



Resilient Bold Belize

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

GEF AGENCY: WWF US

LEAD EXECUTING ENTITY: BLUE BOND AND FINANCE PERMANENCE UNIT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGENT	Advancing Gender in the Environment
BBRRS	Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System
BGI	Blue and Green Island
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBOs	Collateralized Bond Obligations
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CTF	Conservation Trust Fund
CZMAI	Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESA	Environmental and Social Assessment
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
ESSF	Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
GA	Gender Assessment
GAP	Gender Analysis and Action Plan
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization's
IP	Indigenous People
IPP	Indigenous Peoples Plan
IPPF	Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Others
LRP	Livelihood Restoration Plan
LRP	Livelihood Restoration Plans
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MBEDRM	Ministry of Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MPAs	Marine Protected Areas
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MSDCC	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NICH	National Institute of Culture and History
NPAS-MEE	National Protected Areas System - Management Effectiveness Evaluation
NTFPs	Non-timber Forest Products
NTP	National Trade Policy
OAS	Organization of American States
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PACT	Protected Areas Conservation Trust
PAP	Project Affected People

PCO	Project Complaints Office
PCR	Physical Cultural Resources
PETAL	Promoting Empowerment through Awareness for Lesbian and Bisexual Women
PF	Process Framework
PFP	Project Finance for Permanence
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPMS	Project and Program Standards
PPRs	Project Progress Reports
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PUP	People's United Party
SA	Social Assessment
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SIB	Statistical Institute of Belize
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SIPP	Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures
UDP	United Democratic Party
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDRIP	The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNIBAM	United Belize Advocacy Movement
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The WWF GEF BGI “Resilient Bold Belize (RBB)” project is a significant public-private partnership driven by the Blue Bond Project Finance for Permanence Unit (BBPFPU) within the Prime Minister’s Office. The GEF Resilient Bold Belize child project focuses on Belize’s Blue Ocean space and is designed to catalyze a Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) to generate sustainable financing for improved protected area and ecosystem management, creating the scaffolding for more resilient fisheries and nature-based tourism in Belize. The coast-to-ocean project scope spans across Belize’s connected marine and coastal ecosystems, including mangroves seagrass and reefs, to deliver on the Blue and Green Island (BGI) Integrated Program objectives through improved management and increased financial sustainability of 34 coastal and marine protected areas, spaces that are globally recognized as biodiversity hotspots, vital for supporting local fishing and tourism industries and for protecting coastal communities from storms.

RBB aims to address ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, and the socio-economic challenges faced by coastal communities. Over the last decade, Belize’s marine environment has faced severe threats such as overfishing, habitat loss, coral diseases, and the impacts of invasive species, leading to reduced fish biomass and compromised food security for local communities.

The RBB project operates within a robust legal framework comprising national and international regulations. Additionally, the project will comply with WWF’s Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework, ensuring that all activities are conducted ethically and sustainably.

Through the Environmental and Social Management Framework, the RBB project identifies several critical risks and impacts associated with its implementation:

- **Environmental Risks:** These include the degradation of coral reefs due to climate change and human activities, deforestation of mangroves, and the loss of biodiversity. The decline in marine habitat health adversely affects the fishing and tourism sectors.
- **Social Risks:** The project acknowledges potential negative impacts on local communities, particularly those reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods. There is a risk of conflicts arising from resource restrictions and changes in land use.
- **Indigenous Peoples:** The project areas include indigenous groups such as the Garinagu and Mayan peoples. Ensuring these groups’ rights and participation is crucial to the project’s success.

To address these risks, the ESMF outlines mitigation measures and details how to safeguard against risks. As part of the risk management framework, the RBB project is underpinned by a robust set of safeguards, stemming from WWF’s social policies, to ensure ethical and sustainable implementation:

- **Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF):** This framework ensures that the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples are respected throughout the project. It outlines the principles, procedures, and organizational arrangements necessary to engage indigenous communities, obtain FPIC, and ensure they benefit equitably from the project.
- **Process Framework (PF):** The PF describes the process for identifying, designing, implementing, and monitoring activities that may restrict access to natural resources. It aims to ensure that affected communities participate in these processes and that their rights and livelihoods are protected. The PF includes measures for livelihood restoration and compensation for any economic displacement caused by the project.
- **Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM):** This mechanism provides a transparent, accessible, and efficient process for addressing grievances and disputes related to the project. It ensures that stakeholders can raise concerns and have them resolved promptly and fairly.

1. INTRODUCTION

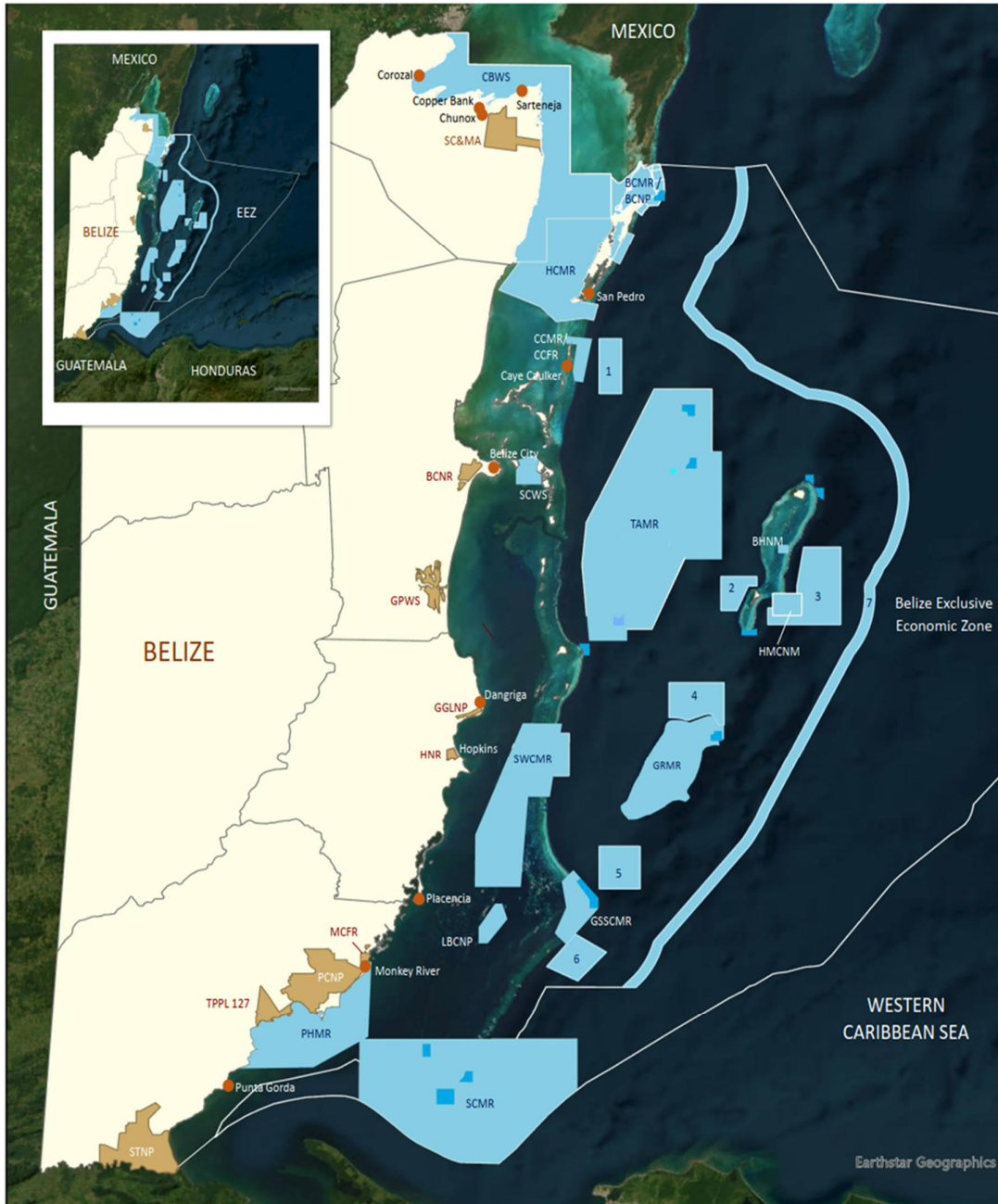
1.1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The WWF GEF BGI Resilient Bold Belize (RBB) is a country-driven, Government-led initiative that will play a critical role in catalyzing Belize's innovative Project Finance for Permanence (PFP). This significant private-public partnership, led by the Blue Bond Project Finance for Permanence Unit (BBPFPU) within the office of the Prime Minister, seeks to deliver systematic, transformative change, integrating nature-based solutions (NbS) into the national agenda and securing key policy changes, bringing together a blend of public and philanthropic funding for implementation of the PFP Conservation Plan. This national project focuses on Belize's coastal and marine protected areas and ecosystems (Figure 1), which are recognized globally as a biodiversity hotspot, demonstrated by the designation of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System World Heritage Site and the coastal Ramsar site. Highly connected reef, mangrove, and seagrass habitats support fishing and tourism industries and protect coastal communities from storms, reducing risks to lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure. The target area protects at least 60 IUCN-listed marine species.

Over the last decade, there has been significant ecosystem degradation and risk of biodiversity loss in the coastal and marine environment. Currently, national commercial fish biomass (snappers and groupers) is rated as Poor, indicative of the extent of overfishing, critical habitat loss, emerging coral diseases, invasive species such as lionfish, significantly reduced productivity of fish spawning aggregation sites, and the conversion of key mangrove fish nursery areas through dredging and land 'reclamation.' This impacts fisher livelihoods and food security, with more fishers chasing reduced primary products (such as conch and lobster), leading to greater pressure for illegal extraction.

This project will complement and strengthen ongoing programs under several government departments, each pivotal in managing and safeguarding Belize's natural resources. Working alongside the Fisheries Department in the Ministry of Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management (MBEDRM), responsible for overseeing Marine Reserves and fisheries management, the Forest Department within the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change (MSDCC), which leads efforts in mangrove protection and restoration, and the National Biodiversity Office, entrusted with coastal and marine protected area management (excluding Marine Reserves), this project amplifies the collective impact of these agencies. Moreover, it aligns with the government's commitment to sustainable financing through initiatives like Blue Bond financing. Additional investments from entities such as the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT), the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future, and the Pew Charitable Trusts further bolster the project's reach and effectiveness. Drawing from the wealth of experience and resources provided by programs like the Green Climate Fund country program, the Caribbean Natural Resource Institute, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), this project leverages a solid foundation to advance its objectives. Building upon these existing frameworks and collaborations, the project aims to enhance marine and coastal conservation enforcement, foster sustainable livelihoods, and promote biodiversity conservation to benefit Belize's ecosystems and communities.

The development of the Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) initiative to date has been a collaborative process led by the Blue Bond Finance Permanent Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister in partnership with WWF, with input from multiple Government ministries and civil society stakeholders, to ensure adequate engagement for committed implementation. The Blue and Green Island (BGI) project will build on the protected area co-management partnerships between the Government, NGOs, and CBOs, and between the co-managers and their local advisory committees that engage direct stakeholders (such as resource users, civil society actors, and the private sector) in marine and coastal protected area management. The design and implementation of the project will follow a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan (see SEP Annexed to the CEO Endorsement Request) that will include a series of varied consultation mechanisms designed to engage key stakeholders to identify, discuss, and validate project activities, including nature-based investment opportunities for reducing pressures on the marine environment.



Data: LIC National Protected Areas System shapefile 20
 Wildlife Conservation Society mapping of S.I. No. 71 and 75 of 2022

FIGURE 1: MAP OF PROJECT AREA

1.1.1. PROJECT OBJECTIVE AND COMPONENTS

The project objective is to secure the long-term conservation and resilience of Belize’s marine and coastal ecosystems, promoting nature-based livelihoods and the well-being of Belizeans.

The project has three components.

Component 1: Enabling Environment for Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Conservation

- 1.1. The integrated PFP framework was co-developed and agreed upon by government and non-government stakeholders. The project will build the capacity of the government and partners to (i) develop PFP governance arrangements, (ii) design a comprehensive conservation plan that will identify priority investments to support improved management of 34+ coastal and marine protected areas and associated sustainable livelihoods, and (iii) develop its associated financial plan. The planning process will build capacities, cross-sectoral coordination, and policy coherence. These plans will be informed by natural capital accounting valuation, building on a baseline of work conducted by the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development.
- 1.2. Enhanced capacity for domestic resource mobilization in Belize to achieve area-based conservation and associated livelihoods. The project will support the Belize government in developing sustainable finance mechanisms to increase domestic resource mobilization towards the PFP Conservation Plan. Based on identified needs and the existing baseline of domestic funding, options for mobilizing additional investments from the public and local private sector will be explored, including establishing an endowment fund.

Component 2: Scaling Up Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) in Coastal and Marine PAs and Key Ecosystems Outside of PAs

- 2.1 Existing nature-based solutions applied at scale in coastal and marine protected areas and target ecosystems, resulting in improved habitat integrity and ecosystem conditions. Once the governance arrangements, conservation plan, finance plan, and funding commitments are formally agreed upon, under this component, the PFP will implement the agreed Conservation Plan, scaling up NbS including, protection, effective management, and restoration of coastal and marine PAs and key ecosystems, and improvement of livelihoods of targeted communities, particularly in the tourism and fisheries sectors. The PFP Conservation Plan will include strategies under five pillars:
 - I. Marine and Coastal PA Management,
 - II. Ecosystem Restoration and Protection,
 - III. Livelihoods and Wellbeing,
 - IV. Institutional and Policy Reforms and
 - V. Sustainable Financing.

Component 3: Knowledge Management, Coordination, and M&E.

- 3.1 Project monitoring and evaluation data contributes to efficient decision-making and adaptive project management.
- 3.2 Project knowledge sharing and management.
- 3.3 Coordination with the global BGI IP.

The project will coordinate stakeholder participation on national and regional platforms through webinars, study exchanges with other Small Island Development States (SIDS), workshops, side events, and communication materials. The Belize BGI project will facilitate key staff to attend the BGI IP Annual Workshops or events, and project management unit staff will include time dedicated to coordinating with the Global BGI Project and the Global BGI IP PMU.

1.2. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The preparation of this Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) was required by the WWF's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF) through guidance and procedures described in WWF's Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP) to identify and manage the environmental and social risks and impacts of the Resilient, Bold Belize project. The ESMF aims to outline the principles, procedures, and mitigation measures for addressing environmental and social impacts associated with the project in accordance with Belize's laws and regulations and with the ESSF.

Since the scope of activities implemented as part of the Project will only be determined during the implementation phase, site-specific social and environmental impacts are still being determined. Thus, the development of site-specific Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) is currently not feasible, and an ESMF is necessary to set out procedures for addressing potential adverse social and environmental impacts that may occur during project activities. Site-specific ESMPs will be developed under the guidance of this ESMF during project implementation.

1.2.1. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The specific objectives of the ESMF include the following:

1. Carry out a preliminary identification of the positive and negative social and environmental impacts and risks associated with the implementation of the Project, including any SEAH risks;
2. Outline the legal and regulatory framework that is relevant to the Project implementation;
3. Specify appropriate roles and responsibilities of actors and parties involved in the ESMF implementation;
4. Propose a set of preliminary recommendations and measures to mitigate any negative impacts and enhance positive impacts;
5. Develop a screening and assessment methodology for potential activities that will allow an environmental/social risk classification and the identification of appropriate safeguards instruments;
6. Set out procedures to establish mechanisms to monitor the implementation and efficacy of the proposed mitigation measures and
7. Outline requirements related to disclosure, grievance redress, capacity-building activities, and budget required to implement the ESMF.

1.2.2. OBJECTIVE OF THE PROCESS FRAMEWORK (PF)

The project triggers the WWF's Standard on Access Restriction and Resettlement as it may restrict or otherwise affect access to natural resources and the livelihood activities of project affected people (PAP). This Process Framework (PF) describes the process by which affected communities participate in identification, design, implementation and monitoring of relevant project activities and mitigation measures. The purpose of this PF is to ensure participation of Project Affected People (PAP) while recognizing and protecting their rights and interests and ensuring that they do not become worse off as a result of the project. Specifically, the PF will:

- Describe activities that may involve new or more stringent restrictions on the use of natural resources in the project area.
- Establish the mechanism through which the local communities can contribute to the project design, implementation and monitoring.
- Identify the potential negative impacts of the restriction on the surrounding communities, including any gendered differences or SEAH risks associated with access restriction or differing uses of natural resources.
- Specify the criteria for eligibility of economically displaced persons to receive compensation benefits and development assistance (no physical displacement will be allowed under this project or any WWF project).
- Describe the mitigation measures required to assist the economically displaced persons in their efforts to improve their livelihoods, or at least to restore them, in real terms, while maintaining the sustainability of the landscape/seascape type, will be identified.
- Describe the grievance procedure or process for resolving disputes to natural resource use restrictions.
- Describe the participatory monitoring arrangements with neighboring community members.

As the project intends to enhance the livelihoods and resilience of IPs and local communities, the allocation of project benefits among local community members is particularly important. The intent of the framework is to ensure transparency and equity in the planning and implementation of activities by

the project. This framework details the principles and processes for assisting communities to identify and manage any potential negative impacts of the project activities. Since the exact social impacts will only be identified during project implementation, the PF will ensure that mitigation of any negative impacts from project investments occurs through a participatory process involving the affected stakeholders and rightsholders. It will also ensure that any desired changes by the communities in the ways in which IPs exercise customary tenure rights in the project sites would not be imposed but should emerge from a consultative process.

1.2.3. OBJECTIVE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PLANNING FRAMEWORK (IPPF)

The target project areas include indigenous groups, namely the Garinagu and Mayan peoples.

Based on WWF's Standard on IPs, the people affected by this project would thus be considered Indigenous, ethnic or tribal minorities. An Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework thus has to be prepared.

The objective of the IPs Planning Framework (IPPF) is to clarify the principles, procedures and organizational arrangements to be applied to IPs for the RBB project. This framework will serve as a guideline to the project team to:

- Enable them to prepare an IPs Plans (IPPs) for specific activities proposed consistent with WWF's Environment and Social Safeguard Integrated Policies and Procedures.
- Engage affected IPs in a Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process.
- Enable IPs to benefit equitably from the project.

1.2.4. METHODOLOGY

The ESMF preparation and development consisted of the following steps:

- Document review;
- Field research - surveys, focus groups, observation;
- Data analysis and interpretation;
- Impact Assessment and Update Risk Screening and
- Risk Categorization

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Team members conducted document reviews before, during, and after the field research to understand the Project's legal framework and complement the data collected on the ground with existing research. Academic literature, government websites, and websites from conservation organizations were the primary sources for documents. The Belize Census was also used to secure national and district-level social and economic data.

FIELD RESEARCH

Two instruments were used to conduct fieldwork—a focus group and a survey with questions about the individual and the household. The tools were designed to integrate questions to gather baseline social and environmental data in the project area, identify project risks and impacts, and better understand the situation regarding gender, vulnerable groups, and Indigenous Peoples.

Field research was conducted from February 26, 2024, to March 21, 2024. A team of four researchers, three from Belize and one from Mexico, visited each of the eight target communities. In each community, with the support of partner organizations, the research team conducted a focus group and surveys with community members. A summary of the participants in each community can be found in Table 1 (for more information on consultations, see Annex 2 of SEP).

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY COMMUNITY IN EACH FIELD RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Community Name	# of Participants - Focus Group	# of Participants - Survey
Chunox	8	9
Sarteneja	4	8
Copper Bank	0	0
Gales Point	0	6
Riversdale	3	6
Seine Bight	6	7
Monkey River Town	8	7
Barranco	5	3
Punta Gorda	12 ¹	0

No one participated in the focus group in Copper Bank and no one was available or willing to participate in the surveys in Copper Bank. The local leaders indicated that the community has a belief that it is bad luck to fish during Holy Week, so all the fisherfolk were out on fishing boats during the week before holy week and thus unavailable to participate in the research. The research team found one fisherman, but when approached to participate in the survey, he refused, stating that his perception was that the study was about decreasing the fishing area.

Due to the project's inherent timelines, the on-the-ground research period coincided with the high tourism and fishing seasons. As such, Project Affected People were mostly unavailable, resulting in low survey participation rates. There is also distrust in the project communities, which manifested in some people using fake names for the focus group and survey activities. Others responded negatively and claimed at the start that they believed the meeting would restrict access to their fishing areas. Additionally, numerous community members expressed that they had already participated in other research studies, surveys, or similar projects, and they were too busy or not interested in doing so again, demonstrating the problem of consultation fatigue.

Given these factors, the final sample size for surveys and focus groups is small. Although statistical representation was never a goal guiding the design, the reduced number of participants constrains the conclusions drawn. However, this has been actively addressed through the following:

1. Though the numbers are small, the research team ensured that representatives from the diverse groups identified during desk research were present before the field assessments. The field assessments, both focus groups and surveys, included men and women from key Indigenous Peoples (Garinagu and Maya), diverse age groups (young adults, adults, and elders), representatives from important industries, particularly tourism and fisherfolk, the two sectors expected to be the most affected livelihoods, and participation from all seven project-affected communities.
2. Additional desk research was conducted to complement the gaps in the field assessment.
3. The planned remote interviews with key stakeholders were expanded to complement the information gathered in the field research and pursue other questions of interest that arose during said time.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Python, while Qualitative data was organized using Atlas. The research team organized and interpreted the data, which consisted of qualitative and

¹ A focus group led by the Audubon Society team was held in Punta Gorda on June 1, 2024.

quantitative data from field research, information from document reviews, and secondary data sources, to assess risks and impacts.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND UPDATE RISK SCREENING

The ESA results and the project partners' insights were used to update the original risk screening and add new impacts and risks found during the research.

RISK CATEGORIZATION

Risks were categorized by their likelihood (Very unlikely to occur (1), Not expected to occur (2), Likely - could occur (3), Almost certain - known to occur (4), Common occurrence (5)), and Consequence (Severe (5), Major (4), Medium (3), Minor (2), Negligible (1)). Then, the risk is categorized based on the risk significance matrix.

Risk Significance		Likelihood				
		Very unlikely to occur (1)	Not expected to occur (2)	Likely - could occur (3)	Known to occur - almost certain (4)	Common occurrence (5)
Consequence	Severe (5)	Moderate	Substantial	High	High	High
	Major (4)	Low	Moderate	Substantial	Substantial	High
	Medium (3)	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Substantial
	Minor (2)	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Negligible (1)	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

FIGURE 2: RISK SIGNIFICANCE MATRIX

2. INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

National Protected Areas System Act² - The act guides the legal requirement for environmental and social assessment for the declaration of new protected areas or the alteration, re-classification, or revocation of a declaration. In Part V, Sections 14 and 19, the act defines the requirement to conduct “an integrated assessment of the ecological, social and economic status of the area, potential impacts and contribution to the National Protected Areas System.”

Environmental Protection Act³. The objective of the Environmental Protection Act, Chapter 328, is to establish a comprehensive legal framework for protecting and managing the environment in the country. This legislation aims to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources and safeguard environmental quality to promote Belizean citizens' and future generations' health and well-being. Key objectives of the Environmental Protection Act include Preventing Environmental Degradation, Sustainable Development, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Regulation and Enforcement, Public Participation and Awareness and Conservation of Natural Resources. The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations within the Environmental Protection Act describe the process of preparing, conducting, and evaluating environmental impact assessments for projects, programs, or activities that could significantly negatively impact the environment.

PROTECTION OF NATURAL HABITATS

Belize Fisheries Policy⁴ - The Belize Fisheries Policy serves as a guiding framework for the management and sustainable use of fisheries resources in Belize. Its main objectives typically include: *Conservation*: Ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of marine and freshwater fisheries resources to maintain healthy ecosystems and biodiversity; *Sustainable Development*: Promoting the sustainable development of the fisheries sector, balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity; *Governance*: Strengthen fisheries' governance through effective laws, regulations, and management measures, as well as enhance enforcement mechanisms; *Stakeholder Engagement*: Encouraging the participation of stakeholders, including fishers, communities, NGOs, and government agencies, in fisheries management and decision-making processes. *Research and Monitoring*: Supporting scientific research and monitoring programs to assess the status of fisheries resources, understand ecosystem dynamics, and inform management decisions. *Capacity Building*: Building institutional capacity and providing training and education opportunities for fisheries managers, fishers, and other stakeholders to improve their understanding of sustainable fisheries practices. Overall, the Belize Fisheries Policy aims to ensure the long-term viability of fisheries resources while promoting the socio-economic well-being of communities dependent on these resources.

