

Country Technical Note on
Indigenous Peoples' Issues

Belize

Technical Country Note on Indigenous Issues

BELIZE

2022

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Acronyms

BENIC	Belize National Indigenous Council
BNCCC	Belize National Climate Change Committee
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CELADE	Centro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Demografía
CICA	Coordinadora Indígena de Centro América
CPF	Country Partnership Framework (WB)
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (CEPAL)
EU	European Union
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HDI	Human Development Index
IAComHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPAF	Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IFAD)
FILAC	Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe
GCF	Green Climate Fund
MLA	Maya Leaders Alliance
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NCCO	National Climate Change Office
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
ONECA	Organización Negra Centroamericana
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PAR	Poverty Assessment Report
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forests Degradation
SIB	Statistical Institute of Belize
SICA	Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana
SISPI	Sistema de Indicadores Sociodemográficos de Pueblos Indígenas
TAA	Toledo Alcaldes Association
TMLR	Toledo Maya Lands Rights (Commission)

UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Fund for Children
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNMSDCF	United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSR	United Nations Special Rapporteur
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Indigenous Peoples in Belize

1.1 Population

According to data pertaining to the last census (2010), the total population of Belize was 324,528.¹ The Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) estimates a global population of 430,191 persons by July 2021.²

Population of Belize by age and sex

Age group	Total population		Male		Female	
	Total	%	Population	%	Population	%
0-14	111,320	35.6	56,541	35.8	54,477	35.2
15-64	188,244	60.2	94,603	59.9	93,941	60.7
Over 65	13,133	4.2	6,791	4.3	6,345	4.1
Total	312,698	100	157,935	100	154,763	100

Source: 2010 *Population and Housing Census Belize*.

The census included a question on ethnic self-identification. According to the data, the ethnic composition of the population comprises four indigenous peoples (three Mayan peoples and the Garifuna). For the 2010 census, Maya groups were the 12 per cent of the total population. According to CEPAL/FILAC, the indigenous population would represent the 14.5 per cent of the total population.³

Total population by sex and ethnicity 2018-2020

	Ethnic group	2018	2019	2020
Total	Total	395,882	406,262	421,464
	Creole	109578	90764	110,370
	Garifuna	21517	23649	28,093
	Maya	44798	45262	41,528
	Mestizo/Hispanic	188148	216471	200,248
	Other	31710	30039	40,398
	Dknow/Not stated	131	78	825
Male	Total	197,943	203,133	210,754
	Creole	54957	46871	57,548
	Garifuna	10378	11369	12,846
	Maya	22066	22560	20,463
	Mestizo/Hispanic	94315	106569	98,191

¹ 2015 Compendium of statistics. Statistical Institute of Belize. website: <http://sib.org.bz/>. 2010 census report: http://sib.org.bz/wp-content/uploads/2010_Census_Report.pdf Post census estimations up to mid-2021 by age group and sex and by administrative division and sex, without disaggregated data by ethnic group available at <http://sib.org.bz/statistics/population/>

² <https://sib.org.bz/>

³ ECLAC (2020), Cuadro III.6,p.108. Regarding the population data, the SICA study on Belize in the preparation of the *Agenda for sustainable and inclusive development of indigenous peoples and afro-descendants in Central America* points out: *However, due to the shortcomings of official censuses, [...], the above data are approximations and may vary considerably from one source to another. Thus, for example, the systematization of census studies carried out by ECLAC in 2017 reports a total indigenous population of 52,334, which makes for 13.7%. It also reports the existence of 137,520 people of African descent, corresponding to 36%. That is, if the ECLAC data are correct, there would be 189,854 indigenous and Afro-descendant persons in Belize, equivalent to 48.6% of the total population. (ECLAC. Population Notes No. 97. Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE). Santiago, Chile. 2014). SICA (2021) p.109*

	Other	16186	15731	21,185
	Dknow/Not stated	41	33	521
Female	Total	197,939	203,129	210,709
	Creole	54621	43893	52,822
	Garifuna	11139	12280	15,248
	Maya	22733	22702	21,065
	Mestizo/Hispanic	93833	109902	102,057
	Other	15524	14308	19,212
	Dknow/Not stated	90	45	304

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize. April Labour Force Survey. No LFS was conducted in April of 2020. Data for 2020 is from the September LFS4

Mayans of Belize belong to three different peoples: Q'eqchi', Mopan and Yucatec, with the following population according to the 2010 census:

Population by Maya Ethnic Group Affiliation and Sex

	Total	Males	Females
Maya Q'eqchi'⁵	20,616	10,342	10,274
Maya Mopan	13,022	6,436	6,586
Maya Yucatec	2,869	1,520	1,349

Source: Prepared on the basis of the 2010 Census.

1.2 Geographical distribution

Indigenous peoples of Mayan origin, are present in all six districts of the country. They live mainly in rural areas in essentially peasant communities, but are not distributed uniformly throughout the country. The Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya live mainly in the district of Toledo, and to a lesser degree in the districts of Cayo and Stann Creek, whereas the Yucatecan Maya are located mainly in the district of Cayo, and to a lesser degree in the district of Corozal.

Indigenous Mayan population and geographical location by district

Indigenous people	Population by ethnic group affiliation	%	Geographical location by district
Maya Q'eqchi'	20,616	56%	Belize, Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo, although Corozal and Orange Walk are home to some indigenous groups as well
Maya Mopán	13,022	35.6%	Orange Walk, Belize, Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo, with small populations in Corozal
Maya Yucateco	2,869	7.8%	Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize and Cayo, with small populations in Stann Creek and Toledo
Total	36,507	100.0	

Source: Prepared on the basis of the 2010 Census.

Percentage of Population per District Claiming Maya Ethnic Group⁶

Corozal	Orange Walk	Belize	Cayo	Stann Creek	Toledo
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⁴ http://sib.org.bz/wp-content/uploads/2020_Abstract_of_Statistics.pdf

⁵ Belizean census use the writing "ketchi". In this CTN the more common transcription of Q'eqchi' is used.

⁶ According to data from the 2010 Population Census. Percentages of indigenous Maya per region were not available from the 2015 *Compendium of statistics*.

2.8	1.7	2.4	8.0	16.9	66.5
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Population by Maya Ethnic Group and District

	Country total	Corozal	Orange Walk	Belize	Cayo	Stann Creek	Toledo
Maya Q'eqchi'	20,616	399	254	1,118	1,904	1,852	15,089
Maya Mopan	13,022	169	297	926	2,371	3,910	5,349
Maya Yucatec	2,869	590	226	278	1,699	47	29

Source: Prepared on the basis of the 2010 Census.

1.3 Socio-economic, political and cultural situation

1.3.1. Lands and territories

There is no recognition, either Constitutional or in other domestic laws of indigenous land rights based on customary tenure. Indigenous communal lands are known as reservations and considered as State property. There are ten reservations covering a total of 70,000 acres, in which 51 per cent of the Maya population live. The Government reserves the right to administer them “in the best public interest”.⁷ Other Mayan customary lands outside reservations are also considered as State lands. Large tracts of forest lands in the district of Toledo were included in the Sarstoon-Temash National Park and the Columbia River Forest Reserve. Indigenous Maya peoples have had to fight for recognition of their territorial rights in court. According to MLA, Maya ancestral territory in southern Belize covers over one million acres.

