1946	1960	1970	1980	Percentage Change 1970-1980
Country Total	45,297	51,347	59,220	90,505	119,934	145,353	21.19
Urban	21,480	26,417	33,073	48,768	65,025	75,152	15.57
Rural	23,817	24,930	26,147	41,737	54,909	70,201	27.85
Belize	17,398	21,661	26,781	40,084	49,355	50,801	2.93
Belize City	12,423	16,687	21,886	32,867	39,050	39,771	1.85
Belize Rural	4,975	4,974	4,895	7,217	10,305	11,030	7.04
Corozal	6,756	6,885	6,773	9,730	15,551	22,902	47.27
Corozal Town	2,069	2,197	2,190	3,171	4,724	6,899	46.04
Corozal Rural	4,687	4,688	4,583	6,559	10,827	16,003	47.81
Orange Walk	5,607	5,895	5,520	10,306	17,041	22,870	34.21
Orange Walk Town	1,175	1,099	1,395	2,157	5,698	8,439	48.10
Orange Walk Rural	4,432	4,796	4,125	8,149	11,343	14,431	27.22
Cayo	5,464	5,694	7,370	11,764	15,975	22,837	42.95
San Ignacio	1,237	1,260	1,548	1,890	4,336	5,616	29.52
Benque Viejo del Carmen	1,097	1,211	1,264	1,607	1,921	2,435	26.76
Belmopan	-	-	-	-	274	2,935	971.17
Cayo Rural	3,130	3,223	4,558	8,267	9,444	11,851	25.49
Stann Creek	4,830	4,960	6,373	10,906	13,023	14,181	8.89
Dangriga	2,557	2,844	3,414	5,287	6,939	6,661	-4.01
Stann Creek Rural	2,273	2,116	2,959	5,619	6,084	7,520	23.60
Toledo	5,242	6,252	6,403	7,715	8,989	11,762	30.85
Punta Gorda	922	1,119	1,376	1,789	2,083	2,396	15.03
Toledo Rural	4,320	5,133	5,027	5,926	6,906	9,366	35.62

Source: Department of Statistics
Government of Belize

I) Percentage population by race and district 1980

DISTRICT	POPULATION	CREOLE	EAST		MAYA	KETCHI	GARIPUNA	WHITE	MESTIZO	OTHER NOT STATED	* TOTAL
			INDIAN	CHINESE							
Country Total	145,353	39.7	2.1	0.1	6.8	2.7	7.6	4.2	33.1	3.6	100.0
Urban	72,717	54.0	1.5	0.3	0.8	0.1	11.3	0.8	26.2	5.7	100.0
Rural	72,636	25.5	2.5	0.0	12.4	5.3	3.9	7.4	40.1	2.4	100.0
Belize	50,801	75.1	1.5	0.3	0.7	0.1	3.2	1.1	13.1	4.8	100.0
Belize City	39,771	76.0	1.5	0.4	0.3	0.1	3.5	0.9	12.2	5.1	100.0
Belize Rural	11,030	71.8	1.5	0.0	2.1	0.1	2.3	1.6	16.4	4.1	100.0
Corozal	22,902	16.9	2.9	0.1	13.8	0.3	2.3	1.7	58.4	3.6	100.0
Corozal Town	8,899	30.5	1.8	0.5	0.0	0.0	3.2	0.3	59.2	4.5	100.0
Corozal Rural	16,003	11.1	3.3	0.0	19.7	0.4	1.9	2.2	58.0	3.4	100.0
Orange Walk	22,870	11.3	0.3	0.0	6.8	0.2	2.3	13.5	64.5	1.1	100.0
Orange Walk Town	8,439	19.7	0.4	0.1	3.8	0.0	5.1	0.2	68.9	1.8	100.0
Orange Walk Rural	14,431	6.4	0.2	0.0	8.6	0.3	0.6	21.3	61.9	0.7	100.0
Cayo	22,837	31.0	1.1	0.0	4.6	0.4	1.9	8.0	49.0	3.8	100.0
San Ignacio	5,616	28.1	1.5	0.2	1.0	0.5	1.2	1.1	59.0	7.5	100.0
Cayo District	14,286	26.9	0.4	0.0	6.9	0.4	0.7	11.6	50.5	2.5	100.0
Belmopan	2,935	56.8	3.2	0.0	0.5	0.1	9.3	3.9	22.9	3.3	100.0
Stann Creek	14,181	32.9	2.0	0.1	5.2	0.2	45.6	0.5	10.5	2.9	100.0
Dangriga	6,661	21.6	1.4	0.2	0.3	0.0	70.0	0.4	1.8	4.2	100.0
Stann Creek Rural	7,520	43.0	2.7	0.0	3.7	0.4	23.7	0.5	18.3	1.7	100.0
Toledo	11,782	11.3	8.6	0.0	25.4	31.5	12.7	1.0	5.9	3.0	100.0
Punta Gorda	2,396	23.6	4.4	0.0	3.3	1.1	48.3	0.9	8.9	9.5	100.0
Toledo Rural	9,386	9.0	9.6	0.0	31.1	39.3	3.4	1.0	5.1	1.3	100.0