Fisheries Resources Act (2020)⁵—The policy applies to Belize's fisheries resources, where it exercises sovereign rights or jurisdiction and is under the jurisdiction of the Belize Fisheries Department. The primary objective is to promote long-term conservation, management, and sustainable use of Belize's fisheries resources. It explains the licensing needs for different fishing-related activities, the prohibited fishing methods, and the rules and regulations that must be followed regarding fishing species. The policy applies to Belizeans and foreigners fishing in Belizean waters.

² Belize: National Protected Areas System Act, 2015. Arrangement of Sections [National Protected Areas System Act, 2015 Arrangement of Sections](#)

³ Department of Environment, Environmental Protection Act 2011. [Environmental Protection Act, Chapter 328, Revised edition 2011](#)

⁴ Legislation. Fisheries related Laws and Statutory Instruments (n.d.) [Legislation. Fisheries related Laws and Statutory Instruments](#)

⁵ Fisheries Resources. BELIZE: Fisheries Resources Act. 2020 [Fisheries Resources Act, 2020](#)

Belize Coast Guard Service (Amendment) Act (2016)⁶ - The 2016 Belize Coast Guard Service Amendment Act of 2016 changed the name of the Belize National Coast Guard Service to the Belize Coast Guard. The Coast Guard is primarily designated as a military service entity, serving as Belize's naval force responsible for defending its territory and safeguarding sovereignty in maritime areas. The Belize Coast Guard Service has many powers, including immigration, customs, and ports. The powers of conservation and biodiversity include fisheries protection, marine resources and environmental protection, marine pollution, and maintaining territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belize sea spaces.

National Protected Areas System Act (2015)⁷ - The act's objective is to provide for the maintenance of coordinated management of the protected areas in accordance with international agreements, effectively managed, ecologically based, consistent with international law, and based on the best available scientific information and the principles of sustainable development for the economic, social and environmental benefit the Belizeans in the present and future. The areas that are part of the protection are biological diversity and landscape diversity in land, sea, or freshwater. It includes the governance of the Designed Protected Areas, the activities that can be done in those areas, and their classification: (a) national park; (b) nature reserve; (c) wildlife sanctuary 1; (d) wildlife sanctuary 2; (e) natural monument; (f) forest reserve (g) marine reserve; (h) archaeological reserve; (i) private protected area; (j) protected landscape or protected seascape; (k) spawning aggregation site; (l) special management area; (m) scenic landscape of geomorphic significance.

High Seas Fishing Act (2013)⁸—The High Seas Fishing Act aims to promote long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources on the high seas according to international agreements. It includes regulations on the high seas, sanction licensing, monitoring, control, and surveillance.

Merchant Ships Registration Act (2010)⁹ - The Merchant Ships Registration Act provides guidelines regarding ships, including registrations, name and flag, transfer and transmissions, maritime liens, maritime claims, and relevant penalties.

Coastal Zone Management Act (1998, Rev. Ed. 2000)¹⁰ - The Coastal Zone Management Act improves coastal zone management in Belize by establishing a Coastal Zone Management Authority and a Coastal Zone Management Institute. The Authority is tasked with several vital functions aimed at the sustainable development and management of coastal resources. These functions include advising the Minister on coastal zone matters, formulating policies, and translating marine policies into sustainable development activities. Additionally, the Authority assists in fostering regional and international collaboration in marine resource usage reviews of Coastal Zone Management Plans. It conducts research and monitoring in coastal areas to mitigate potential environmental impacts.

Wildlife Protection Act (1982, Rev. Ed. 2000)¹¹ - The Wildlife Protection Act seeks to generate norms and rules to generate conditions for the conservation of wildlife, including hunting normative, hunting species allowed, generates clarity regarding the punishments and/or fines for those who do not comply with the existing regulations, the species protected and the actions that the rangers can carry out if they observe or are investigating people committing violations of the rules.

Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) Act (1996)¹² - The Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) Act was passed in 2011, 2015, and 2024. The Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) of Belize was established to support the conservation and sustainable management of the country's protected areas. PACT was created through the Protected Areas Conservation Trust Act, which outlines its functions and responsibilities. Amendments to this act may include changes to the structure, funding mechanisms, or mandates of PACT to address evolving conservation needs better or enhance its

⁶ BELIZE: Belize National Coast Guard Service(AMENDMENT) Act, 2016 [Belize Coast Guard Service \(Amendment\) Act \(2016\)](#)

⁷ BELIZE: National Protected Areas System Act. 2015 [National Protected Areas System Act, 2015](#)

⁸Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [High Seas Fishing Act \(2013\)](#)

⁹ BELIZE: Merchant Ships(Registration) Act,2010. No 22 of 2010. Arrangement of Sections(Part I- Preliminary) 2010 [Merchant Ships Registration Act \(2010\)](#)

¹⁰Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2000) [Coastal Zone Management Act \(1998, Rev. Ed. 2000\)](#)

¹¹Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2000) [Wildlife Protection Act \(1982, Rev. Ed. 2000\)](#)

¹² PACT(Protective Areas Conservation Trust) (1996) [Protected Areas Conservation Trust \(PACT\) Act \(1996\)](#)

effectiveness in managing protected areas, which is currently being revised as the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (draft).

Maritime Areas Act Chapter 11 Revised Edition 2020¹³ - An Act to make provisions concerning the Territorial Sea, Internal Waters, and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Belize and for matters connected or incidental to it. It is a crucial framework for safeguarding Belize's territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Act delineates essential provisions concerning Belize's maritime jurisdiction. The Act covers various legal aspects, such as innocent passage (Part IV), charting and geographical coordinates (Part V), jurisdiction of courts, and other legal matters (Part VI). It serves as a vital legal instrument to delineate and protect Belize's maritime boundaries and rights in accordance with international law.

Belize Tourism Board Act Revised Edition 2020¹⁴ - The Belize Tourism Board has the authority, with the Minister's approval, to establish regulations to carry out the objectives of the Tourism Board Act effectively. These regulations cover various aspects of the tourism industry, including improving the tourism industry's foundation and addressing factors that may negatively impact it, registering hotels catering to tourists and classifying them based on amenities, keeping records of tourist numbers and their countries of origin, establishing standards, training, certification, and supervision for all sectors of the tourism industry and related enterprises, such as tour guides, operators, transportation services, restaurants, and entertainment venues, levying tariffs, rates, fees, and charges for regulatory purposes and imposing penalties for regulation breaches.

RESTRICTION OF ACCESS AND RESETTLEMENT

National Protected Areas System Act¹⁵ - The Act does not explicitly address Access Restrictions or Rights Holders. Still, in Part V, Section 24, the Act specifies that declaring a protected area requires that "no private land shall be declared except with the prior written consent of the owner of such land." In Section 26, the act details that when declaring or re-classifying protected areas, "existing rights on or to those protected areas are observed," even if rights to access are not specifically mentioned. All protected areas are non-extractive except for the Marine Reserves and Forest Reserves. The Act does identify the need to recognize multi-generational traditional fishing as a customary use in areas such as the use of beach traps in Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. This has been done by establishing the Wildlife Sanctuary (2) category, which allows for traditional use through Ministerial permits.

Fisheries Resources Act Commercial Fishing in Belize is regulated through licensing. Fishers must obtain the appropriate licenses, which may have specific conditions, including catch limits and gear restrictions. Belize implements closed seasons for certain species to protect them during their reproductive periods. During closed seasons, fishing for specific species may be prohibited. Minimum size limits for certain species may be established to ensure that individuals can reproduce before being harvested. There are also specific closed areas - spawning aggregation sites and shark protection areas, as well as high and full protection zones where no commercial extraction of marine resources is permitted.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Belize Constitution guarantees the right to non-discrimination and protection from arbitrary deprivation of property, which extends to indigenous peoples' rights over their traditional lands and natural resources.

The legal framework in Belize that defines and protects Indigenous Peoples is based on the country's obligations under international human rights treaties; Belize has ratified several international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the

¹³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2020 [Maritime Areas Ac. Chapter 11, Revised Edition 2020](#)

¹⁴ BELIZE. Belize Tourism (2000) [Belize Tourism Board Act Revised Edition 2020](#)

¹⁵ Belize Assembly, (2015) [National Protected Areas System Act, 2015 Arrangement of Sections](#)

Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Charter of the Organization of American States, all of which require the protection of indigenous peoples' rights to their lands and resources.

COMMUNITY HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY, AND LABOR AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The Labor Act (Cap. 297)¹⁶ - The Labor Act is chapter 297 of the Substantive Laws of Belize. The act provides guidance and regulations about various aspects of labor in Belize, including recruitment, registration, holidays, maternity, and sector-specific regulations. The chapter has been amended on numerous occasions, most recently in 2011. Part XII, Safety, Health, and Housing, outlines the duties of employers to provide safe working conditions. For contracting and maintaining employees in Belize, either by WWF or partners, the regulations from the Labor Act should be followed to protect labor rights. The act also provides details on regulations about forced labor and employment of women and children in Part XIII.

An in-depth Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Bill has been a work in progress for the past 12 years, with multiple iterations and stakeholder consultations. From available information, the bill is not yet a law.

The Belize Constitution, outlined in Part II, protects Individual Rights and Freedoms. This part of the Constitution includes safeguarding the right to life, personal liberty, protection of the law, prevention of inhuman treatment, prohibition of slavery and forced labor, prevention of arbitrary search or entry, freedom of movement, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, and the right to privacy, among others.

Additionally, the Constitution addresses the protection of the right to work, the prevention of discrimination based on various grounds, the prevention of property deprivation, provisions for periods of public emergency, the protection of persons detained under emergency laws, the enforcement of protective provisions, the protection of existing laws, and interpretation and savings freedoms.

PEST MANAGEMENT

The Pesticides Control Act¹⁷, passed in 1985 and updated as recently as 2011, established the Pesticides Control Board and its functions. It provides guidelines for registration, licensing of manufacturers, and importing pesticides. Additionally, it outlines restrictions for certain pesticides.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) oversees the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Belize.

The Belize National Cultural Policy (2016-2026) seeks to promote the preservation of the heritage and cultural forms of minority groups in Belize, including both tangible and intangible heritage, by protecting, preserving, and imparting Belizean cultural heritage. It focuses on several important aspects, including but not limited to the development and promotion of cultural industries and the financing and administration of culture. It seeks to incorporate important elements of culture in policy interventions, such as language and oral traditions, music, health and traditional medicine, family and religion, ethnicity, national days, heroes and symbols, as well as research and cultural documentation.

GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

No legal framework for a Grievance Mechanism in Belize has been identified.

¹⁶ SIR COLVILLEN. YOUNG. (Governor- General) (2011) [Labour \(Amendment\) Act 211](#)

¹⁷ [Pesticide Control Act](#).

PUBLIC CONSULTATION, DISCLOSURE, AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

National Protected Areas System Act¹⁸. The act provides the legal requirement for engaging with communities and key stakeholders to declare new protected areas or alter, reclassify, or revoke a declaration. In Part V, Section 19, Sub-section b, the act defines the requirement to “ensure consultation with nearby communities and affected parties of the area and follow a process of public participation.”

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

Domestic Violence Act, Chapter 178, Revised Edition 2011¹⁹ - The act aims to provide legal measures and protections against domestic violence, outlining provisions related to the prevention, intervention, and legal consequences associated with such acts. In the context of a marine protected areas project, these provisions in the Domestic Violence Act could help ensure the safety and well-being of women who may be affected, for example, if their livelihoods or living situations are disrupted. This Act's legal protections and support services would complement the environmental conservation goals.

The Revised National Gender Policy of 2013²⁰ outlines the government's approach to promoting gender equity and women's empowerment. It provides a framework for ensuring that marine protected area initiatives are designed and implemented gender-responsively, empowering women's participation, addressing family impacts, and upholding women's and children's rights and best interests.

The Revised National Gender Policy 2024-2030²¹ - The policy continues the 2013 policy, focusing on the gaps for further action. It defines the actions to reduce discrimination against women and GBV. The policy seeks to enforce women in power and decision-making.

Belize Criminal Code Chapter 101 Revised edition 2000²² - The Criminal Code contains provisions related to criminal offenses, including gender-based violence. These gender and women's issues are crucial for ensuring the safety, rights, and well-being of women and vulnerable populations involved in or impacted by the project. It is essential to consider these legal provisions to safeguard against gender-based violence, exploitation, and discrimination within the project's implementation and enforcement processes.

Protection Against Sexual Harassment Act Chapter 107 Revised Edition 2000²³ - Provides essential legal protections against sexual harassment and victimization, particularly for women and other vulnerable groups, in employment, institutions, and accommodation. These safeguards are relevant to ensuring gender-sensitive processes when developing a marine protected area project.

National Trade Policy (NTP) (2019-2030) Laws—Stakeholders designed the National Trade Policy to strengthen the country's economy through policies that make business and entrepreneurship easy and fair. It includes inclusive policies for youth, women, and people with disabilities.

Families and Children Act, Cap. 173²⁴ - This Act provides for the protection of children and their rights, including the right to maintenance and the attendant duty of the parent or person with parental responsibility to protect the child from discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect. It also outlines the

¹⁸Belize: National Protected Areas System Act, 2015. Arrangement of Sections [National Protected Areas System Act, 2015 Arrangement of Sections](#)

¹⁹ Belize Judiciary. (2011) [The Domestic Violence Act, Chapter 178](#).

²⁰ The National Women's Commission. (2013) [The revised National Gender Policy](#)

²¹ [https://assets-global.website-](https://assets-global.website-files.com/604665626bb4328821a62cb8/6621343271f094ed0496381e_2024NationalGenderPolicy.pdf)

[files.com/604665626bb4328821a62cb8/6621343271f094ed0496381e_2024NationalGenderPolicy.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/604665626bb4328821a62cb8/6621343271f094ed0496381e_2024NationalGenderPolicy.pdf)

²² Criminal Code Chapter 101.(2000) [Belize Criminal Code Chapter 101 Revised edition 2000](#)

²³ BELIZE. Protection Against Sexual Harassment Act Chapter 107.(2000) [The Protection Against Sexual Harassment Act Chapter 107 Revised Edition 2000](#)

²⁴ BELIZE: Families and Children Act, Chapter 173.(2000)

https://www.oas.org/dil/Families_and_Children_Act_Belize.pdf

rights of a child to stay with parents, the duty to maintain a child, parental responsibility, harmful employment, and children with disabilities.

Domestic Violence Act, Cap. 178²⁵ - This Act offers protection to a child, whether or not it is a child of the marriage or union, and provides for reintegration and rehabilitation of child victims of violence.

Juvenile Offenders Act²⁶ - This Act empowers the court to adopt a range of measures in response to a charge it considers, including dismissing the charge, conditional release of the offender, or his or her release into the care of a relative. The court's actions must be in the child's or young person's "best interests."

Belize Constitution, Cap. 4²⁷ - This Constitution protects the following freedoms for the benefit of people in Belize, including children: life, liberty, security of the person, and the protection of the law; freedom of conscience, of expression and assembly and association; protection for his family life, his privacy, the privacy of his home and other property and recognition of his human dignity; and protection from arbitrary deprivation of property.

Marriage Act, the Domestic Violence Act, the Criminal Code, and the Crime Control and Criminal Justice Act 610: These laws use general and all-encompassing terms that apply to all children, regardless of their sex or sexual orientation.

2.2. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Belize is a member of various international agreements and organizations. The ones relevant to the project are:

1. **United Nations (UN):** Belize is a member of the United Nations, having joined on September 25, 1981, following its independence.
2. **Organization of American States (OAS):** Belize is a member of the OAS, a regional organization comprising countries in the Americas.
3. **Caribbean Community (CARICOM):** Belize is a member of CARICOM, a regional organization promoting economic integration and cooperation among Caribbean countries.
4. **Central American Integration System (SICA):** Belize is part of SICA, which fosters regional cooperation and integration among Central American countries.

2.2.1. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)²⁸ - A comprehensive international treaty that addresses a wide range of gender and women's issues, including ensuring the rights and participation of rural women, protecting women's employment and economic rights, and upholding equality in family and property matters.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action²⁹ - A landmark document that outlines strategic objectives and actions to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. These gender and women's issues would be highly relevant to ensure the safeguards process is designed and implemented to promote equality, empower women, and address their needs and concerns. Particular

²⁵ BELIZE. Domestic Violence Act Chapter 178. (2000) <https://www.belizejudiciary.org/download/LAWS-of-Belize-rev2011/Laws-of-Belize-Update-2011/VOLUME%209A/Cap%20178%20Domestic%20Violence%20Act.pdf>

²⁶ Congress.Gov S.10.Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offenders Act (1997) <https://www.belizejudiciary.org/download/2012/10/cap119-juvenile-offenders-act.pdf>

²⁷ National Assembly of Belize. Belize Constitution, Cap. 4 (2021) <https://www.nationalassembly.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Belize-Constitution-Chapter-4-2021.pdf>

²⁸ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. (1979) [The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)

²⁹ The Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing-declaration/)

attention should be paid to ensuring women's meaningful participation in decision-making, protecting their rights and access to resources, and addressing any risks of violence or discrimination they may face.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)³⁰ - Serves as a crucial framework for ensuring inclusivity and equality in various spheres, including projects concerning maritime protected areas. The fundamental purpose of the CRPD is to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by individuals with disabilities while also fostering respect for their inherent dignity. By recognizing the diverse range of disabilities and the barriers they face, the CRPD emphasizes principles such as respect for inherent dignity, non-discrimination, and full participation and inclusion in society. Furthermore, the convention underscores the importance of accessibility, equality of opportunity, and the empowerment of individuals with disabilities, including women, girls, and children. Through its comprehensive provisions, the CRPD advocates for awareness-raising initiatives, combating stereotypes and prejudices, and promoting accessibility in various aspects of life, including the physical environment, transportation, information and communication technologies, and public services. Additionally, the CRPD emphasizes the right to life, protection in situations of risk, legal recognition, and access to support to ensure the exercise of legal capacity. By upholding these principles and obligations, the CRPD provides essential safeguards in projects related to maritime protected areas, ensuring the meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in conservation efforts and the enjoyment of marine resources on an equal basis with others.

The legal framework in Belize that defines and protects Indigenous Peoples is based on the country's obligations under international human rights treaties - Belize has ratified several international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Charter of the Organization of American States, all of which require the protection of indigenous peoples' rights to their lands and resources.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Covenant established universal standards for the protection of civil and political rights and to ensure that individuals can enjoy these rights without discrimination, oppression, or undue interference from the state or other actors.³¹

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The convention looks to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers and their families, recognizing their contributions to the economies and societies of both their countries of origin and destination and ensuring that they are treated with dignity, respect, and equality under the law.³²

Convention on the Rights of the Child serves as a powerful instrument for promoting social justice, equality, and human dignity for future generations.³³

2.2.2. INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL INSTRUMENTS

Rio Convention: Belize is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Escazu Agreement: In 2020, Belize signed the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu Agreement). It has as its objective "to guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the

³⁰ UNITED NATIONS. United Nations Human Rights. Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights. (2008) [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)

³¹ UNITED NATIONS. United Nations Human Rights (office of the High Commissioner). (1996) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

³² UNITED NATIONS. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner). (1990) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>

³³ UNITED NATIONS. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (1989) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters, and the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development.”³⁴

Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage:³⁵ The convention was adopted by UNESCO in 2003, highlights several key areas related to the protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage including recognizing and documenting intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to ensure its preservation, creating inventories of intangible cultural heritage elements, implementing measures to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, such as educational programs, research, and the promotion of traditional knowledge and skills, ensuring that these measures respect the customary practices and traditions of the communities involved, promoting awareness and appreciation of the importance of intangible cultural heritage at local, national, and international levels, incorporating intangible cultural heritage into educational programs to foster respect and understanding among young people, encouraging the active involvement of communities, groups, and individuals who create, maintain, and transmit intangible cultural heritage in all aspects of its safeguarding, recognizing the role of these communities as the primary custodians of their cultural heritage, facilitating international cooperation and exchange of information and experiences related to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and promoting technical assistance and support among member states to enhance their capacity to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage and integrating the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage into development policies and programs to ensure sustainable development that respects cultural diversity.

2.2.3. WWF’S ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS FRAMEWORK

WWF’s safeguards standards require that any potentially adverse environmental and social impacts be identified and avoided or mitigated. The following safeguards policies are relevant to this project.

STANDARD ON ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

This standard is applicable because Resilient, Bold Belize intends to support activities that result in various environmental and social impacts. The Project is expected to generate both positive and negative impacts. The precise location and impact of specific activities cannot be determined at this stage and will only be known during project implementation. Thus, an ESMF is prepared to set out guidelines and procedures to identify, assess, and monitor environmental and social impacts and avoid or mitigate adverse impacts. Site-specific ESMPs will be prepared as required based on the principles and guidelines of the ESMF.

STANDARD ON PROTECTION OF NATURAL HABITATS

WWF’s mission is to protect natural habitats, and it does not undertake any projects that would result in the conversion or degradation of critical natural habitats, especially those that are legally protected, officially proposed for protection, or identified as having high conservation value. Overall, the Resilient, Bold Belize activities will produce conservation benefits for marine ecosystems through improving nature-based solutions (NbS) for these ecosystems. The improved management will result in more sustainable fisheries (i.e., reduced overfishing), improved protection of endangered species, and sustaining marine-based ecosystem services. Any potential adverse environmental impacts on human populations or environmentally important areas are not expected, as the project focuses on generating positive environmental impacts. However, this standard has been triggered as a precaution because some of the project’s activities, such as restoration and overall increase of management capacity for the MPAs, are likely to have an on-the-ground impact.

STANDARD ON RESTRICTION OF ACCESS AND RESETTLEMENT

The WWF’s Standard ensures that adverse social or economic impacts on resource-dependent local communities due to resource access and/or use restrictions are avoided or minimized. The project triggers this standard as it may cause access restrictions for economic activities, specifically for fishing and possibly for certain tourism activities. Increased enforcement or stronger restrictions, while

³⁴ [Observatory on Principle 10, in the Latin America and the Caribbean \(n.d\)](#)

³⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2003). [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#)

expected to lead to improved and sustained fisheries in the long term, may have a short-term impact of reducing catch amounts, adversely impacting fisherfolk's income, and negatively impacting some families' food security.

STANDARD ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The WWF's standard requires ensuring that indigenous rights are respected, that IPs do not suffer adverse impacts from projects, and that IPs receive culturally appropriate benefits from conservation. The policy mandates that projects respect IPs' rights, including their rights to FPIC processes and tenure over traditional territories; that culturally appropriate and equitable benefits (including from traditional ecological knowledge) are negotiated and agreed upon with the IPs' communities in question; and that potential adverse impacts are avoided or adequately addressed through a participatory and consultative approach. The project has triggered this Standard because the Garinagu³⁶ Peoples in project areas actively engage with marine resources for their livelihoods, culture, health, and recreation. The Maya People are also present in the project area, though they were not found to have strong cultural or livelihood ties to marine natural resources. However, since there is proposed work with inland protected areas, not just Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), a more detailed review of the presence and participation of Maya Peoples in the inland protected areas that will be impacted by the project should be done to determine if they should require an FPIC process.

STANDARD ON COMMUNITY HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

This Standard ensures that communities' health, safety, and security are respected and appropriately protected. The Guidance on Labor and Working Conditions requires employers and supervisors to implement all reasonable precautions to protect workers' health and safety by introducing preventive and protective measures. It also requires that the labor rights of project-employed workers are observed, as indicated in [Annex 1: Screening Tool](#). Project activities should also prevent adverse impacts involving quality and supply of water to affected communities; SEAH-related risks to both affected communities as well as project staff; safety of project infrastructure, life, and properties; protective mechanisms for the use of hazardous materials; disease prevention procedures; and emergency preparedness and response. This standard is triggered because there is a risk identified for the health, safety, and security of project team members and team members of collaborating organizations for being exposed to insect-borne diseases, the risk for boat accidents, and the security risks associated with conflicts with people engaging in illegal activities at sea.