Since early 1990s, the government started granting logging concessions in traditional reservation and non-reservation Maya lands in Toledo district without consultation or consent. An oil exploration permit was granted to AB Energy Corporation to explore in an extensive part of lowland Toledo District. In 1996, the Toledo Maya Council filed a petition under the IAComHR for the protection of their traditional lands. In 1999, the Maya Leaders Alliance was founded for the defence of their collective rights to their territories.⁸

In 2000, representatives of the Maya of Toledo signed the *Ten Points of Agreement between the Government of Belize and the Maya Peoples of Southern Belize*. The Government recognized that Maya people had rights to lands and resources based on their longstanding use and occupancy. In 2004, the IAComHR issued a report finding that Belize had violated its obligation to protect Maya rights over their lands and resources by issuing logging and oil concessions on their traditional lands and recommended Belize, *inter alia*, to delimit, demarcate and title the lands of the Maya in accordance with their customary land use practices and to “provide them with the protections necessary to exercise their right to property fully and equally with other members of the Belizean population”.⁹

The government disregarded these recommendations and continued issuing permits for extractive activities and leasing Maya communal lands to private interests.¹⁰ In 2007, two Maya communities, Conejo and Santa Cruz filed actions in the Supreme Court of Belize for recognition of their property rights. In October 2007 the Supreme Court held that the government had the obligation to respect and protect Maya land rights in the Toledo district.¹¹

⁷ Atlas (2010)

⁸ For a summary time line, see <https://thetenurefacility.org/timeline/belize/>

⁹ *Case of Maya Indigenous Communities of Toledo v. Belize*, Case 12.053, Inter-Am. C.H.R. Report No. 40/04 (2004). See also MLA (2006) submission to UNSR on the rights of indigenous peoples

¹⁰ *idem*

¹¹ Campbell, M. (2012). See also MLA submission UPR 2019.

The government of Belize intended a restricted interpretation of the ruling, as only applying to Santa Cruz and Conejo, the communities that had filed the case, so in 2008 a case was filed on behalf of 36 Maya villages. In its 2010 ruling of the case, the Supreme Court of Belize upheld the decision recognizing the property rights of the Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya communities to the ancestral lands they occupied, stating that customary ownership to Maya land had always existed and continued to exist in all Maya communities in Toledo District and that, where it existed, it conferred collective and individual property rights in the sense of sections 3.d and 17 of the Constitution of Belize.

The Government of Belize appealed this ruling. In 2013, the Court of Appeals upheld the Supreme Court decision.¹² The Government of Belize appealed then to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). There, it changed its prior position and came to an agreement that was the basis for a judgement by consent. The 2015 Consent Order of the CCJ was accompanied by a written commitment by the government setting out a schedule of dates for the demarcation process.¹³

In 2016, the Government established the Toledo Maya Land Rights Commission (TMLR) to facilitate the implementation of the Consent Order. The TMLR Commission has not developed any implementation plan to comply with the Consent Order.¹⁴ According to the MLA, the government has continued disregarding its duty to protect the rights of the Maya and continues granting permissions and leaseings on their traditional lands without consultation or consent. In January 2022, the TMLC presented a FPIC protocol developed to comply with the Consent Order (*see infra*).¹⁵

Indigenous and afro-descendant representatives have stated that despite this legal case, there are many other cases in which indigenous peoples have not managed to assert their rights and achieve legal certainty over communal lands. Cases of restrictions on access to and use of other natural assets in their territories, many of these sacred places, have also been reported due to the expansion of extractive activities by rural settlers.¹⁶ Another recent decision of the Supreme Court of Belize in the case of the Ical and Jalacte Maya villages confirm the validity of Maya traditional land tenure and the State obligation to respect it.¹⁷

1.3.2. Political participation

Maya indigenous peoples of Belize in the Toledo district maintained their traditional *alcaldes* system of local government, in spite of the reservation policy implemented by the colonial government since 1968 that was continued after independence. The *alcaldes* are part of the governance structure that evolved under European colonization adapted by the Maya into their own traditional precolonial governance practice. The *alcaldes* system has no party affiliation and oversees all aspects of life in indigenous communities. In 1999, a system of village councils was imposed on the Maya communities.¹⁸ This new

¹² At the same time, a claim was brought by Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) and four communities to stop the energy company US Capital from operating in the protected area of Sarstoon-Temash National Park which encompasses land belonging to the Maya communities of Crique Sarco, Midway, Sunday Wood, Conejo, and the Garifuna community of Barranco. On 3rd April the Supreme Court ruled that government permission to commence oil drilling and road building in Sarstoon-Temash National Park by US Capital Energy was unlawful. The company continues to apply for concessions to operate in the region

¹³ In its decision in 2015, the CCJ stipulated that the country develop a land registry to classify and exercise traditional governance over Mayan lands. The CCJ reaffirmed that the 39 Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya indigenous communities of Southern Belize have rights to the lands in Toledo which they have traditionally used and occupied. The ruling states that traditional Maya land-use practices constitute property rights equal in legitimacy to Western forms of property ownership.

¹⁴ On the lack of progress in implementation of Consent Order, among others: UNCT (2019) submission UPR, par.51 and MLA submission to CERD 2012. Moreover, the 300,000 Bz awarded by the CCJ as a remedy for the violations of their constitutional rights have been spent, according to the Government in the setting and operation of the Commission. (MLA (2019) UPR submission) See also on recent case: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/maya-peoples-win-lawsuit-against-belize-government-violating-land-rights>

¹⁵ See MLA (2019) UPR submission

¹⁶ Reported by indigenous and afro-descendant representatives participating in the planning workshop of SICA strategic agenda on indigenous and afro-descendant peoples. SICA (2021) p. 114-115.

¹⁷ IPRI (2022) p.36

¹⁸ Village Councils Act, 1999

organization supersedes the system of *alcaldes*. In the south of Toledo, the village councils exist jointly with the community *alcaldía*.

The Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) was established in 1992 with the objective of promoting the *alcalde* system and addressing issues of concern. Although a draft *Alcalde law* was elaborated with participation of Maya *alcaldes*, it has not been adopted.¹⁹ The state has continued to set boundaries for the powers and positions of *Alcaldes*—most recently in the 2000 Inferior Courts Act, which defines the role and power of *alcaldes*. Recent attempts to delegitimize and control the *alcalde* system have involved government departments publicly raising questions about the jurisdiction of *alcaldes*, their appointment, and the very existence of *alcalde* systems in certain districts. There have also been unreasonable delays on the part of the government in fixing procedural irregularities relating to the appointment of *alcaldes*.²⁰ *Alcaldes* are elected for two year terms. In addition to their traditional leadership role in village administration, *alcaldes* can adjudicate both civil and criminal matters.