Source: POPULATION CENSUS 1980

* Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding errors

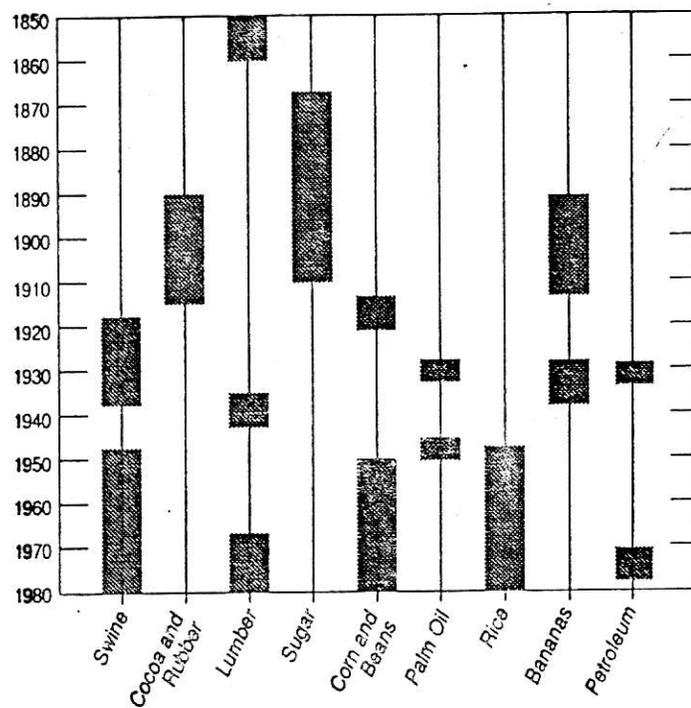
Source: Government of Belize
Department of Statistics

J) Populations by households and villages.

Community	Total	Male	Female	No. of H/Holds	Ave. No. in H/Holds
San Antonio	736	350	386	119	6.2
Santa Familia	441	230	211	72	6.1
San Jose Succotz	945	489	456	164	5.8
Spanish Lookout	1276	653	623	217	5.9
Teakettle	576	295	281	93	6.2
Unitedville	324	168	156	56	5.8
STANN CREEK DISTRICT					
Cow Pen	266	181	85	80	3.3
Georgetown	220	104	116	42	5.2
Hopkins Commerce Bight	749	361	388	127	5.9
Mango Creek & Independance	1474	736	738	261	5.6
Placencia Village	334	173	161	64	5.2
Pomona	434	236	198	104	4.2
Seine Bight	465	210	265	94	4.9
Silk Grass	246	113	133	50	4.9
Sittee River	278	126	152	52	5.3
S. C. Valley road	1008	586	522	251	4.0
TOLEDO DISTRICT					
Barranco	229	100	129	58	3.9
Big Fall Including Never Delay & Esperanza	323	157	166	57	5.7
Forest Home	206	104	102	38	5.4
Indian Creek	264	127	137	51	5.2
Laguna	205	92	113	50	4.1
Pueblo	345	188	158	66	5.2
San Antonio	1087	542	545	229	4.7
San Benito Poite	261	134	127	42	6.2
San Jose	599	313	286	110	5.4
San Miguel	227	120	107	43	5.3
San Pedro Columbia	784	408	376	142	5.5
Santa Cruz	349	176	173	75	4.7