STANDARD ON PEST MANAGEMENT

WWF-funded projects are not allowed to procure or use formulated products in World Health Organization (WHO) Classes IA and IB or formulations of products in Class II unless there are restrictions likely to deny use or access by lay personnel and others without training or proper equipment. The project will follow the recommendations and minimum standards as described in the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides and its associated technical guidelines and procure only pesticides, along with suitable protective and application equipment, that will permit pest management actions to be carried out with well-defined and minimal risk to health, environment, and livelihoods. This Standard is not triggered because no activity associated with pesticide use exists in the project.

STANDARD ON CULTURAL RESOURCES

This standard ensures that cultural resources are appropriately preserved and their destruction, damage, or loss are avoided. Physical cultural resources (PCR) of unique natural value include archaeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, and sacred sites, including graveyards and burial sites. Intangible cultural resources include traditional ecological knowledge, performing arts, oral traditions and expressions, traditional craftsmanship and social practices, rituals, and events. The impacts on cultural resources resulting from project activities, including mitigating measures, may not contravene the recipient country's national legislation or obligations under relevant international environmental treaties and agreements. This standard is triggered by the numerous cultural resources that exist in the area, including the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

³⁶ *Garinagu* is the plural for Garifuna. Garifuna is commonly used for both the individual or the plural, however the correct terminology is used throughout the document. The language spoken by the Garinagu peoples is Garifuna.

STANDARD ON GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

Project-affected communities and other interested stakeholders may raise a grievance with the PMU and WWF at any time. The PMU will inform project-affected parties about the Accountability and Grievance Mechanism. The PMU and WWF's contact information will be made publicly available. Relevant details are also provided in the Grievance Redress section of this ESMF/PF/IPPF.

The WWF Standard on Grievance Mechanisms is not intended to replace project- and country-level dispute resolution and redress mechanisms. This mechanism is designed to address potential breaches of WWF's policies and procedures in a gender-responsive manner; be independent, transparent, and effective; be survivor-centered and offer protections to those reporting SEAH-related grievances; be accessible to project-affected people; keep complainants abreast of the progress of cases brought forward; and maintain records on all cases and issues brought forward for review.

STANDARD ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND DISCLOSURE

This standard requires meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders as early as possible throughout the project cycle. It requires the Project Team to provide relevant information promptly and in a form and language that are understandable and accessible to diverse stakeholders. This standard also requires that information concerning environmental and social issues relevant to the project is disclosed for at least 30 days before implementation and 45 days if the Indigenous Peoples Standard has been triggered. WWF will disclose safeguards documentation on its Safeguards Resources web page. The final safeguards documents should be published on the national websites of the Implementing Agencies and made available locally in specific locations. The project must also release all final key safeguard documents locally via hardcopy, translated into the local language and in a culturally appropriate manner, to facilitate relevant stakeholders' awareness that the information is in the public domain for review.

STANDARD ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

This standard ensures that WWF is committed to meaningful, effective, and informed stakeholder engagement in designing and implementing all GEF and GCF projects. WWF's commitment to stakeholder engagement arises from internal standards such as WWF's Project and Program Standards (PPMS) and WWF's commitment to international instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous People (UNDRIP). Stakeholder engagement is an overarching term that encompasses a range of activities and interactions with stakeholders throughout the project cycle and is an essential aspect of good project management. The project has prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Plan that will be implemented during the project. It can be found in Annex 2.

GUIDANCE NOTE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

All over the world, it is estimated that one in three women and girls experience GBV during their lifetime. A recent study conducted by IUCN, in collaboration with USAID as part of Advancing Gender in the Environment (AGENT), states that forms of GBV (ranging from sexual, physical, and psychological violence to trafficking, sexual harassment, sexual coercion, and in some cases rape) can be linked to environmental issues.

Many projects implemented by WWF relate to effectively managing protected areas and the landscapes in which they are located through support from law enforcement, patrolling, and better management and restoration of landscapes by restricting access to natural resources. These activities can potentially give rise to GBV/SEAH risks where government-employed law enforcement officials/rangers/guards supported by the project may misuse the power of their positions by sexually exploiting women in local communities. This is a risk if women collect water or natural resources in a protected area. As another example, projects that promote alternative livelihoods, particularly ones that improve women's empowerment and decision-making, can often lead to changes in power dynamics within communities and increase the risks of GBV/SEAH toward those empowered women.

GBV and SEAH's implementation of WWF activities in projects and programs is unacceptable and requires timely, proportional, and appropriate action. WWF recognizes that to achieve biodiversity conservation, it is vital to promote gender equality and make every effort to ensure that project activities implemented by WWF respect integrity and human rights and mitigate any risk that gives rise to

discriminatory and exploitative gender inequalities. WWF does support projects in areas where there is civil war, ethnic conflict, and insurgencies where there are existing GBV/SEAH risks. WWF, therefore, needs to understand these risks to avoid exacerbating local conditions that contribute to GBV/SEAH, which would undermine any conservation outcomes the project may seek to achieve.

For WWF projects, including GEF and GCF projects, under the Standard on Community Health and Security, the project team should identify any potential GBV/SEAH risks by screening proposed project activities using the following questions:

- Is there a risk that the project could pose a more significant burden on women by restricting the use, development, and protection of natural resources by women compared with that of men?
- Is there a risk that persons employed by or engaged directly in the project might engage in gender-based violence (including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment)?
- Does the project increase the risk of GBV and/or SEAH for women and girls, for example, by changing resource use practices?
- Does any mandated training for any individuals associated with the project (including project staff, government park rangers and guards, other park staff, consultants, partner organizations, and contractors) cover GBV/SEAH (along with human rights, etc.)?

Identifying GBV/SEAH risks in a project is usually undertaken as part of project preparation. It could be conducted during community/stakeholder consultations, identifying potential risks and screening impacts on vulnerable groups, community health, safety and security, labor and working conditions, gender equality issues, and other social or environmental risks. Any potential GB V/SE AH risk identified during this stage would be factored into the project's overall social risk, which, in turn, is factored into the overall environmental and social risk associated with a project.

GUIDANCE NOTE ON LABOR AND WORKING CONDITIONS

As a conservation organization, WWF does not typically fund large infrastructure activities in conservation projects implemented by WWF's GEF and GCF Agency. Therefore, this does not directly adversely impact labor and working conditions. However, WWF GCF Agency projects implement projects in the forestry, agriculture, and fisheries sectors, which may have potential unintended adverse impacts. This is mainly seen in financing activities necessary for strengthening protected area management systems, including constructing protected area administrative buildings, watch towers, or accommodations for park guards.

In such cases, these activities are usually executed by third-party contractors who employ construction workers, including sub-contractors. In such cases, WWF will ensure that any funding for such activities complies with WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP) and, more specifically, international labor and working condition standards such as the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and any relevant local labor standards of the project-specific countries.

This Guidance Note provides detailed guidance of reasonable precautions to implement in managing principal occupational health and safety risks. The following is based on the IFC's Environmental, Health, and Safety Guidelines (April 30, 2007) and covers the following general thematic areas:

1. General Facility Design and Operation
 - a. Integrity of Workplace Structures
 - b. Severe Weather and Facility Shutdown
 - c. Workspace and Exit
 - d. Fire Precautions
 - e. Lavatories and Showers
 - f. Potable Water Supply
 - g. Clean Eating Area
 - h. Lighting
 - i. Safe Access
 - j. First Aid
 - k. Air Supply
 - l. Work Environment Temperature
2. Training
 - a. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Training
3. Physical Hazards
 - a. Rotating and Moving Equipment

- b. Rotating and Moving Equipment
 - c. Vibration
 - d. Electrical
 - e. Eye Hazards
 - f. Welding / Hot Work
 - g. Industrial Vehicle Driving and Site Traffic
 - h. Working Environment Temperature
 - i. Ergonomics, Repetitive Motion, Manual Handling
 - j. Working at Heights
 - k. Illumination
4. Standards for Workers' Living Conditions
- a. General living facilities
 - b. Drainage
 - c. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation and light
 - d. Water
 - e. Wastewater and solid waste
 - f. Rooms/dormitories facilities
 - g. Bed arrangements and storage facilities
 - h. Sanitary and toilet facilities
 - i. Toilet facilities
 - j. Showers/bathrooms and other sanitary facilities
 - k. Canteen, cooking, and laundry facilities
 - l. Medical facilities
 - m. Leisure, social, and telecommunications facilities

GUIDANCE NOTE ON PROJECTS RELATING TO DAMS

WWF's freshwater conservation work in many river basins is affected by the development of new dams or existing dam operations. WWF opposes unsustainable dams that do not adhere to internationally recognized principles and criteria for good practice. WWF advocates that (1) no dams be built in or affect areas of high conservation value; (2) alternatives be fully considered before decisions are made to build new dams; and (3) principles, tools, and inclusive, transparent processes be applied that make the best possible choices regarding the management of existing dams and development of new dams.

WWF actively works to assess existing dams to minimize impacts, maximize benefits, and reduce demand for new dams. WWF advocates for improving operational management for environmental benefits at existing dams through related policies, plans, or regulations. This can include:

- Establishing environmental flow regimes to restore ecological functions downstream of a dam by mimicking natural variability in river flows. Work may consist of assessment of environmental flow requirements, hydrological studies, design of reservoir releases, and policy work;
- Promoting retrofitting dams or infrastructure to improve performance and reduce the need for new infrastructure;
- Promoting adaptation of existing infrastructure to allow for improved environmental performance and
- Promoting decommissioning or removal of hazardous or obsolete dams.

Dam Safety

Given the above instances, and in line with WWF Network's position on dams, WWF can:

- For GEF and GCF projects, partner with a GEF and GCF Implementing Agency that is accredited for Safety of Dams safeguards to jointly support such efforts, so long as the other agency's safeguards system is applied for the entire project;
- Implement projects that involve working with the government or relevant sector on strategic river basin planning to restrict or concentrate dams to appropriate rivers and watersheds of lower conservation value (e.g., already altered);
- Implement projects that result in recommendations for environmental flow requirements for a stream or river (e.g., timing, volume, duration);
- Implement projects that involve working with governments to ensure better regulation of the hydropower sector;
- Implement projects that build capacity in the hydropower sector and government ministries to improve environmental-based approaches/tools for sustainable development and

- Implement small or minor water infrastructure work whose impact is deemed not to trigger the safety of dam safeguards through WWF's Policy on Environment and Social Risk Management.

This Standard is not triggered because no activity is associated with dams in the project.

GUIDANCE NOTE ON RANGER PRINCIPLES

Rangers protect wildlife, manage protected areas, and resolve human-wildlife conflicts. Rangers must act within the law and under high ethical standards to achieve positive outcomes for both people and nature. WWF only supports legitimate law enforcement activities that are carried out in a way that respects and protects the human rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Specific measures are in place to uphold WWF's high ethical standards, including a risk assessment, mitigation actions, and continuous monitoring throughout implementation.³⁷ Rangers are expected to adhere to the following principles:

1. Act within the law.
2. Ensure accountability.
3. Build ranger capacity
4. Support the welfare of rangers and their families.
5. Partner with local communities.
6. Identify, monitor, and plan for challenges.
7. Maintain impartiality.
8. Communicate regularly.
9. Sanctions for malfeasance.

2.3 GAP ANALYSIS

An analysis was completed to compare the WWF GEF requirements and Belize's national legal framework (Table 2). Gaps were identified, and strategies to fill them were proposed. For the Resilient, Bold Belize, the WWF's ESSF and SIPP provisions shall prevail over Belizean legislation in all cases of discrepancy.

TABLE 2: GAP ANALYSIS

Standards	National Legislative Requirements	Gap	Strategy
Standard on Environmental and Social Risk Management.	The National Protected Areas System Act requires an integrated assessment of the area's ecological, social, and economic status, potential impacts, and contribution to the National Protected Areas System. The Environmental Protection Act defines the requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments for projects that could negatively impact the environment.	There is no national legislation for an Environmental and Social Management System or Framework; there are only different requirements for conducting social and environmental impact assessments.	The project will follow the principles of the WWF Environmental and Social Management System.
Standard on Protection of Natural Habitats	Belize's norms and legislation cover the project's multiple components, including wildlife conservation, fisheries conservation, marine area conservation, mangrove protection, and tourism.	No gap was identified.	The project will comply with WWF requirements.
Standard on Restriction of Access and Resettlement	The legislation does not explicitly address Access Restrictions or Rights Holders but requires consent when private areas are being declared protected areas. Additionally, traditional users' customary rights are recognized under the NPAS Act through the Wildlife Sanctuary designation.	WWF requirements go beyond National legislation	The project will comply with WWF requirements.
Standard on Indigenous Peoples	The Belize Constitution guarantees the right to non-discrimination and protection from arbitrary deprivation of property, which extends to	WWF requirements go beyond National legislation	The project will comply with WWF requirements.

³⁷ See [Ranger Principles document](#) for more details.

	indigenous peoples' rights over their traditional lands and natural resources.		
Standard on Community Health, Safety and Security	The regulations in Belize regarding health, safety, and security include employers' duties to protect workers' health, safety, and security.	WWF requirements exceed national requirements as they include employees and community members.	The project will comply with WWF requirements
Standard on Pest Management	The regulation provides a list of restricted substances for pest management but does not categorize them by WHO classes.	WWF requirements exceed national requirements.	This standard was not triggered for the project. If it is triggered, the project will comply with WWF and national requirements.
Standard on Cultural Resources	The Belize National Cultural Policy seeks to promote preserving the heritage and cultural forms of minority groups in Belize, including both tangible and intangible heritage, by protecting, preserving, and imparting Belizean cultural heritage.	No gap was identified.	Tangible and intangible cultural heritage has been identified within the project areas and this will be considered when designing new management plans.
Standard on Grievance Management	No legal framework has been identified for a Grievance Mechanism; however, the Office of the Ombudsman in Belize has a national system that receives and investigates complaints against public bodies.	WWF requirements exceed national requirements	The project will comply with international requirements stated by WWF's safeguard policies, including a Grievance Mechanism, which should be connected to the Office of the Ombudsman.
Standard on Public Consultation and Disclosure	The National Protected Areas System Act provides the legal requirement for engaging with communities and key stakeholders to declare new protected areas, alter, reclassify, or revoke a declaration, and engage with stakeholders in the management plan development and revision process every four years. The Fisheries Resource Act and co-management agreement require Local Advisory Committees for each PA to engage with and give input on management.	There is a requirement to engage with stakeholders but no specific public consultation and disclosure instructions.	The WWF standards will guide public consultation and disclosure in conjunction with national requirements.
Standard on Stakeholder Engagement	The National Protected Areas System Act provides the legal requirement for engaging with communities and key stakeholders to declare new protected areas or to alter, re-classify, or revoke a declaration.	WWF requirements exceed national requirements	The stakeholder engagement plan will follow WWF requirements.

Focus group discussions, field observations, surveys, and interviews indicate that the primary issue is not the presence of legal loopholes or the need for more vital legislation per se but rather the consistent failure to enforce existing laws. This problem, as repeatedly emphasized across all communities, stems from widespread corruption in applying national regulations. There is a pervasive sense of a double standard in the enforcement of laws, particularly discriminating between local Belizean residents and retired foreigners, as well as between local fishermen and those from Guatemala and Honduras. This disparity in law enforcement undermines the legal framework and erodes trust in governmental institutions.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

Effective environmental and social baseline information is critical to support the development of project safeguards and procedures and inform the ESMF. Therefore, the socio-economic and environmental data collected guide the development of adequate safeguards against potential economic displacement or other negative impacts and support monitoring and evaluation of project performance indicators.

Baseline data collection and analysis serve several important purposes in creating a high-quality ESMF and project implementation, including:

- Identification of potential direct or indirect positive and negative impacts on affected communities, which informs the development of mitigation measures as well as the development of environmental and social management plans
- Support of project eligibility determination
- Establish a pre-project baseline that can be used to monitor and evaluate mitigation measures and demonstrate success.

3.1. ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

3.1.1. GEOGRAPHY

Bordering the Caribbean Sea with an area of 22,970 km², Belize is limited to the north by Mexico and the west and south by Guatemala. It has an estimated population of 397,483 inhabitants³⁸. Its capital is Belmopan, and other economically important towns are Belize City, Orange Walk, Corozal, San Ignacio/Santa Elena, Dangriga, and Punta Gorda³⁹.

To the east, Belize's waters extend into the Caribbean Sea, covering a total area of 3,937 km². Belize is home to the 185-mile-long barrier reef, the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (BBRRS), the longest reef in the Western Hemisphere. UNESCO recognizes it for its globally outstanding universal values. This includes three of the region's four atolls, located on offshore ridges and surrounded by deep water. The Atolls and coastal lagoon support numerous mangrove and sand cayes, some large enough to support tourism population centers (Ambergris Caye and Caye Caulker) and exclusive resorts, while others provide critical habitat for colony nesting waterbirds and nesting sea turtles.

The interface between the land and sea, the coastal zone, supports coastal communities, including Belize City, the commercial center of Belize. Much of the coastline is protected.

3.1.2. ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY

The project encompasses numerous landscapes and seascapes, ranging from offshore marine ecosystems to onshore coastal and mangrove ecosystems (Figure 3).

³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain. (2023). [Belize Country File](#)

³⁹ SIB, 2024. 2022 Census

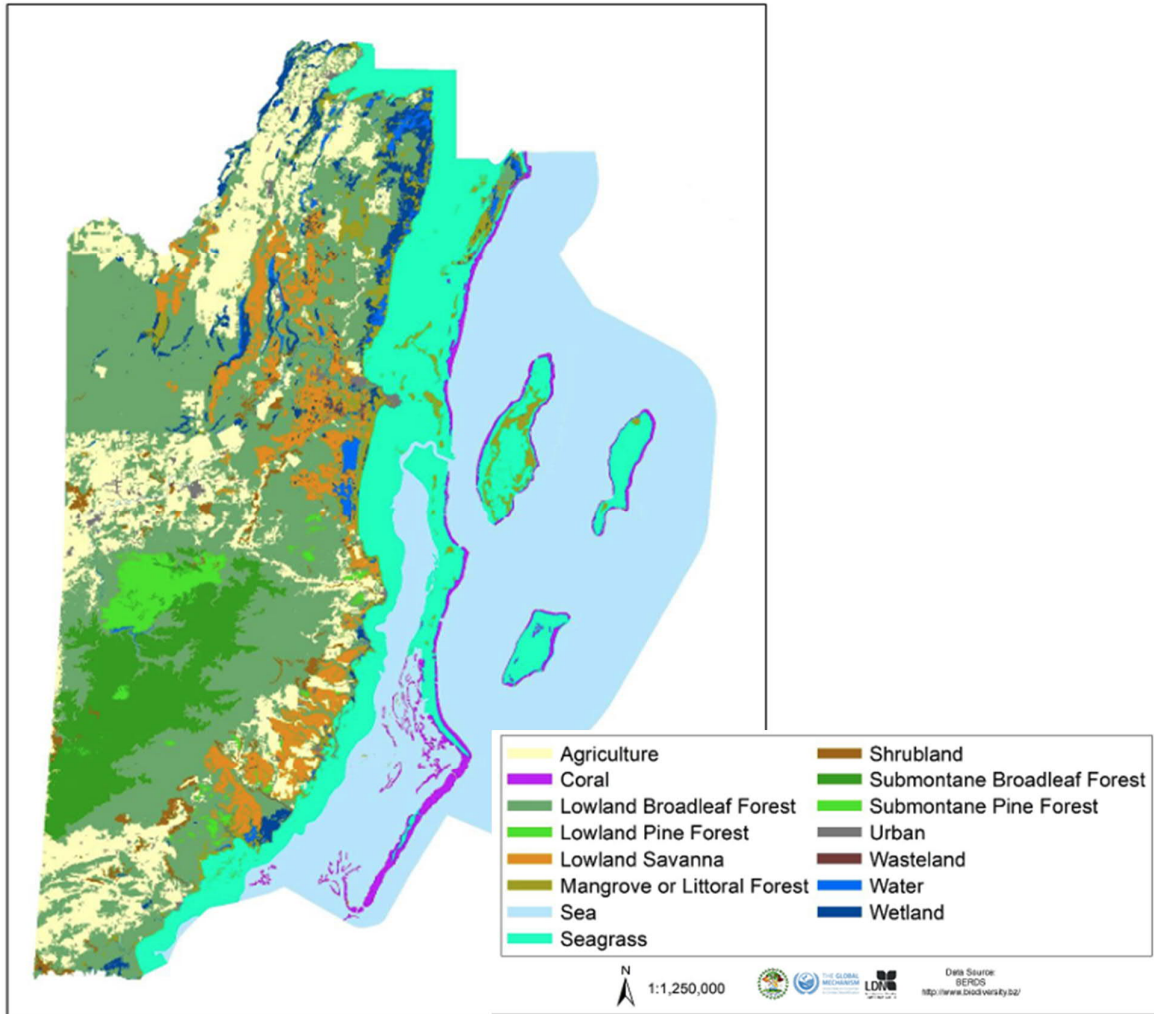


FIGURE 3: LAND COVER MAP SHOWING THE ECOSYSTEMS AND LAND USE IN THE AREAS AROUND THE PROJECT

- **Offshore Ecosystems:**

- *Coral Reefs* - Coral reefs in Belize are diverse and include fringing reefs, barrier reefs, and atolls⁴⁰. The Barrier Reef runs parallel to the Belize coastline, protecting the coastline by providing a structural barrier to oceanic waves. Lying between the barrier reef and the mainland is the nearshore lagoon, a patchwork of patch reefs, seagrass, and mangrove cayes. Three of the region's four atolls lie offshore, surrounded by deeper waters, formed from rings of coral on uplifted ridges surrounding protected lagoons and patch reefs. These reefs are crucial for marine life and ecosystem health and support much of Belize's tourism and fishing industries⁴¹.
- *Shallow clear waters*—Belize's shallow clear waters support diverse marine life, from microscopic organisms to large predators like sharks and its coral reef. These waters are important for Belize's tourism industry, offering activities like snorkeling, diving, and fishing opportunities. The ecosystem in the shallow clear waters is rich and varied, supporting various aquatic species.
- *Seagrass beds* - Seagrass beds form the base of the coastal lagoon's food chain and filter and stabilize sediments and contaminants from the water, preventing transport to the nearby reef⁴². They provide habitat, connectivity nursery areas, and habitat for

⁴⁰ <https://ocean.si.edu/conservation/solutions-success-stories/belize-barrier-reef-reserve-system>

⁴¹ Coral Reef Alliance. [Types of Coral Reef Formations.](#)

⁴² <https://rris.biopama.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Placencia%20REA%20Final.pdf>

species, including queen conch, juvenile reef fish, manatees, turtles, and invertebrates, and enhance the productivity of nearby marine ecosystems.

- **Onshore Ecosystems:**

- *Sand Beaches* - Belize's sand beaches are part of the country's coastal and marine ecosystems, providing nesting grounds for sea turtles and shorebird feeding areas. These beaches are dynamic environments influenced by tides and currents, supporting a variety of plant and animal species adapted to sandy conditions.
- *Coastal Plain*—The coastal plain stretches inland with sandy soils and supports pine savannas and tropical forests in areas with deeper, richer alluvial soils. Away from the coastline, agriculture (banana, citrus, and sugar cane plantations) dominates this region, particularly along rivers⁴³.
- *Pine Savanna* - Pine savannas in Belize are open woodlands dominated by pine trees, interspersed with grasslands and shrubs. These fire-dependent ecosystems support a unique mix of plant and animal species adapted to periodic burning⁴⁴.
- *Tropical Forest* - Belize's tropical forests include lowland broad-leaved forest, sub-montane broad-leaved forest, lowland broad-leaved dry forest, shrubland, lowland savanna, lowland pine forest, and sub-montane pine forest. These forests are vital for biodiversity conservation, water regulation, and habitat provision^{45,46}.
- *Coastal Lagoons*—Belize's lagoons, such as Placencia Lagoon, are significant for their mangrove ecosystems. These lagoons provide nursery functionality for many commercial fish species and sheltered nesting sites on mangrove cayes for waterbirds. These lagoons also serve as critical habitats for various marine species, supporting traditional artisanal fisheries and marine-based tourism.
- *Littoral Forest* - Littoral forests in Belize are coastal forests located on the coastal strand characterized by coastal shrubs and salt-tolerant trees, transitioning into mangroves, providing essential ecosystem services like coastal protection and habitat for marine species. These forests play a crucial role in maintaining the health of coastal and caye ecosystems⁴⁷ and are an important habitat for resident and migratory bird species.