According to MLA the government has not recognized the duly elected representatives of the Maya peoples in the work of the TMLR to implement the Consent Order of the CCJ.²¹ The Government has taken the position that it is for the Attorney General to appoint Maya traditional leaders. In their view, by marginalizing and bypassing the Maya peoples' own procedures and representative institutions, the government has failed to conduct good-faith consultation towards implementation of the Consent Order with the Maya peoples, and to respect their right to self-determination, which is protected under numerous human rights instruments.

In terms of participation in decision-making, there are no mechanisms for consultation or free, prior informed consent in Belize. The TAA and the MLA proposed a Maya Consultation Framework in 2014,²² but it was not accepted by the State.

In January 2022, the Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs submitted a Free Prior Informed Consent Protocol to the CCJ, as implementation of the Order. According to government information, the protocol affirms that the Government and third parties must consult with the Mopan and Q'eqchi' prior to initiatives or projects that may affect their rights in their lands, territory and resources. The government also states that this Protocol has been widely consulted.²³ MLA and TAA have expressed their objections to the process and to the contents of the Protocol.²⁴

1.3.3. Socio-economic situation

According to UNDP 2020 Human Development Report, Belize's HDI value for 2019 was 0.716, positioning it at 110 out of 189 countries and territories. When considering the inequality factor, the HDI falls to 0.554. Current Human Inequality Coefficient for Belize is equal to 21.6 percent.²⁵

The most recent survey data publicly available for Belize's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) estimation refers to 2015/2016. In Belize, 4.3 percent of the population are multidimensionally poor while an additional 8.4 percent are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The breadth of deprivation (intensity) in Belize, which is the average deprivation score experienced by people in multidimensional poverty, is 39.8 percent. The MPI, which is the share of the population that is multidimensionally poor, adjusted by the intensity of the deprivations, is 0.017.²⁶ According to UNDP,

¹⁹ MLA (2012) submission to CERD

²⁰ <http://worldpolicy.org/2017/07/06/belize-attempts-to-undermine-the-alcalde-system/>

²¹ MLA (2019) submission UPR, para 37

²² The Maya Consultation Framework of 2014 serves as a key governance tool for external relations, outlining the minimum standards acceptable for engaging with Maya people and their territory. The framework draws upon the Maya customary process, national and international human rights norms such as those stated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). UNDP (2019)

²³ <https://www.pressoffice.gov.bz/ministry-of-human-development-families-and-indigenous-peoples-affairs-on-fpic/>

²⁴ <https://lovefm.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/may-a.jpg>; <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/belize-fails-obtain-maya-consent-consent-protocol>

²⁵ <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/BLZ.pdf>

²⁶ <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/BLZ.pdf>

and as recorded in the Voluntary Report on SDGs implementation,²⁷ 41.3 percent of the population live under the poverty line, a number that increases to 50 percent in under 15.²⁸

Belize's small-size economy, high dependence on exports and imports, and exposure to natural disasters make the country particularly vulnerable.²⁹ The COVID pandemic and the last hurricanes/storms seasons have had a strong impact in Belize, according to UN and World Bank (WB) estimations.

Lack of disaggregated indicators makes it difficult to assess the actual socio-economic situation of Maya and Garifuna groups in Belize.³⁰ CERD has expressed concern about the lack of economic and social indicators disaggregated by ethnicity.³¹ Belize is not included in CELADE's *Sistema de Indicadores Sociodemográficos de Pueblos Indígenas* (SISDPI). Human development statistics reflect worst conventional socio-economic indicators in the districts with highest indigenous population.³² Based on 2010 data, the WB has underlined the differences in poverty data based on ethnic background. Data show that the Maya have the higher poverty incidence levels³³

According to the 2010 Poverty Assessment Report (PAR), rural poverty affects the 44 per cent of the rural population, while urban poverty incidence is 22 per cent. Further, 14 per cent of the households are deemed vulnerable to poverty, with uneven access to resources across groups and communities along age, gender or ethnic groups. Therefore, more than half of all households (57 per cent) are either poor or susceptible to being poor.

Within this context, the social and economic conditions of indigenous peoples in Belize are characterized by poverty, marginalization and inequality. The UN System agencies are in agreement on this point. UNICEF and the CRC have expressed concern over inequalities and widespread poverty among the indigenous population. CRC has recommended that priority be given to effective measures to reduce poverty among indigenous and minority children.³⁴ CERD has also expressed its concern '*at the discrimination, exclusion and poverty faced by the Maya population and by some people of African descent preventing them from fully enjoying their economic, social and cultural rights on equal footing with the rest of the population, in particular with regard to the labour market, housing, health care and education*' and recommended Belize to take concrete steps, including special measures, to guarantee the enjoyment by Maya of access to the labour market, housing and health care, and to combat the poverty they face.³⁵ ILO Committee of Experts has called the attention of the Government on the need to promote equality of Mayan workers.³⁶

The economic activities practised by indigenous peoples in Belize vary by region. To the north of the country, the Yucatecan Maya have an economy based on growing sugarcane to produce sugar for export. The Maya territory in the South is comprised of living, farming, hunting, fishing and ceremonial areas. Subsistence crops planted around the villages centres including corn, the staple food cultivated in traditional *milpa*, and mulch farming. They also raise animals and plant rice, beans, and vegetables in a rotational basis and permanent crops as cacao and fruits. In the forest areas surrounding the village

²⁷ Voluntary National Review (2017)

²⁸ Also National Human Development Advisory Committee (2010). The Abstract of Statistics published by the SIB provides updated data on population, health, education, labour and other issues. No disaggregated data for indigenous peoples are recorded. Also <http://www.bz.undp.org/content/belize/en/home/countryinfo/>

²⁹ IFAD Belize Country Technical Note 2017

³⁰ SICA (2021) p. 112

³¹ CERD/C/BLZ/CO/1, para. 6-7

³² <http://humandevlopment.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Household-Indicators.png>

³³ World Bank, Belize CPF, p. 6

³⁴ A/HRC/12/4, 4 June 2009

³⁵ CERD/C/BLZ/CO/1, par. 11

³⁶ A/HRC/WG.6/31/BLZ/2 27 August 2018 Belize UPR 2018

centres, Maya hunt and gather building materials and medicinal plants. Rivers are a source of fish. Economic activities are based on customary systems of land distribution and crop rotation.³⁷

1.3.3.1. Language, culture and education ³⁸

In Belize, the Maya and Garifuna communities have endeavoured to maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage. The following indigenous languages are spoken in the country:

1. Yucatecan Mayan: 27.4 per cent of households have it as first language
2. Mopan Mayan: 86 per cent of Mopan Maya people consider this their first language;
3. Q'eqchi' Mayan: 96 per cent of Q'eqchi' Maya people consider this their first language; and
4. Garifuna: 54.2 per cent as first language. ³⁹

The Maya of Southern Belize retain distinctive cultural attributes including language, food, music and oral story.