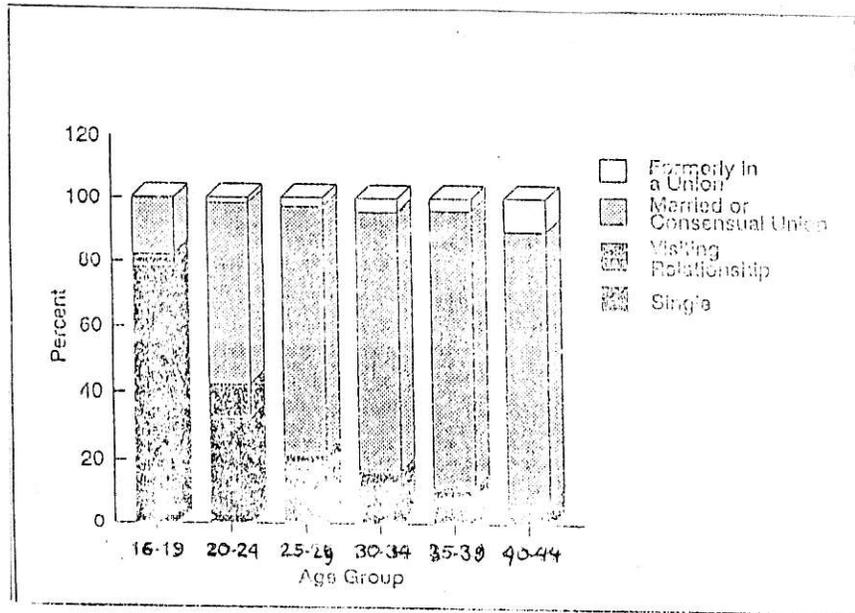
Source: Dept. of Statistics
Government of Belize Census 1981

K) Production for export in Toledo 1850-1980.

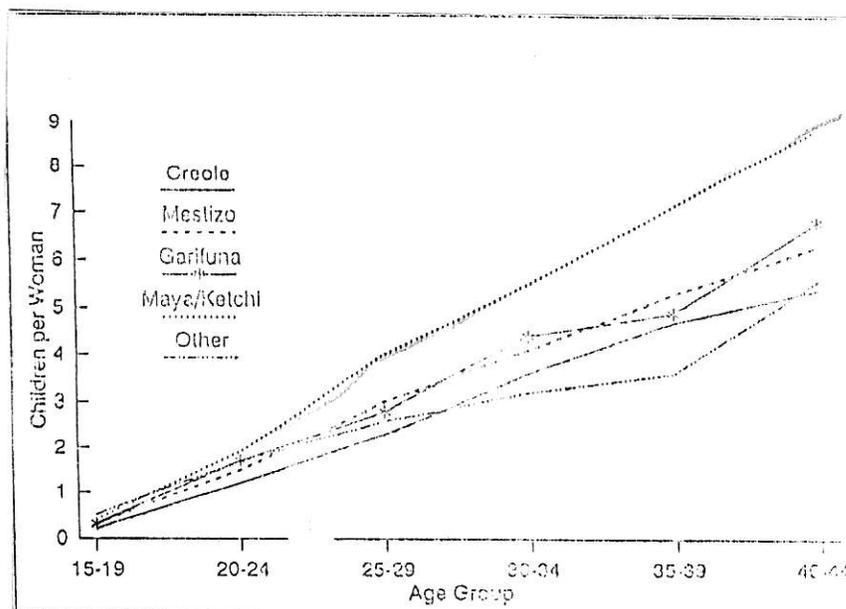


Source: Wilk

L1) Average number of children by ethnic group and age.