- **Mangroves:** Mangroves along the coastline and cayes are key to maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem and human landscape. They act as natural buffers between the land and water, filter land-based contaminants, prevent erosion, and dissipate storm surges during extreme rainfalls⁴⁸. In this region, the mangroves are mixed species, including red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*), black mangrove (*Avicennia germinans*), white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*), and buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus*)⁴⁹.

BIODIVERSITY

Belize has an estimated 1,660 km² of reef within its waters – 30% of the Mesoamerican Reef and 5.5% of the reefs of the Wider Caribbean (GCRMN, 2013), and is included on the list of the 18 richest centers of endemism (Conservation International, 2004). Belize's coastal and marine ecosystems are essential for biodiversity conservation, as they provide habitats and food for important species for conservation, recreation, food security, and livelihoods (i.e., tourism). As a global high biodiversity hotspot, Belize's marine environment provides important protection for over 100 marine species of global and national concern (Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable) (IUCN, 2024). Of these, 25 are Critically Endangered and include species such as the hawksbill turtle, great hammerhead shark, Nassau grouper, and structurally critical reef-building elkhorn and pillar corals. Within the greater Belize Barrier Reef System, "approximately 247 taxa of marine flora have been described within the complex and over 500 fish, 65 scleractinian coral, 45 hydroid and 350 mollusk species have also been identified, in addition to a great diversity of sponges, marine worms and crustaceans⁵⁰."

⁴³ <https://rris.biopama.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Placencia%20REA%20Final.pdf>

⁴⁴ https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaaq597.pdf

⁴⁵ https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaaq597.pdf

⁴⁶ <https://ambergriscaye.com/pages/town/factsbze.html>

⁴⁷ https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaaq597.pdf

⁴⁸ <https://rris.biopama.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Placencia%20REA%20Final.pdf>

⁴⁹ <https://photography.mangroveactionproject.org/stories-post/mangroves-belize>

⁵⁰ UNESCO. Belize Barrier Reef System.

3.1.3. CLIMATE

Belize's observed annual average mean surface air temperature from 1901 to 2022 (Figure 4) shows the temperature trend over the years. The light blue line represents the annual mean temperature, and the dark blue line represents a 5-year trend line. The temperature data exhibits fluctuations, with periods of highs and lows, but overall, there is an upward trend, particularly in recent decades. The graph suggests a gradual warming pattern in the surface air temperature of Belize over the past century.

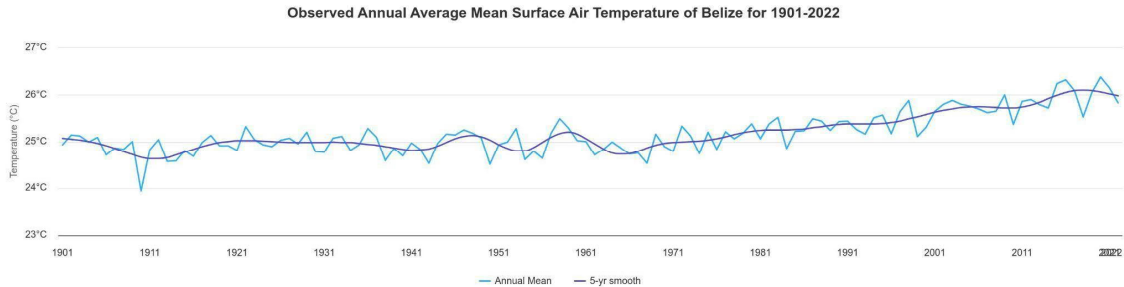


FIGURE 4: ANNUAL AVERAGE MEAN SURFACE AIR TEMPERATURE OF BELIZE

Source: [Climate Knowledge Portal, Country Belize](#).

Precipitation information for Belize from 1991 to 2020 indicates a gradient from lower rainfall in north and west Belize to increased rain in southern Belize. This gradient is a key driver of Belize's ecosystem and species distribution.

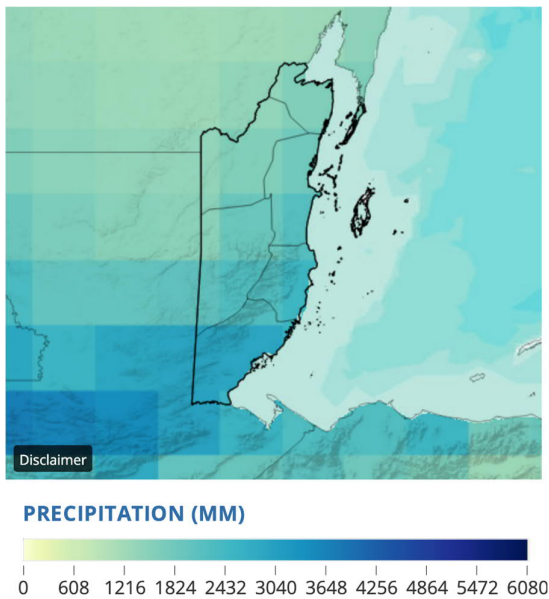


FIGURE 5: MAP OF CLIMATOLOGY OF PRECIPITATION OF BELIZE

Source: [Climate Knowledge Portal, Country Belize](#).

The monthly minimum, mean, and maximum surface air temperatures, as well as precipitation, for Belize during the period 1991-2020 (Figure 5) indicates that the highest levels of precipitation occur during the wet season, from June to October, with the dry seasons with the lowest rainfalls from February to April. Temperatures follow seasonal patterns, with cooler temperatures from November to February and warmer months from May to September.

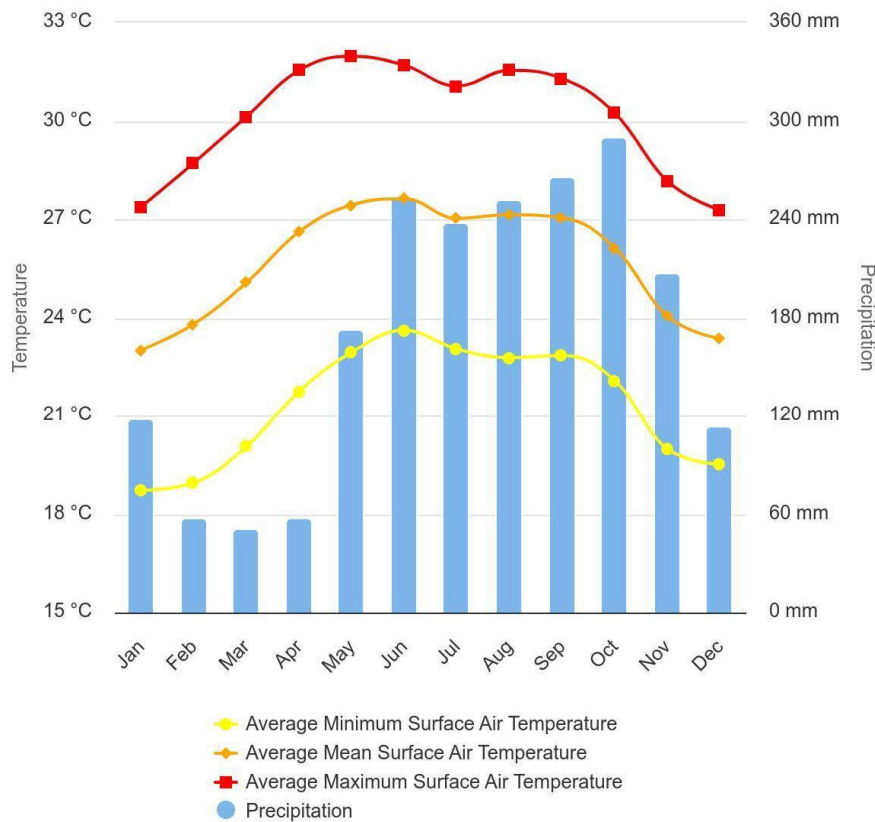


FIGURE 6: MONTHLY CLIMATOLOGY OF AVERAGE MINIMUM, MEAN, AND MAXIMUM SURFACE AIR TEMPERATURES & PRECIPITATION OF BELIZE

Source: [Climate Knowledge Portal, Country Belize](#).

The Köppen-Geiger climate classification system provides a standardized way to categorize the world's climates based on temperature, precipitation, and seasonal patterns. It uses codes representing specific combinations of temperature and precipitation patterns to define the climate zones. The predominant climate types in Belize are "Am" (tropical monsoon climate) and "Af" (tropical rainforest climate). Other climate types, such as "Aw" (tropical savanna climate), are also present in certain regions⁵¹.

Belize's climate vulnerability is based on several natural hazards, including hurricanes, storms, floods, wind damage, and storm surges, especially in coastal communities. The country's long coastline and low-lying topography make it vulnerable to flooding and rising sea levels. Additionally, Belize faces risks from extreme temperature events. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Belize suffers disproportionately from climate change, rating 8th out of 167 countries for climate risk and ranking 61st in relative mortality risk due to multiple hazards globally⁵².

CLIMATE CHANGE

The survey administered by the research team explored the impacts of climate change on households, and 85% of respondents reported that they had been impacted by climate change. These responses indicate that the project communities face various challenges related to climate change and environmental degradation, which include erosion, overheated coastal waters, increased sea temperatures, and heavy rainfall. Flooding, sargassum blooms, coral bleaching, and declining fish stocks due to warmer waters were also mentioned. Extreme weather events like hurricanes have

⁵¹ Source: [Climate knowledge Portal, Country Belize](#)

⁵² Climate knowledge Portal, Country Belize. (2020). [Historical Hazards](#)

resulted in losses, including personal belongings, and have impacted livelihoods, with structural damage to reefs impacting fishing and tourism.

Regarding the groups of people in the community most impacted by climatic events such as strong winds, increasing seawater temperatures, sea level rise, hurricanes, floods, extreme heat, droughts, and coral bleaching, the assessment shows that the most impacted population components are the fisherfolk, followed by people involved in economic activities based on tourism, and older adults. Youth, children, disabled people, men, women, aquaculture producers, ethnic groups, and people dedicated to seaweed production were also mentioned, though the perception of the percentage impacted was lower.

3.1.4. LAND USE

Landscapes: Most of Belize’s land area is forested, and other land use categories include grassland, cropland, wetlands, settlements, and other land (Figure 7). From 2000 to 2015, Belize experienced deforestation at a rate of 7.55%, an increase in cropland of 44.96%, and an expansion of land in settlements of 28.36%, with wetlands and other land remaining more or less stable ⁵³.

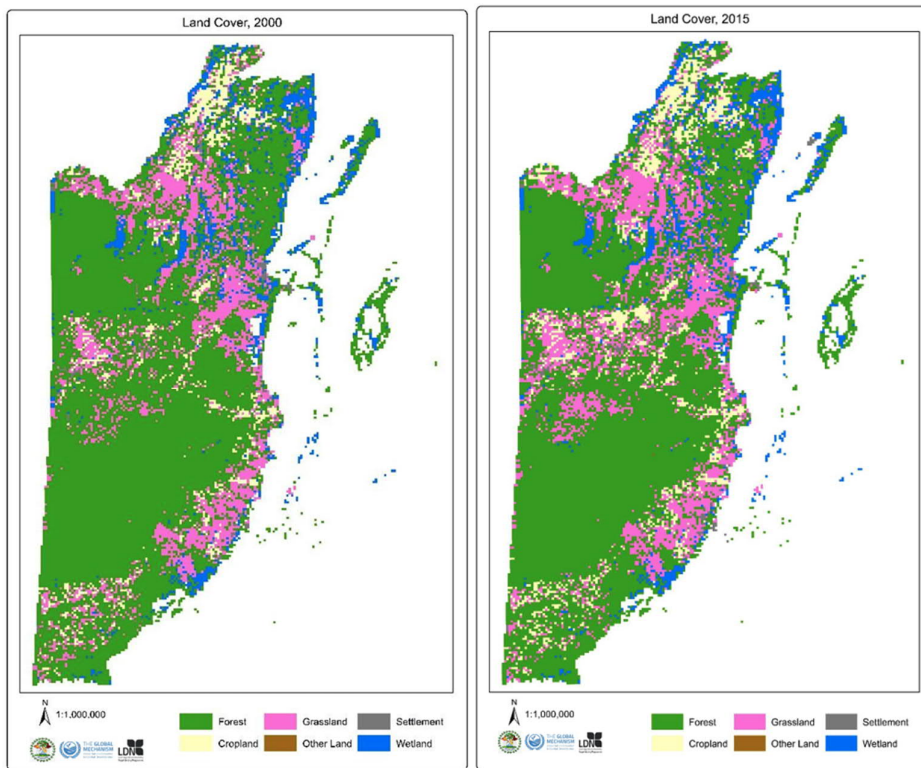


FIGURE 7: LAND USE IN BELIZE IN 2000 AND 2015

Source: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/ldn_targets/2020-10/Belize_LDN%20TSP%20Final%20Report%20%28English%29.pdf

Seascapes: Coral reefs are well represented within the MPAs, with 53.9% within protected areas. However, this ecosystem is the most vulnerable to climate change and anthropogenic pressures and is very sensitive to human activity. Increasing sea temperature results in widespread coral bleaching and rising and emerging coral diseases. Live coral cover has decreased significantly in Belize from 33.8% in the 1970s [1] to an average of 18% in 2022 [2]. The health of the reef and the reef-building corals is declining, with negative consequences for the fishing and tourism sectors and the coastal communities that rely on the reef for protection from oceanic waves, especially during storm events.

⁵³ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/ldn_targets/2020-10/Belize_LDN%20TSP%20Final%20Report%20%28English%29.pdf

DEFORESTATION

In the project area, the forested areas of relevance are littoral forests and mangroves. The Belize Forest Department regulates mangrove removal⁵⁴. Over approximately 30 years, Belize has experienced a net loss of around 3,900 acres of mangrove cover, accounting for 2% of the mangrove area present in 1980, with fragmentation of some 2.1% of mangrove communities⁵⁵. Clearing large mangrove areas during this time is connected to tourism development in key places in the country. Researchers identified hot spots for deforestation of mangroves, including Ambergris Caye, areas near Belize City, the Drowned Cayes, Caye Caulker, areas near Dangriga, Hopkins, and the Placencia Peninsula, and the Turneffe Atoll⁵⁶.

At a national level, the mangrove area in Belize decreased between 1990 and 2000, although there was an increase, peaking at 75.56 thousand hectares⁵⁷. Subsequently, it declined to 72.67 thousand hectares in 2010, 72.31 in 2015, and 71.96 in 2020.

PROTECTED AREAS

Belize has a well-established, highly connected National Protected Areas System that runs from ridge to reef, with 107 terrestrial and marine protected areas providing biodiversity protection, maintaining ecosystem services, and generating socio-economic benefits for Belize. This project focuses on seven existing protected areas in the marine seascape, managed under the Ministry of Blue Economy and Disaster Risk Management's authority through the Fisheries Department. Four non-extractive marine protected areas (one National Park, two Natural Monuments, and one Wildlife Sanctuary) are managed under the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change.

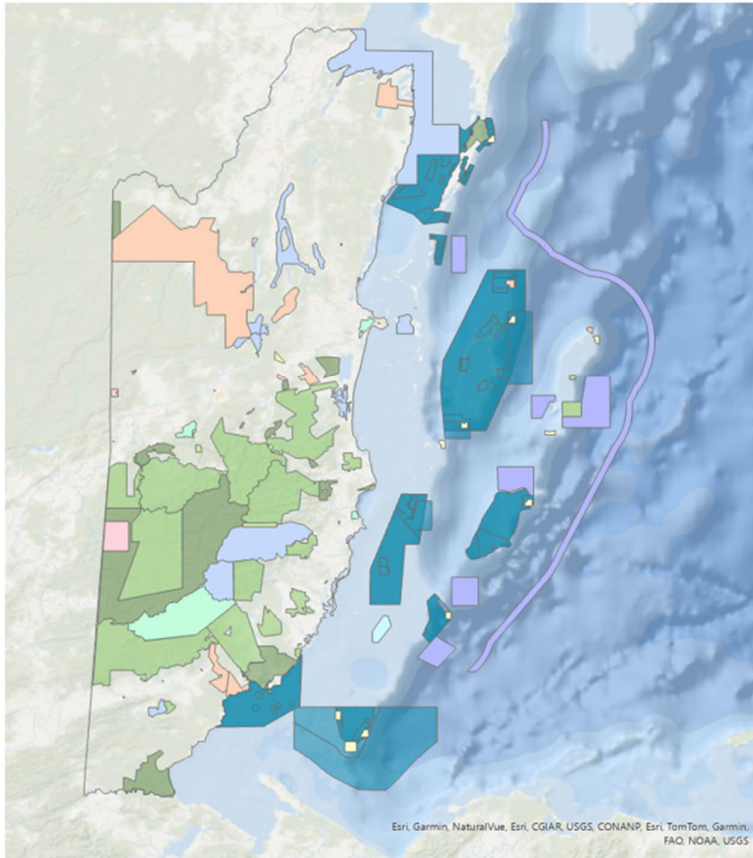
Strong co-management partnerships have been established between the Belize government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The MPAN NGOs are implementing site-level management in seven marine protected areas and will expand to three more by the end of 2024. This has proved a successful strategy, with the Government/NGO co-management partnership demonstrated to improve the management effectiveness of protected areas. Management effectiveness is low when co-management partnerships are not in place, and management is directly under the Government (e.g., Bacalar Chico National Park).

⁵⁴ https://www.mangrovealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/BMA-Action-Plan_Final.pdf

⁵⁵ Coastal Care. [Mangrove Restoration in Belize](#).

⁵⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0034425720301681>

⁵⁷ CEPAL. (2022). [CEPALSTAT: Belize Environmental Statistics and Indicators](#)



PROTECTED AREAS

- | | |
|--|--|
| Marine Reserves | Nature Reserve |
| High Protection for Biodiversity Zone | Natural Monument |
| Wildlife Sanctuary | Archaeological Reserve |
| National Park | Private Protected Areas |
| Forest Reserve | |

FIGURE 8: MAP OF BELIZE'S PROTECTED AREAS

3.2. SOCIOECONOMIC BASELINE

3.2.1. POLITICAL SYSTEM

Belize is a Commonwealth country that became independent on September 21, 1981, and adopted a constitution establishing a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The governmental powers are divided into three branches: executive, represented by the British Monarch and the Governor General; judicial, the Supreme Court; and Legislative, exercised by the bicameral National Assembly.

Bipartisanship has characterized Belizean politics with the United Democratic Party (UDP) and the People's United Party (PUP). In September 2023, Froyla Tzalam was Governor General, and John Briceño was Prime Minister. His government emphasized zero tolerance for corruption and attention to the indigenous agenda. Belize seeks to manage the post-pandemic crisis by focusing on corruption and sustainable development.

Belize is divided into six districts: Belize, Cayo, Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek, and Toledo. Belize scored 87 out of 100 on the Global Freedom Score considered a free country with high participation in election⁵⁸. General elections are held every five years; the next election is expected in November 2025. The Governor-General may also dissolve an assembly, which will trigger a general election outside the five-year timeline. Local elections are held every three years.

3.2.2. DEMOGRAPHICS

With a growing population and density, Belize's demographics have shifted since independence. Despite the ever-increasing population, fertility rates and the number of people living in a household have declined. This is important in the project context, as a growing population requires livelihoods that do not pressure natural resources.

POPULATION

According to the latest census in 2022, Belize's population is 397,484, including 195,695 men and 201,789 women. The population of the target project communities totals 6,196 people (Table 3). Community profiles with more details about the targeted communities can be found in [Annex 2](#). The updated census figures are due to be released in June 2024.

TABLE 3: KEY SETTLEMENTS IN THE PROJECT AREA AND THEIR POPULATION

District	Town / Settlement	Population
Toledo	Barranco	157
	Monkey River Town	196
	Punta Gorda	5,351
Stann Creek	Riversdale	567
	Seine Bight	1,310
Belize	Gales Point	297
Corozal	Chunox	1,375
	Sarteneja	1,824
	Copper Bank	470
	Total	6,196

POPULATION DENSITY

Belize's population density increased from 35 persons per square mile in 2008 to 50 persons per square mile in 2022^{59,60}. This steady increase has important implications for land-use planning, access to services and resources, and demand for local infrastructure.

At the same time, the household size at the national level reveals a decrease in average, from 4.4 persons per household in the 2000 Census to 4.1 persons per household in 2010^{61,62}.

⁵⁸ Freedom House. (2023). [Freedom in the World 2023: Belize](#).

⁵⁹ Statistical Institute of Belize. (2022). [Belize National Statistical System Portal](#)

⁶⁰ Analyzing by district, Corozal has experienced steady growth, reaching 73 persons per square mile in 2022; Orange Walk has shown more modest growth at 31 persons per square mile; Belize has registered a significant increase reaching 81 persons per square mile; Cayo has experienced gradual growth to 54 persons per square mile; Stann Creek has increased to 49 persons per square mile, while Toledo, while showing the least growth, has reached 24 persons per square mile.

⁶¹ Statistical Institute of Belize. (2010). [Belize Population and Housing, Census Report 2010](#)

⁶² However, except for Stann Creek and Belize districts, which record 3.8 and 3.5 persons per household respectively, the average household size in each district exceeds the national average. Toledo has the highest size at 4.7 persons, while Corozal, Orange Walk, and Cayo are second with 4.4 persons per household.

FERTILITY

Fertility⁶³ has declined significantly, with a rate of 4.7 children per woman in 1990 and decreasing to 2.0 in 2021. In addition, progress is observed in health indicators, such as the decrease in infant mortality from 38 per 1,000 births in 1990 to 11 in 2021.

3.2.3. Infrastructure

The basic infrastructure in the project area is consistent with national and district-level statistics, but a significant population remains without access to clean water and electricity. Community members without access to basic infrastructure illustrate the vulnerability of low-income individuals and households in the project area.

WATER

In Belize, access to improved drinking water sources has continued to increase, with 96% of households at a national level reporting an improved water source in 2022⁶⁴. In the survey, 91% of respondents said they have drinking water in their household.

LIGHT AND ELECTRICITY

In the rural areas of Corozal district, 93% of households have electricity for household lighting. In the survey, 94% of respondents said they had electricity in their homes.

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Regarding health infrastructure, all districts in Belize have at least one government hospital, maintaining consistency over time. Private hospitals have experienced variations, with a notable increase in some districts such as Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize, and Cayo. At the same time, Stann Creek and Toledo did not register private hospitals until 2022. This suggests an effort to ensure access to health services in urban and rural areas, with a growth in private provision in some places.

HOUSING

According to survey results, 64% of respondents live in a home with a cement floor and 34% with a wooden floor. From the same respondents, 70% live in houses with a metal roof, 13% with a shingle roof, 10% with a terrace/flat roof, and 4% with a thatch roof.

3.2.4. LANGUAGES

Understanding the language diversity of the project area is essential for effectively implementing stakeholder engagement and FPIC processes, collaborating with Project Affected People, and building trust with local communities. While most people in the project area speak English, to ensure that vulnerable groups such as low-income people, people without education, and Indigenous Peoples are not excluded from project activities, efforts will be needed to use diverse languages or translate into diverse languages to ensure inclusion.

ENGLISH

English is the official language of Belize; however, according to the 2010 Census, only 63 percent of the population over three speaks English well enough to carry on a conversation⁶⁵. According to the 2022 Census Key Finding Launch, ⁶⁶ 75.5% of the country's population speaks English, showing that English use is increasing in the country. The Belize District has the highest proportion of English speakers (72.5%), followed by Cayo (66.7%), while Toledo has the lowest proportion of English speakers (47.9%).

In the project communities, English language use varies according to survey results:

- **Riversdale:** 100% of survey respondents feel comfortable speaking English.

⁶³ The World Bank. (2021). [World Development Indicators database: Belize Country File](#)

⁶⁴ Statistical Institute of Belize. (2022). [Belize National Statistical System Portal](#)

⁶⁵ Statistical Institute of Belize. (2010). [Belize Population and Housing Census Report 2010](#)

⁶⁶ Census Key Findings Launch April 8, 2024. (2024). Belize: Statistical Institute of Belize.