Belize does not have programs of intercultural bilingual education, nor does it have specific legislative or administrative policies dealing with the promotion of native languages or the implementation of Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child or Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration in the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁴⁰ Maya and Garifuna communities are making some attempts to support bilingual education. However, these initiatives are still limited to a few schools.⁴¹

Access to education continues to be limited for a high proportion of the population, and even more so for indigenous peoples. English is the official language and the language of instruction at school. Indigenous children are at a disadvantage in gaining access to and staying in school, especially in rural regions where most of the Maya indigenous peoples live.⁴²

1.3.3.2 Health

Health situation among indigenous peoples in Belize can be assimilated to that of the poor rural populations. The UNCT stressed the need to have targeted approaches for indigenous communities to provide appropriate SRH information and create greater access to services at the local level.⁴³

1.4. Obstacles to the exercise of the rights

The lack of a legal framework recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples in Belize, including the non ratification of ILO Convention 169, is an obstacle for the adequate enjoyment of those rights, particularly with regards to land tenure and security. Indigenous peoples have turned to the justice system for the recognition of their fundamental rights but, as explained above, regional and domestic decisions have not been complied with.

Belize legal and administrative framework do not allow for authentic political representation of indigenous peoples, since participation is confined to voting for a political party. This party system means that the interests of indigenous peoples are not represented in the National Congress.

Poverty, lack of access to adequate education and health services, and discrimination in terms of property rights, labour rights and others have been stressed by the UN agencies and human rights bodies.

³⁷ MLA (2006) Submission UNSR.

³⁸ Updated non disaggregated data on education in the country can be found at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/bz>. Also UNICEF <https://data.unicef.org/country/blz/> MICS 2015-16

³⁹ *Atlas* (2010), based on Census 2000, p. 883-885

⁴⁰ See CERD/C/BLZ/CO/1, par. 11

⁴¹ *Atlas* (2010), p. 888.

⁴² *Atlas* (2010)

⁴³ A/HRC/WG.6/31/BLZ/2. UNCT (2019) UPR submission

As part of the discussions in the framework of the SICA initiative to develop a *Strategic Agenda for the sustainable and inclusive development of indigenous peoples and afrodescendants in Central America*, a planning workshop was held in Belize City in which indigenous representatives highlighted the following critical factors affecting them:

- Degradation of lands located in coastal areas and loss of biodiversity of natural systems in indigenous territories.
- Lack of knowledge and low appreciation of the vision, knowledge and practices of sustainable management of natural systems by indigenous peoples, and the environmental benefits they generate.
- Environmental deterioration and loss of biodiversity of natural systems due to the expansion of extractive activities: forestry, fisheries, tourism.
- Displacement and migration of indigenous communities to cities due to lack of livelihoods and the search for employment opportunities.
- Reduced access to and use of natural resources in their territories, including sacred sites, due to the expansion of extractive activities: hydropower, agroindustry, tourism.
- Non-compliance with the right of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples to free, prior and informed consultation.⁴⁴

The proposal of strategic actions to be undertaken to answer to this situation reflects the priorities identified by indigenous organizations (see Annex III).

2. Legal and institutional framework

2.1 International

2.1.1 International instruments ratified by the country

International human rights and environmental instruments ratified by Belize

Instrument/Treaty	Status	Year
Human Rights Treaties		
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	ratified	1996
CCPR second optional protocol	No ratified	
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC)	ratified	2015
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	ratified	2001
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CDN)	ratified	1990
CRC Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict	ratified	2003
CRC Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	ratified	2003
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)	ratified	1986
Optional Protocol	ratified	2015
Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) OP yes	ratified	1990
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and members of their Families (CMW)	ratified	2001
Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED)	ratified	2015
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	ratified	2011
Environmental treaties and agreements		
Convention on Biological Diversity	ratified	1993
Cartagena Protocol	ratified	2004
Nagoya Protocol		
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	ratified	1994

⁴⁴ SICA (2021) p.114-115

Kyoto Protocol	ratified	2003
Paris Agreement	ratified	2016
United Nations Convention on Fight Against Desertification	ratified	1998
Regional Agreement on access to public information, public participation and access to justice in environmental issues in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu Agreement)	signed	2021
Indigenous Peoples' rights instruments		
ILO Convention number 169 on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries	no ratified	
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	vote in favour	2007
American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples		2016

2.1.2 Jurisprudence and relevant information from UN and Inter-American human rights systems

Belize has no standing invitation for UN Special Procedures. Reporting to treaty bodies and other obligations has been lagging. The OHCHR is supporting the government to comply these obligations. Belize has a OHCHR Human Rights Advisor.⁴⁵ There is no national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles.

References of jurisprudence, observations and recommendations of the UN and IA human rights systems regarding indigenous peoples in Belize

United Nations	
Human Rights Council	
Universal Periodic Review	Belize has been examined under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2009 (A/HRC/12/4), 2013 (A/HRC/25/13) and 2018 (A/HRC/40/14). ⁴⁶ The situation of the Maya of Toledo, including progress in implementation of court decisions, has been addressed in the UPR process and included by the State in its national reports.
Special Procedures	
UNSR on the rights of indigenous peoples	There has been no visit from the UNSR on the rights of indigenous peoples to the country, although the experts have addressed several communications to the country with regards with the land tenure situation of the Maya villages. ⁴⁷ See, A/HRC/4/32/Add.1; BLZ 2/2014; BLZ 1/2015; BLZ 2/2015
UNSR on trafficking in persons, especially women and children	The UNSR visited the country in 2013. The SR refers to sexual exploitation of Mayan girls A/HRC/26/37/Add.6
UN Treaty Bodies	
CCPR	Concluding Observations (CCPR/C/BLZ/CO/1/Add.1, 11 December 2018) The CCPR requested Belize to comply with consent order of the CCJ, to recognize and protect customary land tenure of Maya indigenous peoples

⁴⁵ OHCHR, UNCT (2013); OHCHR (2020)

⁴⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BZIndex.aspx>

⁴⁷ See also public release www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16208&LangID=E

	and guarantee good faith consultations prior to concessions in their customary lands with a view to obtain their FPIC (para 45-46).
CERD	Concluding Observations in the absence of a report (CERD/C/BLZ/CO/1, 3 May 2013). CERD expressed concern for discrimination, poverty and non recognition of land rights of Maya peoples and to their FPIC.
CRDC and CEDAW	Both Committees have made observations and recommendations regarding the situation of Mayan women and children in their reports ⁴⁸ CEDAW/C/BLZ/CO/4 (2007); CRC/C/15/Add.99 (1999)
Inter American and Caribbean Human Rights Systems	
Caribbean Court of Justice	The Maya Leaders Alliance v. The Attorney General of Belize [2015] CCJ 15 (October 30, 2015) ⁴⁹
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	Case 12,053, Report 40/04, Maya Indigenous Communities of the Toledo District, Belize https://www.cidh.oas.org/annualrep/2004sp/Belize.12053.htm .