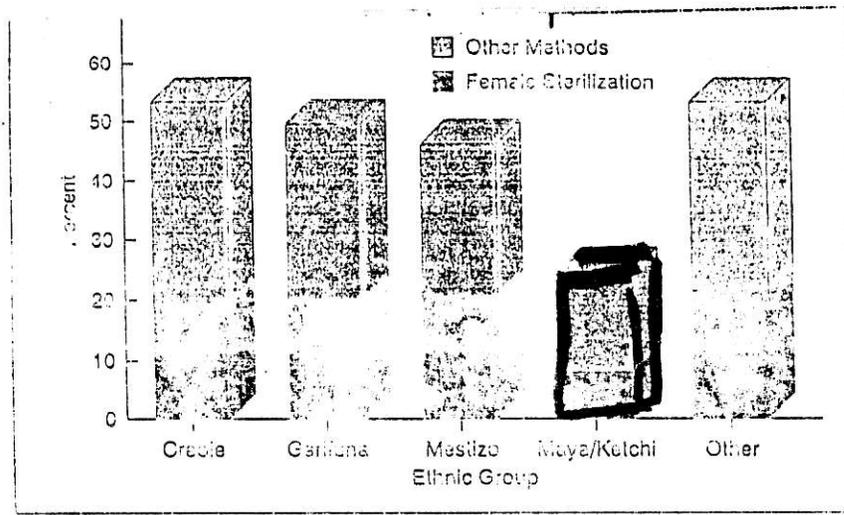


L2) Current marital status by age.