- **Seine Bight:** 86% of survey respondents feel comfortable speaking English.
- **Barranco:** 100% of survey respondents feel comfortable speaking English.
- **Monkey River:** 100% of survey respondents feel comfortable speaking English.
- **Gales Point:** 86% of survey respondents feel comfortable speaking English.
- **Copper Bank:** No data available
- **Sarteneja:** 100% of survey respondents feel comfortable speaking English.
- **Chunox:** 78% of survey respondents feel comfortable speaking English.

However, Spanish is the spoken language in most households in the northern fishing communities (Sarteneja, Chunox, and Copper Bank). In many cases, there is limited spoken English in the older components of the population.

OTHER LANGUAGES

Spanish is the second most spoken language in Belize, with more than half (56.6%) of the population reporting that they can converse in Spanish, followed by Creole (44.6%). Spanish is the most widely spoken language in the Corozal, Orange Walk, and Cayo districts, with rates ranging from 71.5% to 85.6%. On the other hand, in Toledo, only 28.2% of the population speaks Spanish, which is the lowest proportion.

In the Stann Creek District, Creole is the most widely spoken language (67.4%), followed by English (52.0%). In addition, in Toledo, two-thirds of the population speaks some form of the Mayan language, and in Stann Creek, 16.3% of residents speak some variant of the Mayan language (Kekchi, Mopan, Yucatec).

Although the Garinagu population is almost twice as large as the Mennonite population in Belize, a more significant proportion speaks German (3.2%) than Garifuna (2.9%) nationally. In the Stann Creek District, Creole is the most widely spoken language (67.4%), followed by English (52.0%). In Stann Creek, 16.3% of residents speak some variant of the Mayan language (Kekchi, Mopan, Yucatec).

In the project communities, other languages were documented during the survey:

- **Riversdale:** No respondents mentioned other languages; however, two surveys were conducted in Spanish, and the research observed that community members speak Creole.
- **Seine Bight:** 29% of respondents speak Creole, 29% speak Spanish, and 71% speak Garifuna.
- **Barranco:** 33% of respondents speak Spanish and 33% speak Garifuna.
- **Monkey River:** No other languages were reported
- **Gales Point:** 43% of respondents speak Creole and 14% speak Spanish
- **Copper Bank:** No data available
- **Sarteneja:** 13% of respondents speak Spanish
- **Chunox:** No other languages were reported; however, four surveys were done in Spanish

3.2.5. EDUCATION

At a national level, 35% of the population has pre-primary education as their highest level of completed education, 32% primary, 12% secondary, and 8% tertiary education⁶⁷. Regarding the highest level of education completed, there is a slight variation between men and women. Despite near-equal educational attainment in the population, current enrollment shows significantly more men than women enrolled in Junior College and University⁶⁸. For example, in 2022, 2548 women were enrolled in junior college compared to 1720 men; 3146 women were enrolled in university compared to 1498 men.

The survey asked respondents about their highest level of educational attainment, both themselves and anyone else living in their household. We gathered 157 responses about the education level of household members (Table 4).

Educational attainment in project communities does not reflect national statistics but provides a general overview of the academic diversity within project communities. A large part of community members and

⁶⁷ Census 2010

⁶⁸ BNSS

project-affected people (48%) have primary education or less, with a requirement for project presentations, materials, and communications should be designed to consider appropriate language, vocabulary, and concepts according to the educational levels of the population.

TABLE 4: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

<i>Community</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Without studies</i>	9	6
<i>Pre-basic education</i>	5	3
<i>Basic/Primary education</i>	62	39
<i>Middle/Secondary Education</i>	8	5
<i>High School</i>	55	35
<i>University</i>	11	7
<i>I don't know this information / prefer not to answer</i>	7	4
<i>Total</i>	157	100

3.2.6. Economic Context

Belize has key economic activities that range from primary production (e.g., agriculture and fishing) to services (e.g., tourism)⁶⁹. International tourism is estimated to make up 40% of Belize's economy⁷⁰. In 2022, agriculture, fishing, and forestry contributed 9.1% to Belize's GDP, with fishing and aquaculture contributing 0.4%. Both agriculture and fishing have declined as a percent of Belize's GDP. For example, in 2014, fishing and aquaculture accounted for 1.7% of the GDP compared to 0.4% in 2022. Secondary production, or manufacturing, is also declining in Belize, though manufacturing jobs are not a relevant livelihood in the project region. Tertiary, service-based activities are increasing, though they faced a decline during the pandemic.

POVERTY

The Belize Institute of Statistics presented the results of the country's first Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) study, carried out in September 2021, with the support of several international organizations. This index complements the measurement of monetary poverty by considering health, education, employment, and standard of living deprivations. According to the study, 35.7% of the population lives in multidimensional poor households, with a national MPI of 0.139. Data reveals higher levels of poverty in rural communities and among households with unemployment, low education, and male heads of household⁷¹.

⁶⁹ Gross Domestic Product, Annual GDP by Activity, Percent Contribution - <https://sib.org.bz/statistics/economic-statistics/gross-domestic-product/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/belize-market-overview>

⁷¹ Multidimensional Poverty per Network. (2023). [Multidimensional poverty index to complement monetary poverty measurement in Belize.](#)

LABOR FORCE

Male labor participation has increased from 90,032 in 2013 to 108,550 in 2022, and female labor participation has followed an upward trend, rising from 58,704 in 2013 to 73,184 in 2022⁷². The unemployment rate among women has varied, from 20.2% in 2013 to 17.4% in 2022, and so has the male, from 6.1% in 2013 to 7% in 2022. There are fewer women in the labor force and higher unemployment rates than men. The national unemployment rate currently stands at 4.0% (SIB, 2024).

Based on a labor force survey of the Statistical Institute of Belize for 2020, employees worked an average of 43 hours per week compared to 38.8 hours in September 2021. On average, the monthly income is BZ\$1,357. The highest income earners were 'Managers' and 'Professionals' who earned an average of BZ\$2,215 per month.⁷³

CHILD LABOR

Education in Belize used to be compulsory from 5 to 14 years of age, but early in 2024, the mandatory education was raised to 16 years⁷⁴. The legal working age in Belize is 14. In 2013, the majority of Belizean working children were victims of child labor, mainly due to their age and involvement in hazardous activities⁷⁵. All children under 12 years of age involved in economic activities were considered victims of child labor, encompassing tasks that were potentially harmful in nature or the use of tools that could affect child welfare. In addition, most working children were found to be out of school, a situation that has worsened since 2001, mainly due to lack of funds and interest, most notably among those over 14 years of age. Low secondary education completion rates were recorded, especially among employees aged 14 to 17.

The survey documented children's participation in tourism activities—43% (7/21) of households who engage in fishing mentioned the involvement of children in the activity, and 45% (17/38) of households who engage in tourism mentioned the participation of children in the activity.

The participation of children in fishing is a family-oriented activity. Fishermen and fisherwomen generally learned the skills from their family (parents, but could also be uncles, grandparents, or other relatives). Being a family-oriented activity, it can start at an early age on weekends or holidays, but this does not necessarily correspond to forced or damaging forms of child labor. The minimum age recorded for participating in fishing was four years old, the maximum age was 17, and the median age was 10.5 years old. In tourism, the minimum age recorded was seven years old, the maximum age was 16, and the median age was nine years old.

3.2.7. Livelihoods

When survey participants were asked about their livelihoods, most responded that they earned income for their household from fishing and tourism. However, others also mentioned that they or someone in their household earned work in real estate (1 person), as a mechanic (2 people), as a teacher (2 people), and in other businesses (i.e., bar, coconut oil making, art, etc.).

In Punta Gorda, 100% of the people who participated in the focus group (12) were dedicated to fishing, though they devoted some time to other activities. Of the 12 participants, 25% are dedicated to tourism, 8% to aquaculture, 17% to agriculture and 17% to boat transport services.

Fishing is the most common livelihood reported among survey participants and their household members. Of the people surveyed, 81% report that they or someone in their family fishes (38/47). Of those who fish, 63% (24/38) responded that it is their primary source of income. Also among those who

⁷²

https://app.sib.org.bz:8443/ords/f?p=134:43:16984500598196::43,RIR:P43_INDICATOR_ID,P43_FRAMEWORK_ID:2385,41

⁷³ SIB 2018 https://sib.org.bz/wp-content/uploads/LabourForce_2022-10.pdf

⁷⁴ <https://www.sanpedrosun.com/education/2024/02/10/compulsory-education-age-in-belize-increased-from-14-to-16/#:~:text=On%20Friday%2C%20February%202nd%2C%20the.and%2014%20years%20of%20age.>

⁷⁵ ILO-IPEC; Statistical Institute of Belize. (2013). [Report on the National Child Activity Survey – Belize 2013](#)

fish, only 39% (15/38) responded that the revenue earned from fishing is enough to meet their household's basic needs.

In the survey results, 38 (81% of 47) responses were from people who do fishing activities. We obtained 62 responses of multiple choice about where the person or their family conducts their fishing activities. There are more responses than people who answered because people tend to fish in more than one location - Belize's commercial fishing licensing system provides permits for fishing in two fishing areas per fisher, based on traditional use patterns.

Based on these responses, the most common place to conduct fishing activities was Open Sea or Deep Sea (45% of 62 responses), followed by Coastal Lagoon (16% of 62 responses), Reef (13% of 62 responses) and other places (11% of 62 responses) like Turneffe, Corozal Bay, coast but not lagoon, Area 1, 3, 4, 5 and 8 (Table 5).

TABLE 5: WHERE FISHING IS CONDUCTED BY COMMUNITY

<i>Community</i>	<i>BR</i>	<i>CHX</i>	<i>GP</i>	<i>MRT</i>	<i>RD</i>	<i>SB</i>	<i>SJ</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage Total (%)</i>
<i>Open Sea/Deep Sea</i>	2	9	3	4	4	3	3	28	45
<i>Reef</i>	0	2	0	0	3	1	2	8	13
<i>Coastal Lagoon</i>	0	2	5	0	1	1	1	10	16
<i>River</i>	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	5	8
<i>River Estuary</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
<i>Flats</i>	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	5
<i>Other</i>	0	2	0	1	0	0	4	7	11
<i>Total</i>	2	16	13	6	8	6	11	62	100

N = 38

Among the most notable species caught among survey respondents are the Snapper, with a total of 31 responses, followed by the Caribbean Spiny Lobster, the Queen Conch, the Great Barracuda, and the Snook (Table 6)

TABLE 6: MAIN SPECIES CAUGHT IN FISHING ACTIVITIES BY COMMUNITY

<i>Community</i>	<i>BR</i>	<i>CHX</i>	<i>GP</i>	<i>MRT</i>	<i>RD</i>	<i>SB</i>	<i>SJ</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage Total (%)</i>
<i>Stone Bass / Mojara</i>	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	6	5
<i>Snapper / Snapper Family</i>	2	8	3	4	3	5	6	31	24
<i>Mackerel / Tuna family</i>	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	5	4
<i>Caribbean Spiny Lobster</i>	0	8	0	4	5	0	3	20	16
<i>Queen Conch</i>	0	8	0	1	2	1	3	15	12
<i>Octopi</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Great Barracuda</i>	0	2	1	1	2	1	5	12	9
<i>Snook</i>	1	1	3	1	0	2	1	9	7
<i>Grouper</i>	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	8	6
<i>Stone Crabs</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	2

<i>Jacks</i>	1	2	2	0	2	1	3	11	9
<i>Mollusks</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
<i>*Other species to catch</i>	0	0	1	0	2	2	1	6	5
<i>Total</i>	5	34	13	14	19	16	27	128	100

N = 38

* The other species mentioned were commercial (Hogfish and sharks) and catch-and-release sport fishing (Tarpon, Permit, Bonefish). Notably, fishers from the northern communities have a fishing scope that extends over much of Belize's marine space, including the Atolls, so a wider range of species are accessed. However, the primary focus is on Caribbean Spiny Lobster and Queen Conch.

The informal and personal businesses within the community encompass a diverse range of activities aimed at livelihood. Some individuals operate small-scale food ventures, such as selling tacos or running gift shops selling artisanal goods. Others are involved in fishing-related activities, including commercial fishing, shark fishing, spearfishing, and sport fishing, independently or in collaboration with family members. Some offer accommodation services, such as renting rooms or providing camping grounds for tourism. Mechanic services are also available, catering to the maintenance needs of both locals and tourists.

Moreover, some individuals care for older adults, demonstrating a commitment to community welfare. The general mean of household members' years working in their businesses is 16.6, with a maximum of 40 years. As for the money they earn from their own business, everyone indicated that it is allocated to the entire household.

For people who work in tourism (45% of 47 responses), the main activities included tour guiding, recreational (sport) fishing guiding, hospitality (includes hotels, motels, hostels, etc.), food service (includes restaurants, cafes, catering, home delivery, etc.), operating a tour bus, production of artisan crafts, managing a gift shop catering to tourists, offering chartered tours, and engaging in arts and crafts sales (Table 7).

TABLE 7: MAIN TOURISM ACTIVITIES BY COMMUNITY

<i>Community</i>	<i>BR</i>	<i>CHX</i>	<i>GP</i>	<i>MRT</i>	<i>RD</i>	<i>SB</i>	<i>SJ</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Tour guide</i>	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	5	20
<i>Recreational fishing guide</i>	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	12
<i>Hospitality (includes hotels, motels, hostels, etc.)</i>	1	1	1	2	0	0	2	7	28
<i>Foodservice (includes restaurants, cafes, catering, home delivery, etc.)</i>	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	4	16
<i>Other tourism activities</i>	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	6	24
<i>Total</i>	2	2	3	6	2	4	6	25	100
<i>Percentage Total (%)</i>	8	8	12	24	8	16	24	100	

N = 21

3.2.8. Ethnic Groups

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN BELIZE

Belize's history is marked by colonization, territorial wars, slavery, and migration, forming a present-day country whose population comes from diverse roots⁷⁶. The country has diverse ethnicities: Mestizos, Creoles, Mayans, Garifuna, East Indians, Mennonites, Caucasians, Asians, and others⁷⁷.

The Mayan people were the first known to inhabit the region, contributing not only to ethnic diversity but also to scientific and mathematical knowledge, even attributing to themselves the concept of the number zero. Contemporary Yucatec, Mopan, and Kekchi Maya have found a home in Belize to preserve their traditions and ways of life, each with their migratory history and settlement in different regions of the country. This rich cultural fabric, permeated by Mayan influence, contributes to Belize's unique identity in the context of its ethnic and cultural diversity⁷⁸.

The Garinagu are descendants of African survivors of shipwrecks off the island of St Vincent around 1675 who then married with Indigenous Peoples Kalinago, forming an Afro-indigenous culture resistant to colonialism⁷⁹. Their alliance with Kalinago led to a century-long resistance against European colonizers. In 1797, they were exiled to Roatan, Honduras, by the British and later allied with Spain against the British, fighting in Central American Independence wars. In post-independence Honduras, they faced discrimination and marginalization, which led them to disperse to Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Belize, establishing communities like Dangriga and Hopkins. Despite challenges, they maintained their language and culture, engaging in agriculture, fishing, and trade along the Central American coast, seeking work in industries like logging and banana plantations, and migrating to the US. In present-day Belize, they comprise 6% of the population and are considered Indigenous, preserving their language, culture, spirituality, music, and traditions.

Mestizos make up the most significant part of Belize's population. With a mix of Maya and Spanish heritages, they migrated to northern Belize from the Yucatan Peninsula in the 1840s to escape the Caste War. They settled predominantly in the northern regions of Orange Walk and Corozal districts and established the northern fishing communities⁸⁰, but they now live throughout Belize.

Creole culture arose from the descendants of British settlers and enslaved Africans, creating a distinct ethnic group based not so much on their appearance but on their language and way of life, a culture that is unique in Belize. Most of the Creole population lives in Belize City and along the central coastline - Gales Point and Monkey River.⁸¹

People of East Indian descent, which in Belize are sometimes called Hindus or Coolies⁸² arrived in the country in the 19th Century, originally as indentured servants from India, and now form almost 4% of the population. The Chinese migrated to this part of the world, fleeing the Japanese invasion of China just before the outbreak of World War II. Finally, the Mennonites came to Belize in 1958 from Manitoba, Canada, and Chihuahua, Mexico, and live in six main communities in the Orange Walk and Cayo District: Blue Creek, Shipyard, Little Belize, Progresso, Spanish Lookout, and Barton Creek⁸³, and have now expanded across the Belize landscape. The Mennonites maintain their culture, schools, language, and churches, though they are integrated into the Belizean economy⁸⁴.

The number of immigrants in Belize has increased in recent years, representing 14.74% of its population (62,043), which puts the country in 40th place in the world regarding immigration percentage. The majority are men. The main countries of origin are Guatemala, 43% (26,767), El Salvador, 16% (10,016), and Honduras 15% (9,784). Additionally, 4,647 (7.4%) immigrants are from the United States,

⁷⁶ Embajada de Belice. (2024). [Cultura de Belice](#)

⁷⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain. (2023). [Belize Country File](#)

⁷⁸ Minority Rights Group. (2017). [Garifuna \(Garinagu\) in Belize.](#)

⁷⁹ Embajada de Belice. (2024). [Cultura de Belice](#)

⁸⁰ Embajada de Belice. (2024). [Cultura de Belice](#)

⁸¹ Embajada de Belice. (2024). [Cultura de Belice](#)

⁸² During the survey, a number of people self-identified as Coolie -

https://www.indiaempire.com/article/82616/indians_in_belize/2

⁸³ Embajada de Belice. (2024). [Cultura de Belice](#)

⁸⁴

<https://minorityrights.org/communities/mennonites/#:~:text=The%20Mennonites%20in%20Belize%20are,Spanish%20Lookout%20and%20Barton%20Creek.>

and 3,997(6.4%) are from Mexico. China has 2,323 (3.7%) immigrants, Canada has 914 (1.4%) immigrants, India has 670 (1%) immigrants, Jamaica has 561(0.9%) immigrants, the United Kingdom has 462 (0.7%) immigrants, and other countries such as Germany, Lebanon, Haiti, and Siberia have lower figures⁸⁵.

The immigrant’s country of origin makes a notable difference in typical livelihoods, living conditions, and vulnerability. Guatemalan, Honduras, and El Salvador migrants are blended into the communities; even though they speak Spanish in predominantly English-speaking areas, they are an active part of the society. In some areas, “pupusas stands” can be found, and artisanal crafts are sold from Guatemala. Generally, the migrants from Central America are looking for better economic opportunities and are escaping violence in their own countries. Historically, migrants from Mexico went to Belize during the Caste War, and an important migration from Guatemala occurred during the Civil War.

In contrast, the immigrants from the United States, Canada, and Europe are typically retired people looking to invest in a place with nice weather, the same language, and near the beach. They often invest in expensive properties in tourist areas and do not generally integrate into local communities. However, this is partially balanced by the investments and employment opportunities they bring into the local economies. Belizeans perceive that these ‘expats’ have preferential treatment from the government., These trends persist with immigrants from European countries. The Chinese population in Belize has managed to blend into the economy through commerce in the form of restaurants and supermarkets that hire Belizeans in their businesses. Immigrants from other Caribbean countries tend to blend easily with Belizean society due to their cultural similarities.

POPULATION BY ETHNIC GROUP

There are nine distinct ethnicities with different origins and cultures documented in Belize: Mestizos (52.9%), Creoles (25.9%), Mayans (11.3%), Garifuna (6.1%), East Indians (3.9%), Mennonites (3.6%), Caucasian (1.2%), Asians (1%) and others (1.5%)⁸⁶. Although the breakdown varies between communities, the national population breakdown by ethnicity differs from the project area, where there is a higher percentage of Garinagu People than the national rate.

TABLE 8: ETHNIC GROUPS BY VILLAGE, CENSUS DATA

	Barranco	Monkey River Town	Seine Bight	Riversdale	Gales point	Copper Bank	Sarteneja	Chunox	Total	%
Garifuna	68	0	933	17	2	1	3	0	1024	17%
Creole	0	160	58	25	265	5	48	14	575	9%
Mestizo	11	3	197	388	1	426	1661	1307	3994	64%
Maya	12	1	49	50	0	14	13	12	151	2%
Other	66	32	73	87	29	24	99	42	452	7%
Total	157	196	1,310	567	297	470	1824	1375	6196	100

Source: [Belize Population and Housing Census Report 2010](#)

The survey achieved diverse participation of key ethnic groups in the region, as seen below (Table 9).

TABLE 9: ETHNICITY IDENTIFIED BY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS (N=47)

	Barranco	Monkey River Town	Seine Bight	Riversdale	Gales point	Copper Bank	Sarteneja	Chunox	Total	%
Garifuna	2	0	5	1	0	ND	0	0	8	17%
Creole	0	7	0	4	7	ND	0	1	19	40%
Mestizo	0	0	0	1	0	ND	8	7	16	34%
Maya	0	0	1	0	0	ND	0	1	2	4%
Other	1	0	1	0	0	ND	0	0	2	4%

⁸⁵ Inmigración en Belice (2024). [Datos macro](#)

⁸⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain. (2023). [Belize Country File](#)

Total	3	7	7	6	7	ND	8	9	47	100%
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In Punta Gorda, the majority of the participants (12) in the focus group indicated they were Mestizo (42%), though there were also 33% who indicated they were Creole, 17% Mayan and 8% Garinagu.

3.2.9. VULNERABLE GROUPS

Low-income families: Low-income families in the communities prioritized by the GEF project depend primarily on fishing activities to provide food and income. Some communities, like Barranco and Monkey River, have few job opportunities in their area, and their difficult access causes isolation and the need to migrate out of the community for studies.

Locals unable to purchase land or secure employment: Increased land purchasing on the seafloor by expats in communities like Sarteneja and Copper Bank has driven up land property costs. Around Chunox, Mennonites have bought agricultural lands, leaving limited options for income diversification into agriculture. Additionally, the construction sector seeks cheap labor, which migrants from Honduras and Guatemala typically provide.

Migrants: Fleeing insecurity, poverty, and a lack of opportunities, Guatemalan and Honduran young men and women travel north to Belize, Mexico, and the US seeking employment. Hard workers with poverty-stricken families in their country of origin often work multiple jobs in precarious situations. This is a vulnerable group in the region but not likely a target population for the project.

Youth: Limited education and employment opportunities are problematic for youth in the project area. However, they are also very active in environmental issues, leading cleanup campaigns and mangrove restoration initiatives.

Women: Women are a vulnerable group for multiple reasons, explored in more detail in the gender assessment (please refer to GAP). In the fishing industry, women are often excluded or discriminated against because male-dominated crews and male captains typically do not accept working with women. Street harassment is normalized, and multiple research participants said that it is “natural.” Gender roles vary by community, while in some communities, it is common for women to work. There are women heads of households. The northern communities visited presented more traditional gender roles, with professions deemed “appropriate” for a husband to grant women (teachers, health workers) permission to work outside the house. In northern communities where fisherfolk fish for lobster and conch, the men are away for long periods, leaving women to run the households. Women in the tourism-focused communities make up a large portion of the hospitality sector workforce, but often with low wages, long work days, and limited leadership opportunities.

LGBTQIA+ community members: In August 2016, the Supreme Court of Belize decriminalized homosexuality⁸⁷ and in December 2019, the Court of Appeal ruled that the country's anti-discrimination laws also protect LGBTQIA+ persons.⁸⁸ However, LGBTQIA+ people are largely unprotected by the law as Belize lacks a guarantee of rights such as equal marriage and gender identity. People experience discrimination based on their HIV status, and the country lacks legislation to protect them. The census doesn't have any statistics about the LGBTQIA+ community. However, the two organizations we interviewed said they had conducted their surveys, though only Promoting Empowerment through Awareness for Lesbian and Bisexual Women (PETAL) shared their results. PETAL also shared their concerns about lesbian and bisexual women and told us they are a very vulnerable and marginalized group since Belize has no legislation that protects same-sex unions or LGBTQIA+ persons. Even though they have rights, nobody respects them, and they must fight for them.