2.2 National

2.2.1. Legal framework

Following an amendment in 2001, the preamble to the Constitution now states the need for a State *that protects the identity, dignity and social and cultural values of Belizeans, including those of Belize's indigenous peoples*. No legal measures have been developed to make that protection effective for the Maya peoples of the country.

2.2.1 Institutions and policies

Belize recently incorporated Indigenous Peoples' Affairs into the Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs. In January 2021 a Commissioner of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs was appointed in the Ministry, Gregory Juan Ch'oc.⁵⁰ As mentioned, the Maya Land Rights Commission was established to implement the CCJ 2015 Consent Order.

The *Horizon 2030 National Development Framework for Belize, 2010–2030*, was developed through an inclusive national consensus-building process including public and private sector entities and civil society organizations. Its priorities align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and has two main development pillars: education for development and democratic governance. The Belize Medium-Term Development Priorities, 2022– 2025, outline six strategic goals: poverty reduction (including social protection), economic transformation and growth, reducing the trade deficit, citizen security, protection of the environment and stopping corruption.⁵¹

In 2013, Belize volunteered as a pilot country for the incorporation of sustainable development in national development strategies.⁵² With the support of UNDESA the *Belize Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2020* was developed as the national framework for operationalization of *Horizon 2030*. The Strategy sets out eight strategic actions to address the development of the country.⁵³

⁴⁸ For these and UN human rights bodies recommendations up to 2013, OHCHR (2013)

⁴⁹ <https://www.elaw.org/system/files/2015-CCJ-15AJ.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://www.pressoffice.gov.bz/commissioner-of-indigenous-peoples-affairs-appointed/>

⁵¹ UNICEF (2021)

⁵² UNDP (2016), p.232

⁵³ <https://observatorioplanificacion.ECLAC.org/es/node/694>

Belize submitted its Voluntary National Review for the Sustainable Development Goals in 2017 (focusing on Goals 1,3,5 and 14).⁵⁴ The only explicit mention of the Maya is related to the ODS 5 on gender equality, in relation early marriage,⁵⁵ although reference is made to participation of rural communities, which may include Maya and Garifuna peoples. The Review comments as a good practice the co-responsibility cash transfer BOOTS program. No disaggregated data have been found on participation of or impact on indigenous populations.⁵⁶

Belize is member since 2000 of the Central America Integration System (SICA). This regional organization is developing an *Strategic Agenda for the sustainable and inclusive development of indigenous peoples and afrodescendants in the Central American region*, with participation of indigenous and afrodescendants coordinations (CICA, ONECA) and organizations and the support of Luxembourg Aid&Development.⁵⁷

3. IFAD work with indigenous peoples in the country

IFAD

projects:

<https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/w/country/belize>

IPAF projects:

https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/41839851/ipaf_lac_e.pdf/c20cf2f9-b34a-597e-e52d-6fb7237e8eab

IFAD has supported the following projects under the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF):

- Preservation and promotion of local varieties of traditional crops, 2008

Organization: Tumul K'in Learning Centre

Target group: Q'eqchi', Mopán and Yucatecan Maya.

Grant amount: USD 29,000

This project provided Q'eqchi, Mopan and Yucatec Maya people living in the Toledo and Cayo districts of Belize with traditional crop alternatives to hybridized crops. The project benefited directly 51 people (34 males and 17 females) from 8 communities in Toledo, who were given easy access to local varieties of corn and beans and became able to provide other families in the surrounding areas with the seeds. As a result, local varieties of these traditional crops are being preserved and their consumption increased since they are more readily available. The tradition of consuming different colours of corn is therefore being retained. Additionally the traditional meetings held along with the high involvement of young people in the activities fostered youth appreciation for the local Maya food

- Strengthening food security, traditional land governance and forest protection of the Q'eqchi people of southern Belize, 2011

Organization: Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM)

Target group: Q'eqchi Maya

Grant amount: USD 40,000

The Q'eqchi Maya community of Midway produces 95% of its food through an ancestral practice known as 'milpa' farming, also known as 'swidden' agriculture. However, maize yields have declined dramatically over the years, leading to the fragmentation of communal land management, food shortages and a decline in income for the community. The project showed results in organizational strengthening for dealing with the heavy impact of major climate challenges on production cycles. For example, farmers had to implement alternative strategies, such as the application of white lime (limestone rocks ground into a very fine powder) to neutralize soil acid content caused by heavy rainfall.

⁵⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16389Belize.pdf>

⁵⁵ Page 36

⁵⁶ <https://dds.ECLAC.org/bpsnc/programme?id=62>. UNICEF/UNDP (2017)

⁵⁷ SICA (2021). See: Chapter 3. Situation of well-being of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples in Belize.

Given the unpredictability of climate change and its strong impact on crops and production cycles, another innovative measure taken by farmers was to combine different types of fertilizers, which demonstrated their capacity to organize, be flexible and adapt to difficult situations

4. Some relevant initiatives of the international cooperation in the country

Belize lacks an information system on aid and donors. Initiatives compiled in this section do probably not reflect all the international support received by Belize.

4.1. United Nations System

A United Nations Belize Common Country Analysis was published in 2021, and the UN *Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework* (UNMSDCF) 2022–2026 for the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean has been adopted.⁵⁸

UNICEF country program for 2022-2026 will support the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, and relevant non-governmental and community-based organizations, including indigenous organizations, in identifying and addressing inequities and building capacities and knowledge for the full implementation of education policies and services, including for children with disabilities and their families. A framework for engaging and integrating the business sector into the programme cycle will be utilized to support child rights and leverage the sector as a change agent among target audiences.

According to the UNCT report for the UPR, a food security project was implemented amongst indigenous families in rural Toledo with support from PAHO/WHO based on the results of the 2016 Toledo Survey, done with support from PAHO/WHO and UNICEF, to determine nutritional patterns and factors influencing stunting. The immediate impact of the food security project was improved education to children, youth, families and community members on how to replace unhealthy food options with healthier options with the aim of reversing malnutrition as well as the establishment of home gardens.⁵⁹

UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA are developing the Belize Spotlight Programme aimed at ending family violence with funding from the European Union (EU) in its first phase (2020-2021).⁶⁰ The programme works with BENIC providing capacity building and training to empower indigenous communities to address family violence against indigenous women and girls.⁶¹

4.2. European Union (EU)

The European Union has developed a *Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027* for Belize. The Programme includes the alignment of both the EU and Belize with the EU Council conclusions on indigenous peoples and includes specific objectives related to them in the Priority Area 1 of the Programme on promotion of green growth and sustainable socio-economic development.⁶² Several EU countries are supporting aid projects in the country, but the lack of a unified tracking system makes it difficult to systematize current initiatives.