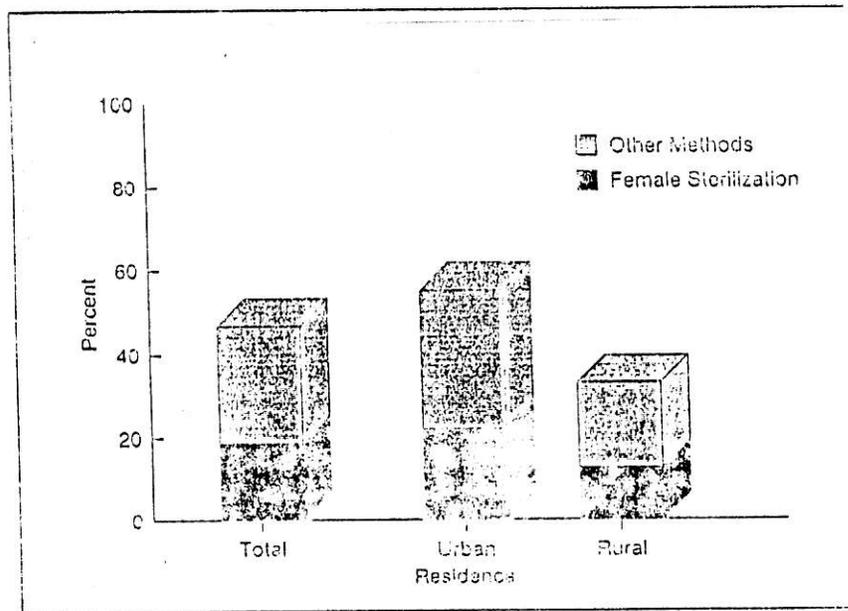


Source: Belize Family Survey, 1991.
 Belize Family Life Association

M1) Current use by ethnic groups of contraceptives



M2) Current use of contraceptives by residence



APPENDIX C

SAMPLES OF MAYA CRAFTS



Traditional Maya Blouse Worn by Women of the Mopan Village



Women Select Designs from the Environment



Yum Yax, God of Corn



Products of Jippa Jappa Straw



Thatching for Housing

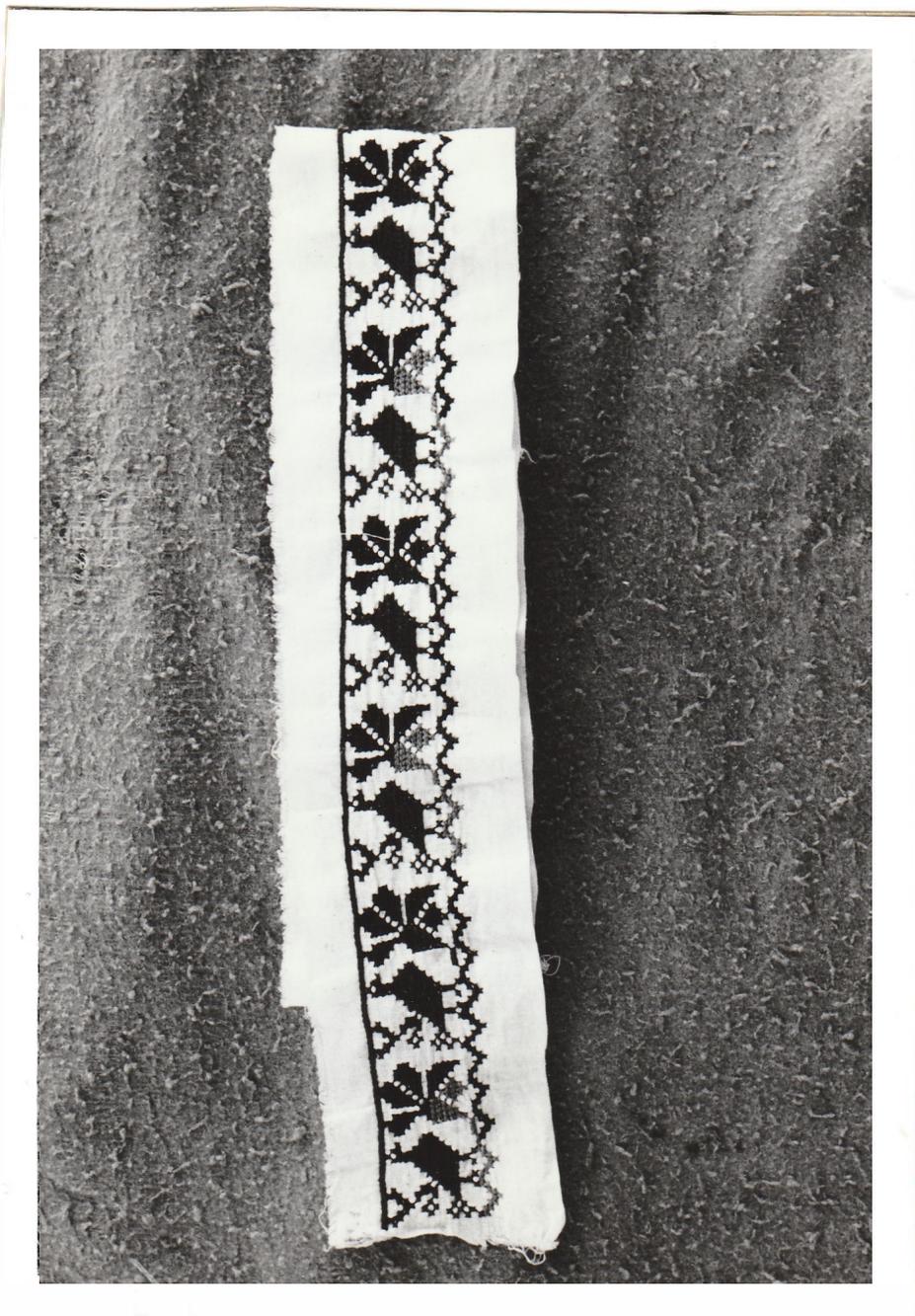
APPENDIX D

EMBROIDERY DESIGNS

These are Maya strips which are placed on traditional Maya blouses and other utilitarian products. The translations of the designs used in this work were prepared by the women, and the descriptions vary, depending on who thought of them. These strips are presently being experimented with for new fashions and design.