Despite the lack of statistics on the LGBTQIA+ population, we found out from interviews and web information that Belize is the country with the highest HIV prevalence in Latin America at 13.89% among men.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ [¿Cómo están los derechos LGBTI en Belice?](#)

⁸⁸ [Red Gay latino.](#)

⁸⁹ [Red Gay latino.](#)

Indigenous Peoples: Both Mayan and Garinagu Peoples face discrimination and structural racism in Belizean society, making them vulnerable people (see section on Indigenous Peoples). In field assessments, participants mentioned preferential employment, racism, corruption, and being mistreated due to cultural or linguistic differences. The responses reflect systemic and societal issues leading to discrimination and unfair treatment.

People who do not read, write, or speak English: While English is the national language of Belize and is understood by most, there is still a group of people who do not speak, read, or write in English, so using only English as a project language will exclude this vulnerable group. This group is already vulnerable as they have lower education levels and reduced access to participation in other aspects of life outside their communities due to language barriers. In the northern communities, many adults don't feel comfortable speaking, reading, or writing in English, and Sarteneja, Copper Bank, and Chunox are communities where Spanish is the only language used in the majority of households. The young people, however, are often more bilingual.

Disabled people: Among survey respondents, 20% responded that there is a disabled person in their household, and only 43% of those people have access to support or services from the government. While disabled people exist in all communities, fisherfolk in fishing communities face higher rates of disability due to the extreme conditions of their livelihoods, which often lead to injuries and health problems that lead to disabilities. As such, working with people with disabilities is essential in this project. In conversations during field research, participants mentioned that COVID-19 had more adverse impacts on fisherfolk who perform free diving, and long COVID is also worse due to the specific lung conditions of fisherfolk. The United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM), an NGO interviewed better to understand the vulnerability of people with disabilities in Belize, shared the importance of including all citizens, including people with disabilities, in the environmental processes to ensure that people with disabilities are respected, destigmatized, and recognized.

VULNERABLE GROUPS IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Regarding people who cannot participate or are excluded from activities or meetings, 47 responses were collected from 45 survey participants. The groups who are excluded or unable to participate mentioned were youth (4 responses), disabled people (2 responses), low-income families (2 responses), women (2 responses), people with mental health problems (2 responses), residents living in remote areas (2 responses), individuals with language barriers (1 response), and individuals experiencing homelessness (1 response). The most common response was "other," mentioned 33 times. The other responses included rich people, Garifunas, people without family or friends, the whole village because the chairman does not call meetings, people who are disconnected, people who don't want to go, Spanish people, and people who are working.

In addition to those who actively choose not to participate, people mentioned that various factors contributed to individuals being left out of community activities or meetings. These include people who are not informed about the meetings, those who are not connected to the internet or have limited access to information, individuals who are out working and unavailable during meeting times (particularly northern fishers), and instances where meetings are not adequately promoted or organized by community leaders. Additionally, language barriers and cultural differences may play a role in some cases, as mentioned by Garinagu people and people who speak Spanish as people who are excluded.

Twenty-one percent (10/47) of respondents reported that a specific group of people are treated poorly or unfairly in their communities. Artisans, for example, often face challenges and discrimination in their efforts to promote and sell their work. Additionally, members of Garinagu and Indigenous communities often experience discrimination for cultural and social differences. Fishermen, especially those from low-income families, also encounter difficulties.

Furthermore, individuals with disabilities, low-income households, and locals who are discriminated against based on their skin color are also victims of unfair treatment and marginalization in the communities. The responses highlight how specific groups experience discrimination and unfair or poor treatment. In the community, multiple groups face unfair treatment and discrimination differently. Hispanics often receive preferential employment treatment as compared to Garinagu People, leading to disparities in opportunities. Additionally, there's a stigma attached to some groups, labeling them as "gangsters," further exacerbating social divisions. Moreover, there's a perception of racism, with certain individuals marginalized based on their race or ethnicity.

Fourteen survey participants indicated that they or someone in their family is part of a vulnerable group. These respondents specified they felt vulnerable because they are part of a low-income family (5/14 responses), have a disability (2/14 responses), are part of an ethnic group (2/14 responses), and are Indigenous (1/14 responses). Of the responses received, 29% (4 out of 14) indicated that they or someone in their family identified with a vulnerable group labeled "Other." The other answers include fishermen, the whole community, and people with less education or connections. These individuals elaborated on their experiences, particularly with fishermen who have faced significant challenges due to climate change. This includes a notable decline in fish stocks, reducing income for themselves and their families.

Additionally, there is a prevailing sense of disadvantage, as opportunities favor those with higher education or strong familial connections within the community, leaving others feeling marginalized. This sentiment extends beyond individual experiences to impact the community as a whole. Despite promises from politicians, such as constructing a sea wall in Gales Point, tangible improvements have yet to materialize.

3.2.10. ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Most people who work in tourism reported that they would experience difficulties if access to tourism within marine areas were restricted (76%, or 16 of 21 people who work in tourism). Of those who said they would experience difficulties in tourism due to restrictions, 88% (14/16 respondents) reported that they would experience negative economic impacts if access to these areas were reduced.

TABLE 10: PEOPLE WOULD EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES IF ACCESS TO TOURISM WITHIN MARINE AREAS WERE RESTRICTED

	Barranco	Monkey River Town	Seine Bight	Riversdale	Gales point	Copper Bank	Sarteneja	Chunox	Total	%
Yes	2	5	2	1	1	ND	4	1	16	76%
No	0	0	0	0	2	ND	1	1	4	19%
Don't know	0	0	0	1	0	ND	0	0	1	5%
Total	2	5	2	2	3	ND	5	2	21	

95% of surveyed fishers are aware of existing restrictions, identifying 'restrictions' as restricted access to MPAs, use of illegal fishing practices, and restricted species. Fishers have observed changes in their fishing compared to 20 years ago, with 92% reporting they now catch fewer fish and 95% reporting it is harder to catch fish now compared to 20 years ago.

In the focus groups, participants discussed the consequences of access restriction due to increased surveillance and enforcement to comply with laws. In Monkey River Town, participants agreed this is important and necessary and would positively impact fishing and tourism. Although participants in Riversdale, Seine Bight, and Barranco mentioned that there are significant problems with non-Belizeans (usually identified as Guatemalan people) engaged in illegal fishing practices, they had varying opinions on how an increased surveillance and enforcement presence would help, with some thinking it would not be helpful as some rangers benefit from taking bribes. Similarly, while Barranco participants thought it could have a positive impact, those in Sarteneja did not believe it would make a difference.

During the focus group in Punta Gorda the impact of the access restrictions on the income of the families that depend on fishing was mentioned. One participant said, "it has a big impact as we will not be able to put food on the table. We will have a smaller area to fish and fish are already hard to find". Another participant mentioned that other people (like Guatemalan fishers) will come to harvest what they cannot harvest. They said, "we are being restricted by all these laws and reserves and we are not the ones destroying the environment".

When asked if access restrictions to MPAs during certain times of year would impact their family or community, participants from Sarteneja expressed this would affect them negatively. They think that current conservation laws are discriminatory against fishers and that fishers have to find alternative jobs to sustain their livelihoods when they cannot fish, with the increasing length of the closed seasons for conch and lobster. Other participants from Seine Bight, Monkey River, and Barranco thought the restrictions would be acceptable if designed and implemented correctly, with rules applied fairly and ensuring that the limits do not leave fishers without a time or place to fish. Chunox strongly distrusts the government and NGOs, so the restrictions are perceived poorly. This was partly a result of past experiences when promises of support for complying with the restrictions and regulations did not materialize, and there was no perceived positive change in the situation. Communities are also distrustful of Government promises, as was the case following Hurricane Lisa, when the government approached community members and NGOs to assess aid needs, yet “nothing happened.”

When asked what they would do if households could not continue to eat as much seafood and fish from the ocean, 73% said they would replace seafood with another protein, 9% would eat less protein, and 18% would eat less food. This data suggests that 27% of the population would suffer negative impacts on food security if access restrictions led to catching fewer fish.

3.2.11. LAW ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER CONFLICTS

In the survey results, thirty-eight responses were collected on conflicts or confrontations with the police or other types of law enforcement related to fishing. Of these, 29% (11 of 38) reported conflicts with other community members, ranging from piracy to theft, with community members engaging in illegal activities like stealing lobster shades or piracy against fellow fishermen. Additionally, disputes emerge overfishing territories, with tensions arising when others encroach on designated areas or when there are disagreements regarding sustainable fishing practices. Some conflicts escalate to dangerous levels, as indicated by reports of individuals resorting to violence, such as shooting incidents.

Three people (8% of 38) reported conflicts or confrontations with the police or other types of law enforcement - one in Monkey River Town, Riversdale, and Seine Bight, respectively. The types of conflicts reported included corruption, where law enforcement officials allegedly engaged in unethical practices such as accepting bribes to allow illegal activities (e.g., night diving for Guatemalan individuals). Other issues mentioned were illicit fishing crocodiles, where fishermen clash with law enforcement agencies tasked with enforcing wildlife protection laws.

Nine responses (24% of 38) were collected on Marine Protected Area (MPA) management-related fishing conflicts - three in Gales Point, two in Riversdale and Seine Bight, and one in Monkey River Town and Sarteneja. There are allegations of corruption and unethical practices, such as law enforcement officials expecting bribes and targeting fishermen for using certain types of boats. Additionally, there are complaints about overreaching regulations and excessive fees imposed by these agencies. Some fishermen feel unfairly targeted and harassed by these authorities, who they perceive as seeking to exploit and extort money from them.

In response to conflicts or confrontations with the local government, while working in fishing, one person expressed frustration with the lack of support and assistance from the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI) despite the collection of sport fishing license fees.

Four people (19% of 21) who do tourism activities reported conflicts about economic competition and property usage. These conflicts manifest as competition among gift shop owners and artisans, often stemming from overlapping business interests. Additionally, tensions arise when neighbors express opposition to individuals engaging in selling activities, leading to disputes over property rights and commercial activities within the community.

One person (5% of 21) reported conflicts in tourism with the local government because CZMAI is primarily concerned with collecting fees for licensing tourists for recreational and sport fishing activities. However, the funds collected do not contribute to supporting the sport fishing community or ensuring improved compliance with sport fishing regulations.

Another individual reported conflicts in tourism with MPA management because of the Fisheries Department's lack of response to reports, specifically the sale of illegal tarpon and bonefish (catch and release only fish), which creates frustration and distrust within the community. Those who report such activities may face retaliation, as the Department informs the reported individuals that they were identified as informants.

Furthermore, one respondent, accounting for 10% of the total respondents who earn income from other sources, reported conflicts or confrontations with the police or other types of law enforcement. Specifically, in Seine Bight, it was mentioned that the police sometimes attempt to shut down the individual's operations (a bar) before the designated closing time.

During the Focus Groups, Law Enforcement was generally seen as a problem. Corruption was mentioned in most Focus Groups (especially in southern communities), and bribes were cited as a common problem. Participants think law enforcement would be good if it involved well-prepared and honest people.

3.3. GENDER ASSESSMENT

A Gender Assessment (GA) was carried out during field research to collect gender-specific data that will increase knowledge on the roles of women and men in the project area, the decision-making processes among women and men at the community level, control over the management of natural resources and the types of resources, access to land/coastal areas/marine and fisheries areas by women and men in the project area, etc. This is necessary to identify gaps and solutions to improve women, men, and youth participation in conservation, project opportunities, and livelihoods and promote more equitable management of and benefits from using natural resources among women and men. Additionally, the GA seeks to explore the intersectionality between gender, age, race, ethnicity, education, geography, gender identity, and other key variables that emerge in the research, providing insight into a more adequate and responsive project design and implementation. The results of this GA can be found in the separate report (see Annex F).

Gender disparities are a fact in the access to communication, employment, and household decision-making services. Even when women are actively involved in commercial activities, they are burdened with household responsibilities and face barriers to economic opportunities. The results of the research also show that Gender Based Violence (GBV) against women and one of the root challenges, as the population perceived, is alcohol abuse. Key findings also display that traditional gender norms are harmful and an obstacle to achieving gender equality and closing gender gaps. This context must be considered carefully in the project design and implementation so as not to perpetuate or worsen inequalities and, ideally, contribute to changing and working towards equality. Some of the critical concerns and implications for the project are:

- There are very strong beliefs, particularly among men, that women are incapable of doing work that requires strong physical effort. This needs to be addressed not to perpetuate the beliefs and norms associated with the topic.
- There are very strong beliefs held by men that fishing is not appropriate for women. However, some women wish to be fishers, which is a source of tension. A main issue that arises of why women should not be fishers is the safety concern, and a double standard held that it is ok for men to participate in unsafe activities whereas women do not. Another issue is the lack of bathroom facilities on fishing boats where men pee off the side of the boat; women do not have this option. Addressing the belief system about women and fishing will be essential to addressing gender inequality in the region.
- While women feel comfortable expressing themselves in community spaces, fewer women are in leadership positions. Thus, the project should consider special efforts to bring women and other vulnerable groups into leadership positions.
- Women earn less than men in formal employment settings and own fewer businesses than men despite higher levels of academic achievement. Livelihood interventions should be designed to

ensure men and women are considered for higher-paid positions and women are considered for business ventures.

- Women in the project area have a double burden of participating in livelihood activities, either formal employment or an unpaid support role to men's livelihoods. However, they still have much more housework and caregiving responsibilities than men. While women have made significant advances in education and workforce participation, they have not been relieved of their assigned gender roles.

3.4. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The project area has two groups of Indigenous Peoples—the Garinagu and the Maya. Although no legal framework recognizes the Garinagu People as Indigenous, many legal precedents have recognized the Maya People as Indigenous. The following section will discuss these two groups related to national recognition, project impacts, and culture.

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

In Belize, there is minimal national recognition for Indigenous Peoples. While the Garinagu and Maya people are visibly represented in national statistics, no solid legal framework exists to support them. The country has a Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs. However, at the time of this study, they do not have an active website, so there is no publicly available information about the Ministry's recognition and work with Indigenous Peoples. In 1994, neither the Maya nor Garinagu communities were consulted when the Government converted a large area of their ancestral land into government land, with plans to conduct oil drilling by a foreign company⁹⁰.

Although there are legal processes underway that recognize Mayan land rights as IPs, there is no legal framework for the Belizean government to recognize the Garinagu People as indigenous to Belize. Despite this, UNESCO declared the Garifuna language, dance, and music the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008⁹¹. In Belize, most of the Garinagu People live in coastal communities.

WWF determines if a group of people is Indigenous based on the provisions established by the ILO in Convention 169, Article #1, which states "(a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; and (b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions."

According to this definition, particularly part (a), the Garinagu People are to be designated as Indigenous Peoples for this project as social, cultural, linguistic, spiritual, and economic conditions and customs and traditions distinguish them from the rest of Belizean society.

There are three groups of Mayan origin in Belize: the Yucatec Maya, who came to Belize in the mid-1800s to escape the Caste Wars in Mexico; the Mopan Maya, originally from Peten, Guatemala, who came in 1886 to escape forced labor and taxation; and the Kekchi Maya, who arrived to Belize in the 1870s to escape slavery by German coffee growers in the Verapaces region of Guatemala⁹².

Cases have been brought against the government of Belize for failing to protect the land rights of the Maya People of Belize. In 2004, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights confirmed that the

⁹⁰ https://www.informea.org/sites/default/files/court_case/judicial/Sarstoon-Temash-Institute-for-Indigenous-Management-et-al-v-The-Attorney-General-of-Belize-et-al-.pdf

⁹¹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/language-dance-and-music-of-the-garifuna-00001>

⁹²

<https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/mrgi/2017/en/28820#:~:text=The%20three%20Maya%20groups%20in,Orange%20Walk%2C%20and%20Cayo%20Districts>

government had been unable to protect their rights to property, equality, and a fair trial⁹³. The government admitted in 2000 that the Mayan people have land rights and passed a law in 2003 that protected some of this land. Furthermore, in 2015, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruled for “Free and Prior Informed Consent” (FPIC) regarding the Toledo Maya’s right to tenure of their traditional lands. Despite this ruling, the Belizean Government has thus far failed to realize this, and the Mayan people continue to struggle for their rights in Belize today.

The most recent Draft Maya Customary Land Tenure Policy dated December 8, 2023, which defines the traditional communal land for each of the 41 Maya Villages in the Toledo District, caused outrage in Maya communities as the potential communal lands had been severely reduced, there was a failure to include meaningful resources which are vital to Maya life, and there was inadequate representation to address the various concerns of residents, including the protection of privately owned property. This oversight would mean negative repercussions for the well-being and livelihoods of the Maya people, including access to lands that have economic, social, and spiritual significance within the communities and are an integral part of Maya culture and further development. Given this, the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs is currently conducting consultations on the Policy to obtain proper consultation and commit to the principles set forth by the CCJ, which seeks to protect the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMUNITIES, CUSTOMS, CULTURES, AND ECONOMIES

While Belize’s indigenous populations have overcome much adversity, they continue to work actively towards preserving their customs and cultures in modern-day Belize. The Garinagu comprise 6.1% of the country’s population and are similarly concentrated in the southern districts of Belize, including the Stann Creek and Toledo districts. Although the community accounts for a smaller percentage, the largest Garifuna community in Belize, Dangriga, is nationally known as the “Culture capital of Belize.” The community of Dangriga has produced nationally and globally recognized artists and musicians and is the birthplace of Punta Rock music. It remains a national and regional hub for Garifuna cultural practices, rituals, and celebrations.

In 2024, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology approved using the Garifuna Language in the school curriculum after tireless efforts by the National Garifuna Council and Battle of the Drums Secretariat to safeguard crucial aspects of Garifuna heritage. The National Garifuna Council has also attempted to address the decline in traditional Garifuna practices and combat national stigma toward the cultural group. One such effort is establishing a medicinal herb garden and a cassava farm, which seeks to preserve cultural and agricultural practices and provide economic opportunities for the Garinagu People. The main economic activities of the Garinagu People have centered around subsistence fishing and farming; however, today, the Garinagu People are involved in various industries. There is also a market for cultural tourism, with activities such as traditional Garifuna drumming and drum making, as well as traditional food preparation, cultural museums, and traditional reenactments.

Three distinct groups of Maya people reside in Belize, which accounts for 11.3% of the population. While most of the Maya population is located in the southern Toledo district, there are also communities in the western and northern districts of the country. Due to their geographical location, primarily rural areas that are often not prioritized by the government, and due to the main economic activities of the members being subsistence farming, most Maya communities continue to face developmental drawbacks and financial hardships. Notably, there is a wage disparity among ethnic groups in Belize, with the Maya groups being the most disadvantaged.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, many Mayan communities continue to maintain their traditional ways of life and are self-sufficient, relying on the natural environment for food, medicine, housing, sanitation, and economic activities. There are many traditional practices and rituals, some unique to Belize, which are still being celebrated today, and several Mayan languages are widely spoken within the Maya communities of Belize. Several tourism activities highlight Maya heritage and life in Belize, including tours of ancient sites and traditional food preparation. The Belize National Cultural Policy (2016-2026) seeks to promote

⁹³ https://indianlaw.org/projects/past_projects/belize

⁹⁴ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26379934>

preserving the heritage and cultural forms of minority groups in Belize⁹⁵, including tangible and intangible heritage. In addition, the Maya Leaders Alliance, a minority rights group in Belize, also actively works to support the best interests of Maya communities regarding their territorial rights.

4. PRELIMINARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

A crucial ESMF principle is the mitigation and management of potential environmental and social impacts as an integral part of project lifecycle management. Each step of the project lifecycle provides opportunities to address environmental and social mitigation and management requirements to achieve optimal project performance.

This section presents the potential positive and negative impacts of the four outputs listed in Section 1.1 of this ESMF. By nature, the Project is a conservation initiative; it can generate potential positive environmental and social impacts. Negative social impacts may occur, and further analysis from the project team is required to understand both positive and negative impacts. A current analysis of potential social and environmental impacts is summarised in Table 10.

4.1. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

4.1.1. POTENTIAL POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The environmental impacts of the project are overwhelmingly positive. The positive environmental impacts include:

- Reduced pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems
- Resilient marine and coastal ecosystems provide services valued nationally and locally, supporting biodiversity, people, and national development.
- Increased terrestrial and marine protected areas with improved management
- Contribute to ecosystem restoration
- Mitigate Greenhouse Emissions
- Globally over-exploited marine fisheries move to more sustainable levels

4.1.2. POTENTIAL NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The potential negative environmental impacts of the project include:

- Increased enforcement in MPAs may cause fisherfolk to increase pressure on other marine resources outside of MPAs, thus negatively impacting marine ecosystems and biodiversity.
- There might be environmental impacts from income diversification projects. The specific livelihood diversification activities have not been identified at this point in project development, as they will be developed during project implementation. Once the livelihood diversification activities are identified, a more specific analysis of potential negative environmental impacts will be carried out. For the time being, based on some possible activities identified, potential negative impacts include:
 - Negative impact on biodiversity through unsustainable sourcing of raw materials.
 - Production processes that lead to contamination in nearby ecosystems.
 - Introduction of invasive species through seaweed cultivation activities.

⁹⁵ <https://www.dgft.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Copy-of-National-Cultural-Policy-Final-Policy-Document-1.pdf>

4.2. POTENTIAL SOCIAL IMPACTS

4.2.1. POTENTIAL POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS

Resilient, Bold Belize activities can negatively affect communities' livelihoods that depend on natural resources and negatively affect other community and household dynamics. Current social impacts identified include:

- In the long term, the project activities are expected to positively impact fisheries in Belize and fisherfolk, Garinagu Peoples, and families who depend on fish for food security.
- The project is designed to create a positive social impact by building capacities for raising funds for conservation, livelihoods, and well-being in project communities.
- Coastal zone conservation and management improvements are expected to make communities more resilient to climate change.

4.2.2. POTENTIAL NEGATIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS

Resilient, Bold Belize activities can negatively affect communities' livelihoods that depend on natural resources and negatively affect other community and household dynamics. Current social impacts identified include:

- Access restrictions impact communities' livelihoods - The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs and enhanced enforcement of MPAs restrictions' regulations is expected to impact the livelihoods of fisherfolk negatively.
- Access restrictions impact communities' food security - The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs is expected to negatively impact some community members' protein consumption or overall food consumption.
- Strengthened enforcement of illegal fishing practices leads to increased corruption. Corruption is already reported as a common problem with patrol in MPAs, and increasing enforcement may lead to increased corruption if the root cause of the corruption is not addressed.
- Strengthened enforcement of illegal fishing practices and the perception of increased scarcity due to increased restrictions (through a new management plan) may lead to increased conflicts between community members and between people of different communities.
- Risk of increased gender-based violence - When fishermen have less work or are unsuccessful in fishing, there is a lot of frustration, tension, desperation, depression, and increasing levels of alcohol consumption in men when it is low season or there are no catches. The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs and enhanced enforcement of MPA restrictions and regulations could cause an increase in violence against women and children.
- Human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples - The human rights concerns are higher for vulnerable groups and Indigenous Peoples. Access restrictions strengthened by the project could significantly impact lower-income resource-dependent households and Indigenous Peoples whose livelihoods and cultural heritage are connected to the project-specific natural resources.
- Garinagu people could lose access to cultural resources if the design of the management plans does not ensure protected access for Garinagu Peoples to key areas of the ocean and coastal lagoons.
- Vulnerable people may be excluded from project activities. Certain vulnerable groups (women, low-income people, Garinagu People, youth, disabled people) are at risk of being excluded from project activities. They may be more affected by access restrictions because they may have been excluded from stakeholder engagement, as they face numerous barriers to

participation (e.g., language, time, harmful beliefs about vulnerable people, structural discrimination).