4.3. Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)

The IADB Group has developed a *Country Strategy for Belize 2022-2025*. Support to cross-cutting issues relating to gender and diversity, institutional capacity and rule of law, digital transformation, and climate change and disaster risk management will be streamlined into each of the priority areas.⁶³ Active portfolio of loans for the amount of 96.5M prioritizes the health, education and reform/modernization of the State (2 projects each). Other sectors supported include environment and natural disasters, financial markets, sustainable tourism, transport and water and sanitation. Current projects do not specifically

⁵⁸ UNCT (2021) UNMSDCF (2021)

⁵⁹ PAHO/WHO Country Cooperation Strategy 2017; UNCT (2019) submission UPR

⁶⁰ <https://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00119130>

⁶¹ <https://www.breakingbelizenews.com/2021/08/27/the-belize-national-indigenous-council-benic-meets-on-occasion-of-international-week-for-indigenous-peoples/>

⁶² https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/mip-2021-c2021-9098-belize-annex_en.pdf

⁶³ <https://www.iadb.org/en/countries/belize/overview>

mention indigenous peoples, although the IADB has funded projects directly addressed to indigenous peoples of Belize in the past.⁶⁴

4.4. World Bank

The Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Belize covers the period from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2022. The CPF is aligned with the Government's *Horizon 2030*. The overarching goal of the proposed CPF is to support Belize in strengthening its economic resilience. The CPF is organized around two focus areas: (a) fostering climate resilience and environmental sustainability; and (b) promoting financial inclusion and social resilience. The CPF recognizes that "[t]here are social and environmental concerns regarding land tenure in indigenous communities in the Toledo and Stann Creek districts. In the event that Bank-supported operations involve these districts, the Bank's environmental and social framework will guide the viability of Bank support to land use management that may include indigenous lands, recognizing the Caribbean Court of Justice ruling, and considering the Maya Consultation Framework."⁶⁵

The WB will support the Belize FCPF REDD Readiness Preparation (P152415) for an amount of USD 76.50 million.⁶⁶ The Bank reports on the delay in starting implementation due to several reasons, including inadequate involvement of indigenous peoples. A consultation framework was agreed in 2014, and further comments on consultation and consent have been provided by BENIC.⁶⁷ Another planned project which may involve indigenous communities is the *Climate resilient and sustainable agriculture project* (P172592).⁶⁸

GEF SGP has supported 267 projects in Belize between 1993-2018.⁶⁹ Many of these projects have been implemented by indigenous communities, such as the *Global Support Initiative for Indigenous Peoples and Community-Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCA-GSI)*, with the objective of improving the recognition and overall effectiveness, biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods and resilience to climate change effects of territories/areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities. The project started in 2017 and is a five year global project focused on contributing towards the Aichi 2020 targets. It is funded by the Government of Germany, through the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB).⁷⁰

4.5 Other initiatives

The Land Tenure Facility is developing the project *Securing and protecting tenure rights of the Maya peoples of Southern Belize* to assist in the implementation of the 2015 Court Order with the Julian Cho Society, the MLA and the TAA.⁷¹

2. National framework on climate change

Ratification

⁶⁴ <https://www.iadb.org/en/projects-search?country=BL§or=&status=&query=>

⁶⁵ WB-CPF, p.28

⁶⁶ The complete list of current projects at <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/projects-list?os=0&qterm=Belize>. Several projects have been dropped, while COVID related support has been added. <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P152415>

⁶⁷ https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/grm_belize_fy21_progress_report.pdf. Observations of BENIC on involvement (December 2021) <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099200001282226231/pdf/P152415050928c0420b29503c121d922abf.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P172592>

⁶⁹ GEF SGP (2018)

⁷⁰ <https://undp.shorthandstories.com/gef-sgp-indigenous-allies/>

⁷¹ <https://thetenurefacility.org/projects/protecting-rights-of-the-maya-people-belize/>

UNFCCC	1994
Kyoto Protocol	2003
Paris Agreement	2016

5.1. Legal and policy instruments

Belize has not adopted a specific law on climate change. Related laws are the *Disaster Preparedness and Response Act* (number 10 of 2000) and the *Environmental Protection Act* (number 22 of 1992).

Belize has developed several climate policy frameworks over the last decade, including the *National Climate Resilience Investment Plan, Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy 2014-2017* and a *National Climate Change Policy, Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020)*. Relevant national policies include:

Plans/Policies	Basic contents
HORIZON 2030	The national development framework which was developed after extensive stakeholder consultation inclusive of all political parties. One of its four main pillars is responsible environmental stewardship. The strategies to achieve this pillar, namely integrating environmental sustainability into development planning and promoting sustainable energy for all, address the areas of concern relating to Belize's emission profile
NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY FRAMEWORK	It aims to provide options that Belize can pursue for energy efficiency, sustainability and resilience over the next 30 years. Additionally, the Sustainable Energy Action Plan is a tool to achieve Belize's renewable energy and energy efficiency potential while meeting the Government's economic, social and environmental goals. It provides a framework of actions and tasks to overcome barriers to sustainable energy for the period 2014-2030.
GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	The guiding development plan for the period 2016–2019. It adopts an integrated, systemic approach and encompasses medium-term economic development, poverty reduction and longer-term sustainable development issues. This planning document also provides detailed guidance on priorities and on specific actions to be taken during the planning period, including actions that contribute to longer term development objectives beyond 2019.
NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY, STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (NCCPSAP), 2015-2020	Provides policy guidance for the development of an appropriate administrative and legislative framework, in harmony with other sectoral policies, for the pursuance of a low-carbon development path for Belize. In addition, the NCCPSAP also seeks to encourage the development of the country's Nationally Determined Contribution and to communicate it to the UNFCCC
ROADMAP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272436764_Intercultural_processes_of_territory-heritage_recover	Creates a platform for low carbon growth in new areas while still attaining the national development targets. The roadmap compliments the NCCPSAP and GSDS by focusing on building technical capacity, strengthening institutions and policies, facilitating public-private partnerships and engaging stakeholders to adopt sustainable practices which should lead to national resilience to the impacts of climate change

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Argentina.pdf](https://www.unfccc.int/files/focus/ndc_registry/application/pdf/belize_ndc.pdf)

Source: Belize NDC (2021)

In addition to these policies and strategy documents, national climate adaptation plans have been developed for the agriculture and water sectors.

The Government of Belize has also taken a number of steps towards mobilizing finance for climate change activities from domestic and international sources. Recognizing the importance of climate finance aspects, the Climate Finance Working Group has been established under the Belize National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC) to provide guidance to the national efforts to access, manage and effectively use climate finance.⁷²

5.2. NDC

In April 2016, Belize submitted its first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to implement the Paris Agreement. Belize's mitigation potential proposed under its NDC covered multiple sectors such as forestry, electricity, waste and transport conditional on the availability of cost-effective technology, capacity building and adequate financial support. The initial NDC outlined actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from land use and forestry, fuel wood consumption, electricity, transportation and solid waste. Encapsulated in Belize's original NDC are conditional commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and unconditional commitments to facilitate adaptation nationally.⁷³

An Updated NDC was submitted in 2021, developed with participation of indigenous peoples.⁷⁴ Several actions included in the identified targets are specifically addressed to or include indigenous peoples.