Cynthia Ellis

Translations done with the help
of Michaela Wewe, of the village
of San Antonio, Toledo



Small Cocriko Bird Between Flowers



Wild Turkey Between Wild Plants in the High Bush



Birds Perching On Ho Ho Plant with Flowers Between Them



The Squirrel is Resting on the Limb of a Tree



Design of Scorpions

APPENDIX E

PEOPLE AND CRAFTS



Mother and Child of San Jose, Toledo



Mopan Maya Woman in Kitchen Sorting Coffee and Cocoa Beans



Early Participation of Maya
Women in Cultural Market Day (1986)



INTERACTION OF RESOURCE TEAM
OF BELIZE RURAL WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION AND IN MAYA
VILLAGES WITH MAYA WOMEN





Craft Display and Sale Workshops
Held in Belize City by BRWA in 1988



BRWA Displaying and Selling
Craft at the National Agriculture
and Trade Show in 1989

APPENDIX F

MINI PROFILES OF MAYA INDIAN WOMEN WORKING WITH HANDICRAFT

Michele Cho - Mopan Maya - Eighteen Years

Michele Cho, a Mopan Mayan, originally one of twelve children, is eighteen years old and lives with her parents, a sister and two brothers.

Michele does embroidery. She makes Mayan blouses. She started to do embroidery when she was twelve years old, learning how to do all the different designs.

First Michele goes to the stores and buys thread to do the embroidery, as well as white broadcloth and dacron. She uses the broadcloth material to make the lace and then she uses the dacron for the rest of the blouse. She sews the blouse on a treadle machine. It takes about three weeks to complete a blouse if one works constantly, and about four or five weeks if there are other chores to do.

In Michele's family all the women work together while the men go to the farm. At the end of each term, when there is a BRWA Board meeting, Michelle and her mother bring about six blouses. The price of each blouse varies according to the size of the blouse and width of the lace. A big blouse with the black and white traditional design costs about \$30. The organization buys these blouses and thus the blouses are a source of income for the family.

Michele enjoys being a member of BRWA, especially because she has a market for her blouses and because she travels to Belmopan and other parts of the country, meeting many people and learning many things.

Priscilla Cho - Mayan - 23 years

Priscilla Cho is a twenty-three years old Mayan woman who lives in San Antonio Crique Jute in the Toledo District. Priscilla lives with her mother and father. She is the only child that remained at home. The others have gotten married and left home.

Priscilla does embroidery work at home. She and her mother make blouses and sell them to tourists who go to San Antonio. Priscilla's mother taught her how to do embroidery when she was about eleven years old. She used to start making her laces at home and then she worked on them during sewing classes in school. Priscilla and her mother make about four blouses per month.

Priscilla and her mother buy about six yards of dacron to make three blouses. They first make several lace strips and then they sew the blouses. Priscilla usually makes the traditional black and white laces but sometimes mixes one of the other colors with white. Never does she mix additional colors because this makes the embroidery more difficult. Making blouses is not the main or sole source of income in Priscilla's family. Her father does farming and that is their main source of income. Money earned from making blouses is sometimes spent by the women for their own personal needs like clothing and shoes.

Margaret Brown - Kekchi Maya - 38 years - 7 children

Margaret makes Koshtale and straw baskets. She learned to make straw baskets from the Social Development Department and learned Koshtale from a friend when she was eleven years old. There was no school where Margaret grew up, so getting an opportunity to learn craft was a very good thing to happen to her.

Koshtale

Margaret buys thread from the cabañeros. Five sticks are used for weaving the materials from which bags are made. Margaret takes a day to weave enough material to make a bag.

When she sells her bags she is happy and proud and thanks God for BRWA. She decides that each bag must be a different colour--red, green, blue, yellow, orange, black. The money that is collected is used for whatever is needed in the house.

Margaret's husband told her about BRWA. The organization helped her to overcome her shyness. When she sells her craft, she is proud and happy. She feels good about helping her husband financially. This gives her a sense of security. BRWA buys her craft.

Straw Baskets

Margaret wakes up at 3:00 a.m. to make lunch for the children, after which she feeds her husband and children. At 7:00 a.m. she, along with a friend, leaves home to go into the bushes to look for straw. She cuts the straw, collects

all that she has cut and finds a good place where she can remove the veins of the leaves. The leaves are brought home in a bag which she carries on her back for about two hours. When she reaches home, the leaves are boiled, then dried in the sun. They are now ready to be woven. Margaret makes four small baskets per day. These are sold to BRWA.

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