- Project staff and staff from collaborating organizations may increase exposure to insect-borne diseases, boat activities, and conflict with community members who disagree with project activities.
- Conflict between project staff and project-affected people - There is also a risk that community members disagree with this project, thus causing tension between the project and the project-affected people. During field research, researchers encountered tension with community members who did not want to engage in conversations or research because they associated that research with fishing areas being taken away from them.
- Low engagement rates with key community stakeholders - Due to the challenges faced in engaging with project-affected people during the field research and encountering hostility, stakeholder fatigue, and confusion about the project, the risk of not appropriately engaging with project-affected people is assessed as moderate. Significant measures will be needed to remedy this through work with partners and immediate actions taken for stakeholder engagement during the early stages of project implementation. Details for how to approach this are included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

4.3. MITIGATION MEASURES

TABLE 11. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Project Activity	Potential impact	Proposed mitigation measures	Responsible party
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop gender inclusive protected area management plans that are responsive to external changes, including climate change. Engaging qualified consultants to assess the strategies required to meet Belize’s People-Centric Conservation Agenda for full protection of 10% of Belize’s coral reef and 30% of the marine space in alignment with the Belize Sustainable Ocean Plan 	<p>Access restrictions impact communities’ livelihoods—The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs and enhanced enforcement of MPA restrictions’ regulation are expected to impact the livelihoods of fisherfolk negatively.</p> <p>Access restrictions impact communities’ food security - The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs is expected to negatively impact some community members’ protein consumption or overall food consumption.</p>	<p>Community members will be involved in the planning for MPAs and no-take zones to ensure no plans will significantly or unsustainably impact their livelihoods or food security. If these access restrictions cannot be avoided through participatory planning, the people affected need to be identified and connected to alternative livelihood activities to compensate for this economic displacement.</p> <p>If this cannot be reasonably achieved, the proposed expansion of an MPA or no-take zone should be modified or re-evaluated to prevent potential negative impacts or postponed until such arrangements can be achieved and sustained.</p>	<p>PFP Protected area management partners in partnership with Safeguards and Gender Officer, and CTF (or future executing entity for Component 2)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building for management and co-management partners (e.g. through trainings, supply of equipment, etc.) for strengthening enforcement of fishing regulations 	<p>Strengthened enforcement of illegal fishing practices leads to increased corruption. Corruption is already reported as a common problem with patrol in MPAs, and increasing enforcement may lead to increased corruption if the root cause of the corruption is not addressed.</p> <p>Strengthened enforcement of illegal fishing practices and the perception of increased scarcity due to increased restrictions (through a new management plan) may lead to increased conflicts between</p>	<p>Increase the co-managers capacity to address anti-corruption and collaborate with the Conservation Compliance Unit (CCU) of the Fisheries Department and the Ombudsman Office to allow fishers to bring their claims/complaints forward. Representatives from executing partners (e.g., rangers) receive anti-corruption training, which can, in turn, be provided to other enforcement officers. Additionally, officers and co-managers should be trained in conflict mitigation.</p>	<p>PFP Protected area management partners in partnership with the Safeguards and Gender Officer, CTF (or future executing entity for Component 2)</p>

	community members and between people of different communities.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core costs such as boundary and zone demarcation, signage, human resources, equipment, operational costs, use of technology, training, and strengthening enforcement partnerships 	<p>Risk of increased gender-based violence. When fishermen have less work or are unsuccessful in fishing, there is a lot of frustration, tension, desperation, depression, and increasing levels of alcohol consumption in men when it is low season or there are no catches. The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs and enhanced enforcement of MPA regulations could cause an increase in violence against women and children.</p>	<p>The Gender Action Plan guides actions addressing GBV within the project team and partners. When new projects are developed to promote diversified livelihoods, ensure the targeting of households where women are at risk for increased GBV. To mitigate the negative impacts of access restrictions that may adversely harm women through increased GBV, women fisherfolk, women in households who depend on fishing, and gender-focused civil society actors should be engaged in management planning to avoid further actions that can lead to increased GBV. Work with men and women in the project area to address the root causes of violence through the integration of activities into existing project activities to promote positive masculinities and address harmful gender norms</p>	<p>Safeguards and Gender Officer, CTF (or future executing entity for Component 2)</p>
	<p>Human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples - The human rights concerns are higher for vulnerable groups and Indigenous Peoples. Access restrictions strengthened by the project could significantly impact lower-income resource-dependent households and Indigenous Peoples whose livelihoods and cultural heritage are connected to the project-specific natural resources.</p>	<p>Carry out an FPIC protocol and develop an IPP to ensure the inclusion and participation of IPs in designing new management plans for MPAs.</p> <p>Ensure rights to fisheries and cultural resources are protected and documented in management plans through the FPIC process, IPP, and participatory design workshops with IPs.</p>	<p>PFP Protected area management partners, relevant government partners, Safeguards and Gender Officer, CTF (or future executing entity for Component 2).</p>
	<p>Garinagu people could lose access to cultural resources if the design of the management plans does not ensure protected access for Garinagu Peoples to key areas of the ocean and coastal lagoons.</p>	<p>A culture Heritage Management Plan may be developed, if necessary, upon further assessment during implementation through the Activity-level ESS Screening (Annex 1) (for example, if access provisions aren't already captured in the IPP or the potential access restriction extends to other non-indigenous local communities).</p>	
	<p>Increased enforcement in MPAs may cause fisherfolk to increase pressure on other marine resources outside of MPAS, thus</p>	<p>Fish populations will be monitored to ensure the new measures do not harm biodiversity.</p>	

	negatively impacting marine ecosystems and biodiversity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract consultants to review past income diversification projects and lessons learnt and invest in mechanisms that support livelihood diversification opportunities for vulnerable fisher communities, fisher families (including women and youths) and fishers, towards supplementing household incomes to reduce pressures on the fishery resources 	Potential environmental impacts from income diversification projects. Once the livelihood diversification activities are identified, a more specific analysis of potential negative environmental impacts will be carried out. Possible negative impacts include a negative impact on biodiversity through unsustainable sourcing of raw materials, production processes that lead to contamination in nearby ecosystems, and introduction of invasive species through seaweed cultivation activities.	When livelihood diversification activities are defined, a more detailed assessment of the environmental impacts should be conducted to ensure no adverse impacts are related to those processes.	PFP Protected area management partners in partnership with the Safeguards and Gender Officer, CTF (or future executing entity for Component 2)
Across all project activities	Across all project activities, vulnerable people may be excluded. There is a risk that certain vulnerable groups (women, low-income people, Garinagu People, youth, disabled people) will be excluded from project activities. They may be more affected by access restrictions because they may have been excluded from stakeholder engagement as they face numerous barriers to participation (i.e., language, time, harmful beliefs about vulnerable people, structural discrimination).	To ensure vulnerable people are included, specific activities have been designed to engage with women and IPs (See GAP and IPPF). However, additional efforts should be made to include other vulnerable people, such as youth, disabled people, and low-income families who depend on fishing for food security.	Safeguards and Gender Officer, CTF (or future executing entity for Component 2) and PMU for Component 1 and 3
	Project staff and staff from collaborating organizations may increase exposure to insect-borne diseases, boat activities, and conflict with community members who disagree with project activities.	To mitigate risks, project staff will be given personal protective equipment, such as insect repellent and life jackets. Additionally, project staff will be trained in conflict mediation and management to reduce the negative impacts of conflicts with community members. The project may consider training one key team member to train the rest of the project staff further.	

	<p>Conflict between project staff and project-affected people—There is also a risk that community members disagree with this project activity, thus causing tension between the project and the project-affected people.</p>	<p>Frequent engagement with project-affected people will be key to address this potential risk. Some strategies that have worked in Belize in the past involve 1) a “boat-to-boat” methodology to engage with affected people while they are fishing, and 2) participating into already planned/existing community meetings or other organizational structures to avoid duplicating engagements and contributing to participation fatigue from the communities.</p>	
	<p>Low engagement rates with key community stakeholders - Due to the challenges faced in engaging with project-affected people during the field research and encountering hostility, stakeholder fatigue, and confusion about the project, the risk of not appropriately engaging with project-affected people is assessed as moderate.</p>	<p>Significant measures will be needed to remedy this through work with partners and immediate actions taken to engage stakeholders before the project starts. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan includes details of how to approach this.</p>	

4.4. PROCESS FRAMEWORK: LIVELIHOOD RESTORATION MEASURES

Developing site-specific management plans as part of the project may restrict local communities' access to livelihoods and natural resources. In particular, the following access restrictions to livelihoods may occur as a result of the project:

- Reduced access to fishing areas, seasons, or species as a result of changes in management plans.
- Reduced access to fishing areas, seasons, or species as a result of increased enforcement.

Any change of land use, sea use, or new zonation should be based on free and informed consultations of the affected communities and relevant authorities, which should be carried out before finalizing any usage changes. Associated with the risk of potential restrictions in access to marine resources is the risk of loss of livelihoods of fisherfolk. Furthermore, there is the risk that local people and communities affected by the project are unaware of their rights and/or cannot claim them, thus aggravating the negative impacts of these restrictions.

Livelihood-related support during project implementation will be provided to the households (HH) of all communities impacted by project-induced restrictions of access to natural and community resources within the targeted areas. This process will be organized in the following manner:

- **Screening:** The Safeguards and Gender Officer at the PMU will screen all planned activities for likely restrictions on access and use for local communities in project-affected areas. The screening should consider users of marine resources from nearby protected areas and those who travel far from their homes for fishing activities.
- **Social assessment:** If the screening confirms and identifies households affected due to access restrictions to natural resources, a social assessment (SA) process based on participatory consultations with affected people will be carried out. The SA will generate the necessary baseline information on affected communities' demographics, social, cultural, and economic characteristics, the marine resources they have traditionally or customarily used or occupied, and the natural resources they depend on. The SA will assess potential impacts and the extent of access restriction to resources along with suitable mitigation and enhancement measures, including options for alternative access to similar resources.
- **Livelihood Restoration Plans:** Based on the screening and social assessment findings, Livelihood Restoration Plans (LRP) will be prepared in consultation with affected people and stakeholders, providing tailored livelihood support and benefit sharing for affected persons, groups, and communities. The LRPs will be site-specific and include the following issues: (1) identifying and ranking site-specific impacts; (2) setting out criteria and eligibility for livelihood assistance; (3) outlining the rights of persons who have been either customarily or legally/illegally using marine resources for subsistence to be respected; (4) identifying and describing available mitigation measures alternatives, taking into account the provisions of applicable local legislation, the available measures for mitigation promoted via project activities and any additional sound alternatives proposed by the affected persons; (5) outlining specific procedures on how compensation can be obtained.
- **Mitigation measures as part of the LRPs:** Participatory and inclusive consultations should be carried out with affected communities, individuals, and stakeholders to agree on the allocation of alternative livelihoods. Eligibility criteria should be established according to guidelines provided in Section 5.4: Community Engagement of the ESMF/PF/IPPF. Alternative livelihood schemes should be discussed, agreed upon, and provided for affected persons/groups. The livelihood options should be built on and based upon the affected peoples' traditional skills, knowledge, practices, and culture/worldview. Additionally, the project needs to provide mitigation measures should there be a gap between alternative livelihood commencement and effective income generation derived from said activity.

Where appropriate, affected persons should be provided project-related livelihood support and other opportunities as part of the planned project activities. These may include activities implemented as part of the following outputs:

- 2.1.3.3 Reduce pressure on the marine resources through investment in piloted mechanisms that will engage fishers (e.g. fisher forums, boat-to-boat conversations), building capacity for sustainable fishing practices
- 2.1.3.4 Invest in management and co-management partners (e.g. through providing core operational costs, capacity building of rangers), for strengthening enforcement of fishing regulations
- 2.1.3.5 Contract consultants to review past income diversification projects and lessons learnt and invest in mechanisms that support livelihood diversification opportunities for vulnerable fisher communities, fisher families (including women and youths) and fishers, towards supplementing household incomes to reduce pressures on the fishery resources
- Any other applicable output included in the wider PFP.

In addition, an accessible and efficient grievance redress mechanism should be established and functional (see Chapter 5.3 of this ESMF/PF/IPPF). Special efforts should be made to tailor these mitigation measures to the needs of fisherfolk and fisherfolk families, particularly those designated as IPs.

- **Compensation:** Compensation shall be agreed upon and calculated based on the replacement value of these livelihoods (economic market value plus any replacement costs). In cases where compensation will consist of allocating alternative resources, measures will include identifying these resources with the active involvement of the affected persons/communities and assistance to access these resources. Detailed procedures on how compensation should be calculated and awarded should be provided in each site-specific LRP based on local conditions and feedback from the affected people. Compensation with Indigenous Peoples shall be agreed upon during the FPIC process.

As stated in Table 10 above, community members will be involved in planning for MPA or no-take zone expansions or modifications to ensure no plans or project activities will significantly or unsustainably impact their livelihoods or food security. If these access restrictions cannot be avoided through participatory planning, the people affected need to be identified and connected to alternative livelihood activities to compensate for this economic displacement. All of this should be captured in LRPs.

Please note that if this cannot be reasonably achieved, the proposed expansion of MPA or no-take zone should be modified or re-evaluated to prevent said potential impacts or postponed until such arrangements can be achieved and sustained.

4.5. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PLANNING FRAMEWORK (IPPF)

4.5.1. IP POPULATION OF PROJECT SITES

There are two groups of Indigenous Peoples in the project area—the Garinagu and the Maya. Although the Garinagu People are not recognized as Indigenous by the legal framework, many legal precedents have recognized the Maya People as Indigenous. The following section will discuss these two groups related to national recognition, project impacts, and culture.

For this project, we use the provisions established by the ILO in Convention 169, Article #1, to determine if a group is Indigenous, which states “(a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; and (b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.”

There are three groups of Maya in Belize, many of whom arrived as refugees from elsewhere in the region - the Yucatec Maya, who came to Belize in the mid-1800s to escape the Caste Wars in Mexico; the Mopan Maya, who originally came from Peten, Guatemala, in 1886 to escape forced labor and taxation; and the Kekchi Maya who arrived to Belize in the 1870s to escape slavery by German coffee growers in the Verapaces region of Guatemala⁹⁶. In Belize, there is national recognition for the southern Maya as Indigenous Peoples, with the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs tasked with the role of ensuring compliance with the 2015 ruling of the Caribbean Court of Justice Consent Order that recognizes that the Maya Peoples of southern Belize hold customary land rights over the land they occupy and that the Belizean Constitution and international instruments protect these customary land rights. As part of this recognition, Belize has developed a national FPIC framework that upholds the rights of the Maya as indigenous people. It has been approved by the government as a policy, with the government considering itself bound by the terms of the protocol. Despite these advances, some Maya groups are still concerned about how the government implements its commitments. The FPIC protocols have been put in place, and the Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs is currently conducting consultations on the Policy to obtain proper consultation and commit to the principles set forth by the CCJ, which seeks to protect the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples.

The Commissioner's office also recognizes that the Garinagu Peoples, who live in coastal communities with strong cultural ties to the sea, consider themselves indigenous. UNESCO declared the Garifuna language, dance, and music as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008⁹⁷. Based on the ILO definition, particularly part (a), the Garinagu People are designated Indigenous Peoples for this project as social, cultural, linguistic, spiritual, and economic conditions and customs and traditions distinguish them from the rest of Belizean society.

While the Maya and Garinagu People are prominently represented in national statistics, there is no national definition of the word 'indigenous' or strong legal framework to recognize them as indigenous people in Belize.

Belize's indigenous populations continue to work actively towards preserving their customs and cultures in modern-day Belize. The three Maya groups collectively account for 11.3% of the population, with the majority of the Kekchi and Mopan Maya located in inland southern Toledo district, and have maintained strong links to their language and culture, including the tradition of the *fajina*. There are strong links to the communal lands, which provide natural resources for building materials, food, and medicine, and there are many traditional practices and rituals, some unique to Belize, which are still being celebrated today. In addition to the village chairperson, these communities are still governed internally by Alcaldes, who are recognized as village leaders by the Government of Belize in managing community decisions.

The Yucatec Maya retained much of the culture and, to some extent, the language but no longer follow customary land tenure principles or use the Alcalde system of governance. Most of the Yucatec Maya of northern and western Belize have become integrated into the Mestizo culture, with Spanish / English as their first languages, and only the few remaining oldest generations still speak Maya and follow ceremonies that mix the Catholic and Maya cultures. There is interest in these communities in re-discovering cultural roots.

There is a wage disparity among ethnic groups in Belize, with the Maya groups being the most disadvantaged.⁹⁸ The southern Maya are primarily subsistence farmers living in rural communal lands with the perception that this area has been a low priority for the Government. The younger generation often works in the hospitality industry in the coastal communities, even as far as San Pedro, or may join the Belize Defense Force, or work as teachers, sending funds home to support their families. More recently, with the upgrading of the Southern Highway, there has been an increase in infrastructure and development to support the Maya communities. However, most continue to face developmental

⁹⁶ UNHCR. The UN Refugee Agency. World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples- Belize: Maya <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/mrgi/2017/en/28820#:~:text=The%20three%20Maya%20groups%20in,Orange%20Walk%2C%20and%20Cayo%20Districts>

⁹⁷ UNESCO. Intangible Cultural Heritage. Language, Dance and Music of the Garifuna <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/language-dance-and-music-of-the-garifuna-00001>

⁹⁸ Bellony, A., Clarke, C., & Reilly, B. (2015). Pay Disparity and Ethnicity: Evidence for Belize Men. *Social and Economic Studies*, 64(2), 29–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26379934>

drawbacks and financial hardships, especially with the increasing impacts of climate change, resulting in crop failure and seasonal fires.

Many traditional practices and rituals, some unique to Belize, are still celebrated today. Some are the focus of tourism activities that highlight Mayan heritage and life in Belize, including tours of ancient sites and traditional food preparation. The Belize National Cultural Policy (2016-2026) seeks to promote preserving the heritage and cultural forms of minority groups in Belize⁹⁹, including tangible and intangible heritage. In the south, the Toledo Alcaldes Association, which integrates representation of the Alcaldes and village chairpersons, provides a unified voice for the southern Maya communities. In addition, the Maya Leaders Alliance, a minority rights group in southern Belize, actively supports the communities' best interests regarding their customary land rights.

While some southern Maya migrate to Punta Gorda for employment, they have no strong link to the marine environment and are low or not represented in the Project Affected People.

The Garinagu comprise 6.1% of the country's population and are concentrated in the southern districts of Belize (Stann Creek and Toledo districts). Dangriga, the District center of Stann Creek, is nationally known as the "Culture capital of Belize," the birthplace of Punta Rock music, and has produced nationally and globally recognized artists and musicians. It remains a national and regional hub for Garifuna cultural practices, rituals, and celebrations.

In 2024, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology approved using the Garifuna Language in the school curriculum following lobbying by the National Garifuna Council and Battle of the Drums Secretariat to safeguard crucial aspects of Garifuna heritage. The National Garifuna Council has also attempted to address the decline in traditional Garifuna practices and combat national stigma toward the cultural group. Seine Bight and Punta Gorda are the two project communities that are important Garinagu settlements. The main economic activities of the Garinagu People have centered around subsistence fishing and farming. However, today, Garinagu People are involved in a broader range of industries and cultural tourism, with activities such as traditional Garifuna drumming and drum making, as well as traditional food preparation, cultural museums, and traditional re-enactments.

While Garinagu People live throughout the country, most of the population is concentrated in Southern Coastal Belize (Table 12). Seine Bight and Barranco are important Garinagu communities that rely on fishing and tourism. Thus, it is expected that potential fisheries restrictions will impact them more, but they are also the ones who will benefit more from the establishment of a rights-based fishery. Traditional Garifuna drumming, singing, and dancing are increasingly becoming a tourist attraction, and the Garifuna language, dance, and music have been proclaimed by UNESCO as one of the "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

TABLE 12. IPS IN PROJECT COMMUNITIES

	Barranco	Monkey River Town	Seine Bight	Riversdale	Gales point	Copper Bank	Sarteneja	Chunox	Punta Gorda	Total	%
Garifuna	68	0	933	17	2	1	3	0	1296	2320	20%
Maya	12	1	49	50	0	14	13	12	1201	1353	12%
Non-Indigenous Peoples	77	195	328	500	295	455	1808	1363	2854	7875	68%
Total	157	196	1,310	567	297	470	1824	1375	5351	11547	100

4.5.1.1. PROJECT IMPACTS ON IP GROUPS

There is an opportunity for a positive impact on Indigenous Peoples, especially the Garinagu, as the project will support the improved conservation of areas critical for IP cultural heritage, livelihoods, and

⁹⁹ DIRECTORATE General for Foreign Trade, Belize <https://www.dgft.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Copy-of-National-Cultural-Policy-Final-Policy-Document-1.pdf>

food security. If the enhanced conservation includes the rights of IPs to access the area within the management plans, there is an expected positive impact as cultural resources and natural resources important to the Garinagu Peoples will be conserved and sustained in the long term. Put differently, Improved management of the MPAs and marine resources is important for maintaining and increasing food security and cultural heritage in the long term while allowing access to livelihoods and cultural traditions to continue.

The project is expected to directly impact the Garinagu People, as many depend on fishing for their livelihoods and food security. Any access restriction through the expansion of no-take zones, increased enforcement, and new rules around fishing seasons or other restrictions are likely to adversely affect the Garinagu People by impacting existing livelihood activities. However, there is no evidence that their livelihood would be more affected than that of the general population of fisherfolk.

In the project area, 20% of the population is Garifuna, significantly higher than the national average. When asked if they were originally from their community or had moved here in the survey, 100% of Garinagu People responded that they were originally from the community. Among survey participants, 38% of Garinagu People surveyed responded that there is something special or important, such as a tradition, historic site, or custom connected to the ocean near their community. Key topics mentioned were healing injuries, harvesting seaweed, and funerals (Dugu). This represents a range of connections to marine resources, from food security, spirituality, public health, and cultural heritage.

During the focus group conducted in Punta Gorda, participants highlighted one traditional/spiritual activity that happens sometimes in the months of July or August, where at least 4 boats go out to sea to fish for specific marine products that the spirits have requested. If this happens when the season for lobster or conch is closed or if the people need to go into the marine reserve, they are provided with a permit to fish in the reserve for these traditional needs. These types of traditions are important for the Garinagu people, as it is considered a way to please their ancestral spirits.

Under Belize's National Management Planning Framework, the revision of the relevant management plans for the southern MPAs has to include consultation with and the participation of all stakeholders, including any Garinagu and Maya People. Considering the high concentration of Garinagu Peoples, their strong connection to marine resources, and their alignment with the definition of Indigenous Peoples, WWF and partners will treat them as such for this project. This means that the Executing Entity needs to follow the FPIC process for the Garinagu People.

In the project area, 12% of the population is Maya. Two Maya people were surveyed, and both reported that they had moved to their current community but that they were not originally from the community, suggesting that they are not Indigenous to the area by the definition of Indigenous "peoples in independent countries who are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions."

The team observed that the Maya people present were commonly involved in cleaning jobs in the tourism industry and in selling artisan products from Guatemala. They were not observed participating in economic and cultural activities related to marine resources. In the survey, one Maya person reported having a meaningful cultural connection to the ocean near them, reporting that it is important for the regatta and ferries. Multiple attempts were made to conduct interviews with various Mayan associations in different parts of the country, but these were unsuccessful.

At the moment of writing, the Maya have not been identified as key stakeholders of the project as they focus primarily on agriculture, freshwater fishing (as opposed to marine fishing) and their communities are not on the coastline. As the project unfolds during implementation, the Safeguards and Gender Officer in the PMU will continue to contact these organizations to inquire about project impacts on the Mayan people to ensure they are included and safeguarded. Confirming the Maya people's connection to the ocean and marine resources is essential to determine whether an FPIC process will be required as consent will need to be obtained in advance of the implementation of project activities. *For the remainder of this document, the Project Affected Indigenous Peoples are the Garinagu People.*

Certain project activities may result in adverse impacts on IPs. The potential negative impacts for IPs include:

- Access restrictions impact communities' livelihoods - The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs and enhanced enforcement of MPAs regulations is expected to impact the livelihoods of fisherfolk negatively.
- Access restrictions impact communities' food security - The possible expansion of no-take areas or no-take seasons in MPAs is expected to negatively impact some community members' protein consumption or overall food consumption.
- Human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples - The human rights concerns are higher for vulnerable groups and Indigenous Peoples. Access restrictions strengthened by the project could significantly impact lower-income resource-dependent households and Indigenous Peoples whose livelihoods and cultural heritage are connected to the project-specific natural resources.
- Garinagu people could lose access to cultural resources if the design of the management plans does not ensure protected access for Garinagu Peoples to key areas of the ocean and coastal lagoons.
- Vulnerable people may be excluded from project activities. There is a risk that certain vulnerable groups (women, low-income people, Garinagu People, youth, disabled people) will be excluded from project activities. They may be more affected by access restrictions because they may have been excluded from stakeholder engagement as they face numerous barriers to participation (i.e., language, time, harmful beliefs about vulnerable people, structural discrimination). Discrimination against Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups (e.g., exclusion from Local Management Advisory Committees that will be created).
- Non-participation of Indigenous Peoples in meetings and decision-making processes
- The project interventions might perpetuate existing or lead to new discrimination against women, including Indigenous Women.
- Due to limiting factors and barriers, Indigenous Peoples might be unable to effectively claim their rights, raise concerns, or file grievances.