Target	Action
Reduce GHG emissions and increase GHG removals related to land use change	Promote and monitor the stewardship of 10,000 hectares of local community and indigenous people's lands as sustainably managed landscape to serve as net carbon sinks (p.15)

⁷² NDC 2021

⁷³ https://unfccc.int/files/focus/ndc_registry/application/pdf/belize_ndc.pdf

⁷⁴ <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Belize%20First/Belize%20Updated%20NDC.pdf>.

See p. 1. As a member of the High Ambition Coalition, Belize has committed to increasing emissions reduction ambition and developing a long-term strategy aligned with achieving net zero global emissions by 2050.

Enhance the capacity of the country's mangrove and seagrass ecosystems to act as a carbon sink by 2030, through increased protection of mangroves and by removing a cumulative total of 381 KtCO ₂ e between 2021 and 2030 through mangrove restoration	Action: Throughout delivery of land use interventions related to this target, promote the stewardship of local community and indigenous people's coastal lands as sustainably managed landscapes to serve as net carbon sinks (p.17)
Develop and implement an enhanced early warning system for drought and extreme weather events to support farmers in planning for and responding to the impacts of climate change by 2025	Explore the development of alternative livelihood plans for fishers and their households and include alongside further regulation in the sector, capacity building and strengthening of fisher organizations, especially in local and indigenous communities, who are affected by the establishment of restricted fishing measures (p.26)
Increase the adaptive capacity of tourism sector through the development of climate resilient planning frameworks and infrastructure	Develop area-specific adaptation strategies that provide guidance on adapting to impacts of climate change, paying keen attention to local and indigenous communities (28)
Protect communities from damage caused by flooding and sea level rise through implementation of the Land Use Policy and supporting green and grey infrastructure	Implement Land Use Policy and Policy Framework to incorporate responsible and climate-sensitive (and water-sensitive) development and land use. In implementation, promote and enhance land stewardship practices underway in local and indigenous communities Develop and implement a climate change adaptation strategy/plan for the most vulnerable local and indigenous coastal communities

Source: NDC 2021

5.3. Institutions

The Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries & Sustainable Development is responsible for natural resources preservation, protection and improvement of the environment and is the focal point for domestic and global climate action in Belize.

The implementation of the targets and actions covered in Belize's NDC will be coordinated by the Belize National Climate Change Office (NCCO).⁷⁵ Established in 2014, it is the operational arm of the Belize National Climate Change Committee (BNCCC). Relevant ministries and stakeholders are represented in the BNCCC. In terms of proposals and coordination of financial resources, the NCCO will coordinate financing activities, with advice from the BNCCC Climate Finance Working Group. The Climate Finance Working Group has been established under the BNCCC to provide guidance to the national efforts to access, manage and effectively use climate finance.

5.4. Green Climate Fund

The Green Climate Fund is supporting 2 projects (total GCF 12.0 million) and 9 readiness activities in Belize (budget approved 3.9 million of which 2.1 disbursed).⁷⁶

Name/ Number of Project	Approval/ Value	ESS Category	Accredited Entity
FP 180 Global Fund for Coral Reefs Investment Window Adaptation	Ap. October 2021 Multiple countries 500 millions	Intermediation 2	Pegasus Capital Advisors
FP 101 Resilient Rural Belize (Be-resilient) Adaptation	Ap. February 2019 20 millions	Category B SECAP: potential consultations with indigenous peoples	IFAD

⁷⁵ <https://ncco.gov.bz/aboutus/>

⁷⁶ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/belize>

		and implementation plan ⁷⁷	
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Among the readiness activities, FAO has submitted the proposal *Enhancing adaptation planning and increasing climate resilience in the coastal zone and fisheries sector in Belize* which will potentially include Maya indigenous population and will consultations for FPIC.⁷⁸

5.5. GCF Designated National Authority

Ministry of Finance, Economic Development & Investment
 Dr. Osmond Martinez
 Chief Executive Officer
 Sir Edney Cain Building, First Floor, Right Wing, Belmopan, Belize
 PHONE +501 825-2526 or 2527
CEO@MED.GOV.BZ
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 Mr. Leroy Josiah Martinez
 Economist/Green Climate Fund Focal Point, Policy and Planning Unit
 PHONE +501 822-2526/2527
LEROY.MARTINEZ@MED.GOV.BZ

Belize Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) is the National Implementing Entity (NIE) for the Adaptation Fund of the GCF and acts as the fiduciary channel for international and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the Global Environmental Facility, the Meso-American Reef Fund, and the Belize Nature Conservation Fund.

5.6. REDD+ in Belize

Belize is in the process of elaborating its readiness REDD+ project with the support of the World Bank.⁷⁹

The REDD+ Coordination Unit was established in March 2018 to coordinate all REDD+ related activities, promote collaboration between government agencies and facilitate multi-sectoral discussions that will lead to the development and implementation of REDD+ plans and strategies in Belize. The unit includes and Indigenous Peoples Desk. As a unit under the National Climate Change Office of Belize, the REDD+ Coordination Unit will work closely with the Forest Department, Department of the Environment, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Natural Resources and other government agencies, to ensure improved collaboration and better decision-making processes in the forest sector.⁸⁰

REDD+focal point
 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, the Environment and Sustainable Development
 Mr. Lennox Gladden
 Chief Climate Change Officer
 phone: (+501) 828 59 62
 fax: (+501) 822 24 47
 email: coord.cc@environment.gov.bz

⁷⁷ https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/40206666/belize_2000001247_secap_review.pdf/2b126ee1-410f-89f4-99a8-2ac3b72f2de8?t=1548428167000

⁷⁸ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/enhancing-adaptation-planning-and-increasing-climate-resilience-coastal-zone-and-fisheries-sector.pdf>

⁷⁹ See above. Also <https://www.pactbelize.org/tag/redd/>

⁸⁰ <https://reddplus.ncco.gov.bz/>

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Annex I: Map of Maya Area in Belize

Source: Fundación para el Avance de los Estudios Mesoamericanos: <http://research.famsi.org/>



Annex II: Indigenous organizations

The following list is not exhaustive. It is based on data provided in the IFAD Country Technical Note 2017 with information available on line.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	
Belize National Indigenous Council (BENIC)	<p>BENIC was established in 1989. Its constituent members are the Maya Leaders Association/Toledo Alcaldes Association, the National Garifuna Council, and the Northern Maya Association of Belize. Born of the recognition of the need for an organization to fight for the rights of indigenous peoples in Belize, to promote harmonious and cooperative relations, to promote the principles of justice, equality and non-discrimination, and to ensure the dignity, survival and well-being of the indigenous peoples of Belize. Pillars of work are: land security, indigenous rights, women's participation, recovery and preservation of indigenous culture, education and the environment.</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/BENIC-449994402439140/ belize.indigenous.council@gmail.com</p>
Garifuna National Council	<p>Its mission is to preserve, strengthen and develop our culture, and to promote economic development among the Garifuna people.</p> <p>http://www.ngcbelize.org/index.php https://www.facebook.com/ngcbelize/</p> <p>Tel: (501) 669-0639 Email: ngcbelize@gmail.com</p>
Toledo Alcaldes Association	<p>Coalition of 78 alcaldes, including a first and second alcalde of 39 Maya villages in the Toledo District</p> <p>Voice of America Road, Punta Gorda Town, Toledo, Belize, C.A. Email: taa1992@gmail.com Telephone: (501) 662-1663</p>
Maya Leaders Alliance	<p>The Maya Leaders Alliance was created in 1999, and is constituted by the leaders of several organizations of the Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya people of Toledo district. The Toledo Alcaldes' Association, Toledo Maya Women's Council, the Q'eqchi' Council of Belize and the Toledo Maya Cultural Council make part of the organization. They have enjoyed considerable success, including legal victories against a permit to allow oil exploration within a national park considered part of Maya customary territories. The case led to the establishment of a framework to inform the consultation process between economic actors, the government and local communities, thereby giving the Maya a voice they previously had lacked. MLA was awarded the Equator Prize in 2015</p> <p>Email: mayaleadersbelize@gmail.com</p>
Q'eqchi Council of Belize	<i>No on line data available</i>
Toledo Maya Women's Council	https://www.facebook.com/Toledo-MAYA-Womens-Council-594753317253806
Maya Leaders of Southern Belize	<p>Founded in 1999 to monitor land development in the Toledo District of Belize. They have formed alliances such as the Maya Leaders Alliance of Toledo, bringing together the five organizations of the south</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/mayaleadersofsouthernbelize/</p>
Maya Institute of Belize –	It is a founding organization of the Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas (ECMIA)

U'kuxtal Masewal	
REGIONAL NETWORKS	
Alianza de Mujeres Indígenas de Centroamérica y México	The Alliance of Indigenous Women of Central America and Mexico, created in 1994, is in the process of integrating indigenous women organizations from Belize. sec.amicam@gmail.com http://alianzami.org/
Consejo Indígena de Centroamérica CICA	The Consejo Indígena de Centroamérica (CICA) includes BENIC in its government structure. CICA acts as General Coordination for the Foro Indígena de Abya Yala http://www.consejocica.org/
OTHERS	
Julian Cho Society	The Julian Cho Society is a non-governmental organization devoted to indigenous rights through research, education, and advocacy in southern Belize. It was founded in 2004 having emerged out of the movement for indigenous land rights. JCS is legally incorporated in Belize as an NGO and is governed by a seven-member Advisory Council. The Society is dedicated to increasing understanding of the history and indigenous cultures of the Toledo District of Belize. We aim to carry forward the legacy of Julian Armando Cho through programs that promote education, justice, and sustainable development. http://www.jcsbelize.org/pages/home.php

Annex III: Strategic Agenda for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants in Belize (SICA)

Strategic framework for expected changes and key actions of the Strategic Agenda for indigenous and Afro-Descendant peoples in Belize		
Scenario of long-term historical transformation	Intermediate changes	Key strategic actions
Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in Belize live their lives in well-being according to their worldview, the parameters of their cultures and the existing legal framework	Intermediate change 1. Indigenous and Afro-descendant families and communities increase their access to basic services and improve their economic income	<p>Design and implement, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, a training programme for young people from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities' equivalent to secondary school.</p> <p>1.2 Develop associative organisations (cooperatives and other forms of solidarity economy) for the construction of a habitat model in the communities, with exonerated taxes on materials, including a water and sanitation system, as well as garbage treatment.</p> <p>1.3 Implement a programme to support smallholder farmers for sustainable food production that contributes to improved nutritional security and income generation.</p> <p>1.4 Develop in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture family orchards in communities to help reduce nutritional food insecurity.</p> <p>1.5 Promote campaigns for the prevention of family and social violence, mainly against women and girls, including the reduction of drug and alcohol abuse among young people.</p> <p>1.6 Manage decentralization and improvement of the quality of health services in communities to reduce the incidence of disease: doctors, equipment, and infrastructure.</p>
	Intermediate change 2. Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities achieve legal certainty over their lands and ensure access to natural resources in their territory	<p>2.1 Promote legal certainty regarding the collective ownership of indigenous and Afro-descendant lands, taking into account the lessons learned from the struggle of the communities of the south, which ended in ruling 12.053 of IACHR.</p> <p>2.2 Promote legal initiatives to prevent the expansion of the agricultural frontier, the felling of forests and the degradation of natural systems generated by industrial extractive activities: forestry, hydropower, tourism.</p> <p>2.3 Implement measures for the adaptation and resilience of indigenous communities to the global effects of climate change, recovering and using traditional knowledge and practices.</p> <p>2.4 Promote local initiatives of small enterprises for sustainable agricultural and non-agricultural production, including environmental care, recovery and restoration of degraded natural systems.</p> <p>2.5 Promote compliance with the national regulations related to the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consultation (FPIC) of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, in accordance with ILO-Convention 169.</p>
	Intermediate Change 3. State institutions increase their willingness and capacity to provide culturally appropriate goods and	<p>3.1 Design and implement a training and awareness programme for authorities, officials and technical-professional staff of public institutions on indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants that includes the following minimum contents: world view, paradigm of good living, knowledge and science; international and national legal framework.</p> <p>3.2 Promote the ratification and implementation by the government of laws, treaties and other norms of the</p>

	<p>services to indigenous and Afro-descendant families and communities</p>	<p>international legal framework that protects the rights of indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples. 3.3 Strengthen the capacity of institutions responsible for recording and producing vital statistics and on the main development variables, disaggregated by ethnicity and gender variable. 3.4 Establish standards so that all goods and services provided by institutions to indigenous and Afro-descendant communities correspond to their worldview and cultures. 3.5 Promote greater participation and influence of SICA in the implementation of the strategic agenda agreed at the planning workshop.</p>
	<p>Intermediate Change 4. Indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations strengthen the exercise of their democratic citizenship to effectively influence decisions on public affairs relating to their rights, culture and development</p>	<p>4.1 Design and implement a capacity-building plan for organizations representing indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, including, among other contents: a) history, worldview and culture of their peoples; b) international and national legal framework for the protection of their rights; c) indigenous ethics and inclusive leadership; d) communication, political incidence and use of digital technologies; f) planning and management of development projects. 4.2 Strengthen the participation of youth and women in governance structures and indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations, taking measures to encourage their leadership and strategic 4.3 Promote government support for civil society organizations, mainly indigenous and Afro-descendant, to improve their participation and contribution to development policies. 4.4 Strengthen the communication, dialogue and political advocacy capacities of civil society organizations, mainly indigenous and Afro-descendant, in order to make their voices heard and increase the exercise of their rights. 4.5 Strengthen coordination and collaboration mechanisms between indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations.</p>