4.5.1.2. MITIGATION PLANNING

The exact impacts of the project activities described in section 4.5.1.1. cannot yet be quantified. More project implementation details, such as what changes will be made to protected areas and management plans, are needed to understand impacts. Also, given that only a subset of potential project intervention sites was visited during the field consultations, further verification will be required throughout all the project areas to provide a definitive conclusion with regard to the presence of Indigenous People.

Therefore, at this stage, mitigation planning will consider the following:

1. Regular consultations will be held with the IPs, including the women and youth, to seek their informed participation in assessing potential impacts and designing mitigation measures and project intervention at all project preparation and implementation stages.
2. As an ongoing process, where potential negative impacts are identified, the scope and impact of these impacts will be assessed, and appropriate mitigation measures designed.
3. Where IP groups may be affected, site-specific Indigenous Peoples Plans (IPPs, see below) should be prepared, considering the best options and approaches in accordance with the needs and interests of affected individuals and communities. Specifically, the social and cultural context of affected IPs and their traditional skills and knowledge in natural resource management should be considered in this regard.
4. Community organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders experienced in executing IP development plans or projects will be engaged to prepare these IPPs.

5. The IPPs should provide a set of indicators for periodic monitoring of the progress of planned activities incorporated in the plans to confirm their effectiveness and to plan and undertake alternative measures as appropriate.
6. The project will allocate a sufficient budget for implementing the IPPs and develop a financing plan to ensure a smooth transition after project closure.

4.5.2. FORMULATING AN IPP

WWF's Standard on Indigenous People requires that an IPP be prepared with care and with the full and effective participation of affected communities regardless of whether Project-affected IPs are affected adversely or positively.

The requirements include screening to confirm and identify affected IP groups in the project areas, social analysis to improve the understanding of the local context and affected communities, a process of free, prior, and informed consent with the affected IPs' communities to identify their views fully and to obtain broad community support for the project and develop project-specific measures to avoid adverse impacts and enhance culturally appropriate benefits.

Minimum requirements for projects working in areas with IPs are:

- Identification of IP groups through screening;
- Assessment of project impacts;
- Consultations with affected IP communities following FPIC principles and obtain their broad community support;
- Development of a sites specific IP plan (IPP) to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits and
- In activities with no impacts, the requirements could be limited to consultations during implementation to keep local communities informed about project activities and document all consultations held.

4.5.2.1. SOCIAL ASSESSMENT & CONSULTATIONS

WWF's Standard on Indigenous People requires screening for IPs to assess risks and opportunities and to improve the understanding of the local context and affected communities. The field research conducted in February and March 2024 included an assessment of risks and opportunities specific to IPs. The project concept and the research dynamics to assess risks and opportunities were shared with the focus groups, and participants had the chance to share their needs related to the project concept. Garinagu and Maya Peoples were invited and participated in these assessments and consultations.

The activities that might result in adverse social impacts on IPs will be revisited during project implementation through the annual screening.

4.5.2.2. DEVELOPMENT OF IP PLANS (IPP)

Based on the results of the social assessments, an IP Plan shall be developed for each project site.

The contents of the IPP/s will depend on the specific project activities identified and the impacts these activities may have on IPs in the project area. As a minimum, the IPP should include the following information:

- Description of the IPs affected by the proposed activity;
- Summary of the proposed activity;
- Detailed description of IPs' participation and consultation process during implementation;
- Description of how the project will ensure culturally appropriate benefits and avoid or mitigate adverse impacts;
- Budget;
- Mechanism for complaints and conflict resolution; and

- A monitoring and evaluation system includes monitoring particular issues and measures concerning indigenous communities.

The provisions of the Process Framework (Section 4.4) should be followed for project activities that may result in changes in IPs' access to livelihoods.

FREE, PRIOR, AND INFORMED CONSENT FRAMEWORK

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) ensures that IPs' rights are guaranteed in any decision that may negatively affect their lands, territories, or livelihoods. It ensures that they have the right to give or withhold their consent to these activities without fear of reprisal or coercion, in a timeframe suited to their own culture, and with the resources to make informed decisions.

FPIC is composed of four separate components:

- *Free*—Without coercion, intimidation, manipulation, threat or bribery.
- *Prior*—indicates that consent has been sought sufficiently before any project activities have been authorized or commenced and that the time requirements of the Indigenous community's consultation/consensus processes have been respected.
- *Informed*—Information is provided in a language and form that are easily understood by the community, covering the nature, scope, purpose, duration, and locality of the project or activity as well as information about areas that will be affected, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts, all involved actors, and the procedures that the project or activity may entail.
- *Consent*—The right of IPs to give or withhold their consent to any decision that will impact their lands, territories, resources, and livelihoods.

Consultation and obtaining FPIC will be applied to all aspects of the project (financed under WWF) that may negatively affect the rights of IPs and ethnic minorities. FPIC will be required on any matters that may negatively affect the rights and interests, water areas, lands, resources, territories (whether titled or untitled to the people in question), and the IPs' traditional livelihoods.

Thus, FPIC is integral to the execution of the proposed project, as the project area includes diverse indigenous communities. WWF recognizes the strong cultural and spiritual ties many IP groups have to their lands and territories and is committed to strengthening these ties in all GEF-funded projects. FPIC gives IPs the freedom to determine their development path to promote conservation sustainably. The following checklist (Box 1) may assist in determining whether some Project activities require an FPIC process.

Box 1. Checklist for appraising whether an activity may require an FPIC Process

1. Will the activity involve using, taking, or damaging cultural, intellectual, religious, and/or spiritual property from IPs?
2. Will the activity adopt or implement any legislative or administrative measures that will affect the rights, lands, territories, and/or resources of IPs (e.g., in connection with the development, utilization, or exploitation of mineral, water, or other resources; land reform; legal reforms that may discriminate de jure or de facto against IPs, etc.)?
3. Will the activity involve natural resource extraction, such as logging, mining, or agricultural development, on IPs' lands/territories?
4. Will the activity involve decisions affecting IPs' rights to their lands/territories/water resources, resources, or livelihoods?
5. Will the activity involve accessing indigenous and local communities' traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices?
6. Will the activity affect IPs' political, legal, economic, social, or cultural institutions and/or practices?
7. Will the activity commercialize natural and/or cultural resources on lands subject to traditional ownership and/or under customary use by IPs?
8. Will the activity involve decisions regarding benefit-sharing arrangements when benefits are derived from IPs' lands/territories/resources (e.g., natural resource management or extractive industries)?
9. Will the activity impact the IPs' continued relationship with their land or culture?
10. Will the interventions/activities restrict access to NTFPs, timber, lands, etc., and other livelihood and community resources?

If the answer is 'Yes' to any of these questions in Box 1, FPIC will likely be required of the potentially affected indigenous peoples for the activity that may result in the impacts identified in the questions. When an FPIC process is needed, a stakeholder consultation must be initiated to define and agree on an FPIC process with the community or communities. The IPs who may be affected by the Project will have a central role in defining the FPIC process based on their own cultural and governance practices. The consultation process should be launched as early as possible to ensure full, effective, and meaningful participation of IPs.

All consultations with IPs should be carried out in good faith to seek agreement or consent. Consultation and consent are about IPs' right to meaningfully and effectively participate in decision-making on matters that may affect them. Consultations and information disclosure are integral parts of the FPIC process and any development support planning for IPs to ensure that the indigenous groups' priorities, preferences, and needs are considered adequately. With that objective in view, a strategy for consultation with IPs has been proposed so that all consultations are conducted to ensure full and effective participation. Full and effective participation is primarily based upon transparent, good-faith interactions, so everyone in the community is empowered to join fully in decision-making. It includes providing information in a language and manner that the community understands and in a timeframe compatible with the community's cultural norms.

The affected IPs will be actively engaged in all stages of the project cycle, including project preparation, and feedback from consultations with the IPs will be reflected in the project design, followed by disclosure. Their participation in project preparation and planning has informed project design, and they will continue to participate actively in project execution. Once the IPP or LRP is prepared, it will be translated into local languages (as applicable) and made available to them before implementation, including in formats other than written documents if and when requested by the communities.

The Executing Entity shall ensure adequate funds for consultation and facilitation of planned activities within the IPP. Project brochures and pamphlets with infographics containing basic information such as sub-project location, impact estimates, mitigation measures proposed, and implementation schedule will be prepared, translated into a language understandable to the IPs, and distributed among them. If

literacy is low in the communities, other means of communication must also be agreed upon with them, especially targeting community members with lower literacy levels.

A range of consultative methods will be adopted to carry out consultation, including, but not limited to, focus group discussions (FGDs), public meetings, community discussions, and in-depth and key informant interviews, in addition to censuses and socioeconomic surveys. The key stakeholders to be consulted during screening, impact assessment, design, and implementation of IPP, LRP, and Process Framework (PF) include:

- All affected persons belonging to IPs/marginalized groups;
- Appropriate government Departments/Ministries
- Provincial and municipal government representatives;
- Insert relevant community cooperatives, management structures, umbrella bodies, etc;
- The private sector:
- Academia representatives.

The Project will ensure adequate representation of each group of stakeholders mentioned above while conducting consultations using various tools and approaches.

The views of IP communities are to be considered during the execution of project activities while respecting their practices, beliefs, and cultural preferences. The outcome of the consultations will be documented in the periodic reports and included in the project's trimester progress reports. The Project Manager, with the support of the Safeguards and Gender Officer, will also ensure that affected persons are involved in the decision-making process.

Procedures to seek FPIC

Project interventions and activities adversely affecting the IPs, therefore, need to follow a process of free, prior, and informed consent with the affected IPs to fully identify their views and to seek their broad community support for the project and development of project-specific measures to avoid adverse impacts and enhance culturally appropriate benefits.

Community involvement is a critical component of FPIC, as FPIC is a collective process rather than an individual decision. In practice, FPIC is implemented through a participatory process involving all affected groups that is carried out before the finalization or implementation of any project activities, decisions, or development plans. FPIC is established through good faith negotiation between the project and affected IPs. A facilitator should support this process, a person who will be available throughout the Project, speaks the necessary languages and is aware of the project context. This person may or may not be part of the PMU but should be agreeable to all parties involved.

Box 2 below outlines some generic steps for FPIC with the affected IPs to seek their broad community support.

Box 2. Steps for Seeking FPIC from Project Affected Indigenous Peoples

1. Identify communities, sub-groups within communities, and other stakeholders with potential interests/rights (customary and legal) on the land or other natural resources proposed to be developed, managed, utilized, or impacted by the proposed project activity.
2. Identify any rights (customary and legal) or claims of these communities to land or resources (e.g., water rights, water access points, or rights to hunt or extract forest products) that overlap or are adjacent to the site(s) or area(s) of the proposed project activity;
3. Identify whether the proposed project activity may diminish the rights, claims, or interests identified in Step 2 above and also identify natural resources that may be impacted by this project and the legal and customary laws that govern these resources;
4. Provide the details of proposed project activities to be implemented along with their likely impacts on IPs, either positively or negatively, as well as the corresponding proposed mitigation measures in a language or means of communication understandable by the affected IPs;
5. All project information provided to IPs should be appropriate to local needs. Local languages should usually be used, and efforts should be made to include all community members,

- including women and members of different generations and social groups (e.g., clans and socioeconomic backgrounds);
6. Selection of a facilitator who will be available throughout the Project, speaks the necessary languages, is aware of the project context, and is culturally and gender-sensitive. The facilitator should be trustworthy when dealing with affected IPs. It will also be helpful to involve any actors who are likely to be involved in implementing the FPIC process, such as local or national authorities.
 7. These should usually be consulted if the IP communities are organized in community associations or umbrella organizations.
 8. Provide sufficient time for IPs' decision-making processes (it means allocate enough time for internal decision-making processes to reach conclusions that are considered legitimate by the majority of the concerned participants)
 9. Support a process to create a mutually respected decision-making structure in cases where two or more communities claim rights over a project site.
 10. If FPIC is unfamiliar to the community, engage in a dialogue to identify existing decision-making structures that support the principles underlying FPIC.
 11. Identify the community-selected representative(s) or "focal people" for decision-making purposes—identify the decision-makers and parties to the negotiation.
 12. Agree on the decision-makers or signatory parties and/or customary binding practice that will be used to agree, introducing the chosen representatives, their role in the community, how they were chosen, their responsibility and role as representatives;
 13. If consent is reached, document agreed-upon outcomes/activities to be included in the project and agree on feedback and a project grievance redress mechanism. All parties must mutually recognize agreements, considering customary modes of decision-making and consensus-seeking. These may include votes, a show of hands, the signing of a document witnessed by a third party, performing a ritual ceremony that makes the agreement binding, and so forth;
 14. When seeking "broad community consent/support" for the project, it should be ensured that all relevant social groups of the community have been adequately consulted. This may mean the project staff must seek out marginalized members or those who don't have decision-making power, such as women. When this is the case, and the "broad" majority is positive about the project overall, it would be appropriate to conclude that broad community support/consent has been achieved. Consensus-building approaches are often the norm, but "broad community consent/support" does not mean that everyone has to agree to a given project;
 15. When the community agrees on the project, document the agreement process and outcomes, including benefits, compensation, or mitigation to the community, commensurate with the loss of use of land or resources in forms and languages accessible and made publicly available to all members of the community, providing for stakeholder review and authentication;
 16. The agreements or special design features providing the basis for broad community support should be described in the IPs Plan; any disagreements should also be documented and
 17. Agree on jointly defined modes of monitoring and verifying agreements and their related procedures: how these tasks will be carried out during project implementation and the commission of independent periodic reviews (if considered) at intervals satisfactory to all interest groups.

4.5.2.3. DISCLOSURE

The final IPPF and PF and any site-specific IPPs and LRPs will be disclosed on the website of the Executing Entity and made available to affected IPs; information dissemination and consultation will continue throughout project execution. Summaries of IPPs and mitigation measures proposed in IPPs will be translated into Spanish. Paper copies will be made available to the affected persons in the office of relevant local authorities. Garifuna is not written, so it will not be translated into Garifuna.

4.5.2.4. INSTITUTIONAL AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Safeguards and Gender Officer in the PMU will be responsible for developing and implementing the IPPF and any IPP, with support from the PMU Project Manager on logistical matters (e.g., conducting field visits, reaching out to IP communities, convening meetings, etc.). The Safeguards and Gender Officer will periodically report on the implementation of the IPPF/IPP to the Project Manager, WWF in Belize, and WWF US. Monitoring and reporting will be undertaken together with reporting on the other ESMF commitment (see also section 5.3)

5. ESMF IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Resilient, Bold Belize is designated as PFP, or Project Finance for Permanence, which is a type of project that engages diverse stakeholders (Indigenous Peoples, local communities, government, investors, philanthropy, private sector, and NGOs) to secure the policy changes and long-term funding necessary to sustain conservation efforts in the long term¹⁰⁰.

The “Resilient, Bold Belize” project is funded by GEF, the Global Environmental Facility, through its Blue and Green Islands Program. The funding is leveraged with in-kind contributions from various ministries and departments within the Belizean government, funds from the Belize Blue Bond, and funds from WWF United States from Bezos Earth Fund and other philanthropic grants.

5.1. PROCEDURES FOR THE IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

The following is an exclusion list of activities that will not be financed by the Resilient, Bold Belize project. This includes activities that:

1. Lead to land management practices that cause degradation (biological or physical) of the soil and water. Examples include, but are not limited to: the felling of trees in core zones and critical watersheds; activities involving quarrying and mining; commercial logging; or dredge fishing.
2. Negatively affect areas of critical natural habitats or breeding grounds of known rare/endangered species.
3. Significantly increase GHG emissions.
4. Use genetically modified organisms or modern biotechnologies or their products.
5. Involve the procurement and/or use of pesticides and other chemicals specified as persistent organic pollutants under the Stockholm Convention or within categories IA, IB, or II by the World Health Organization.
6. Develop forest plantations.
7. This can result in the loss of biodiversity, alteration of ecosystem functioning, and introduction of new invasive alien species.
8. Involve the procurement or use of weapons and munitions or fund military activities.
9. Lead to private land acquisition and/or physical displacement and voluntary or involuntary relocation of people, including non-titled and migrant people.
10. Contribute to exacerbating any inequality or gender gap that may exist.
11. Involve illegal child labor, forced labor, sexual exploitation, or other forms of exploitation.
12. Adversely affect Indigenous peoples' rights, lands, natural resources, territories, livelihoods, knowledge, social fabric, traditions, governance systems, and culture or heritage (physical and non-physical or intangible) inside and/or outside the project area.
13. Negatively impact areas with cultural, historical, or transcendent values for individuals and communities.

In advance of the initiation of any project activity, the Safeguards and Gender Officer should fill in detailed information regarding the nature of the activity and its specific location in the Safeguards Eligibility and Impacts Screening form (Annex 1). Part 1 of this form comprises basic information regarding the activity; Part 2 contains basic “pre-screening” questions. If the response to any of the questions in these two parts is “Yes,” the activity will be deemed ineligible for funding under the Project. The executing partners will thus be required to change the nature or location of the proposed activity so that it complies with all safeguards requirements and all responses at the Safeguards Eligibility and Impacts Screening form are negative.

If the activity is deemed eligible according to Part 2, an environmental and social screening procedure will be carried out in accordance with Part 3 of the Safeguard Eligibility and Impacts Screening format,

¹⁰⁰ https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-03/GEF_IIED_Innovative_Finance_Nature_People_2023_03_1.pdf

which is based on the WWF's SIPP and applicable Belize laws and regulations. The executing partners shall respond to the specific questions in Part 3 of the form, provide general conclusions regarding the main environmental and social impacts of each proposed activity, outline the required permits or clearances, and specify whether any additional assessments or safeguard documents (e.g., ESMP) should be prepared.

Issues that are considered as part of this environmental and social screening include the following:

1. Need for government-land acquisition;
2. Environmental impacts (e.g., dust, noise, smoke, ground vibration, pollution, flooding, etc.) and loss or damage to natural habitat;
3. Social impacts: identification of vulnerable groups or Indigenous peoples, impacts on community resources, impacts on livelihoods and socio-economic opportunities, restrictions of access to natural resources, land usage conflicts, impacts on tangible or intangible cultural heritage, etc.; and
4. Health and safety issues (both for workers and for local communities).

The Safeguards and Gender Officer should screen each activity. If the screening process indicates that additional assessments or safeguards documents should be prepared, the executing partners should carry these out prior to the start of activities.

If the screening reveals adverse environmental or social impacts that may arise from the planned activity, an ESMP should be prepared. The Safeguards and Gender Officer should prepare the ESMP in collaboration with the Project Manager(s).

5.2. GUIDELINES FOR ESMP DEVELOPMENT

If the Environmental and Social screening process identifies any adverse environmental or social impacts as a result of specific project activities, the Safeguards and Gender Officer, in collaboration with the Project Manager(s), should develop a site—and activity-specific ESMP. The ESMP should be prepared before the initiation of the project activity and closely follow the guidance provided in this ESMF.

The ESMP should describe adverse environmental and social impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the specific project activity, outline concrete measures that should be undertaken to avoid or mitigate these impacts and specify the implementation arrangements for administering these measures (including institutional structures, roles, communication, consultations, and reporting procedures).

The structure of the ESMP should be as follows:

1. **A concise introduction:** explaining the context and objectives of the ESMP, the connection of the proposed activity to the project, and the findings of the screening process.
2. **Project description:** Objective and description of activities, nature, and scope of the project (location with map, construction and/or operation processes, equipment to be used, site facilities and workers and their camps; bill of quantities if civil works are involved; activity schedule).
3. **Baseline environmental and social data:** Key environmental information or measurements such as topography, land use and water uses, soil types, and water quality/pollution; and data on socioeconomic conditions of the local population. Photos showing the existing conditions of the project sites should also be included.
4. **Expected impacts and mitigation measures:** Describe the activity's contribution to specific environmental and social impacts and corresponding mitigation measures.
5. **ESMP implementation arrangements:** Responsibilities for design, bidding, and contracts where relevant, as well as monitoring, reporting, recording, and auditing.
6. **Capacity Need and Budget:** The capacity needed for implementing the ESMP and cost estimates for implementing it.

7. **Consultation and Disclosure Mechanisms:** Timeline and format of disclosure.
8. **Monitoring:** Environmental and social compliance monitoring with responsibilities.
9. **Grievance Mechanism:** Provide information about the grievance mechanism, how PAPs can access it, and the grievance redress process.
10. **A site-specific community and stakeholder engagement plan:** The ESMP should include a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure that local communities and other relevant stakeholders are fully involved in its implementation. Specific guidelines on community engagement are provided in Section 5.8 below.

5.3. STAKEHOLDERS' ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES IN ESMF IMPLEMENTATION

Institutional Arrangements for GEF Project Start – Pre-Close of PFP

From GEF project start up until PFP Close, activities will focus on contributing to meeting the closing conditions and strengthening the enabling environment for the PFP. During this period, this work (Component 1) will be carried out by the Lead Executing Agency, The Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit with strategic guidance from a temporary Project Steering Committee (figure below). This committee will ensure that GEF funding is utilized in accordance with approved workplans and budgets and WWF GEF Agency policies and procedures. The temporary GEF Project Steering Committee will be comprised of 3 representatives from the Government of Belize: The Office of the Prime Minister CEO, a representative from the Ministry of Sustainable Development (GEF operational focal point), a representative from the BBFP as an observer and will have 1 representative from WWF; and 1 representative from the WWF GEF Agency as an observer. Once the PFP closing agreement has been signed, the GEF temporary Project Steering Committee will be replaced by the PFP Steering Committee which will act as the steering committee for this project.

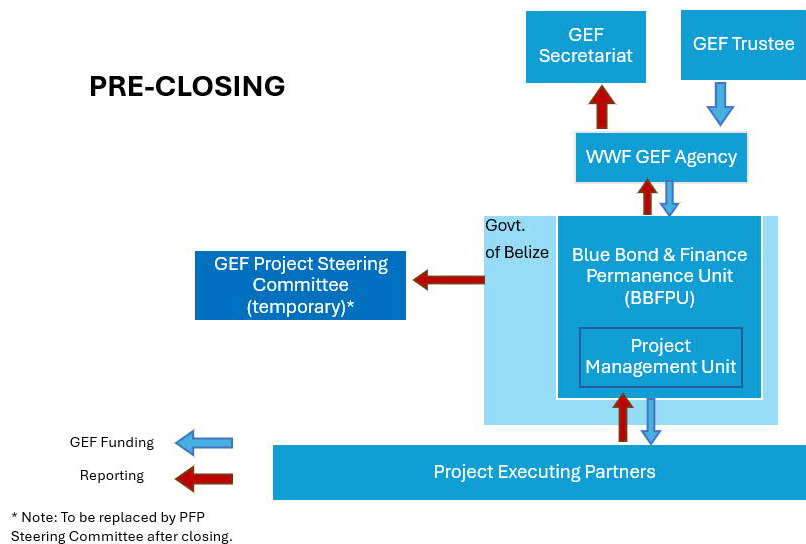


FIGURE 9: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR GEF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION BEFORE PFP SINGLE CLOSING.

Institutional Arrangements for GEF Project - After Close of the PFP (Component 2 Funding) Phase

Once all closing conditions are met, the PFP closing agreement will be signed which will mark the start of PFP implementation. A PFP Steering Committee will be established with responsibility for steering and providing strategic guidance to PFP implementation, ensuring compliance with the PFP conservation plan, financial model and operations manual. The steering committee will be a cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder decision-making body actively operational for integrating nature into the delivery of the PFP guided by the Conservation Plan. This will include the adequate utilization of GEF funding in accordance with workplans and budgets and WWF GEF Agency policies and procedures.

AFTER CLOSING

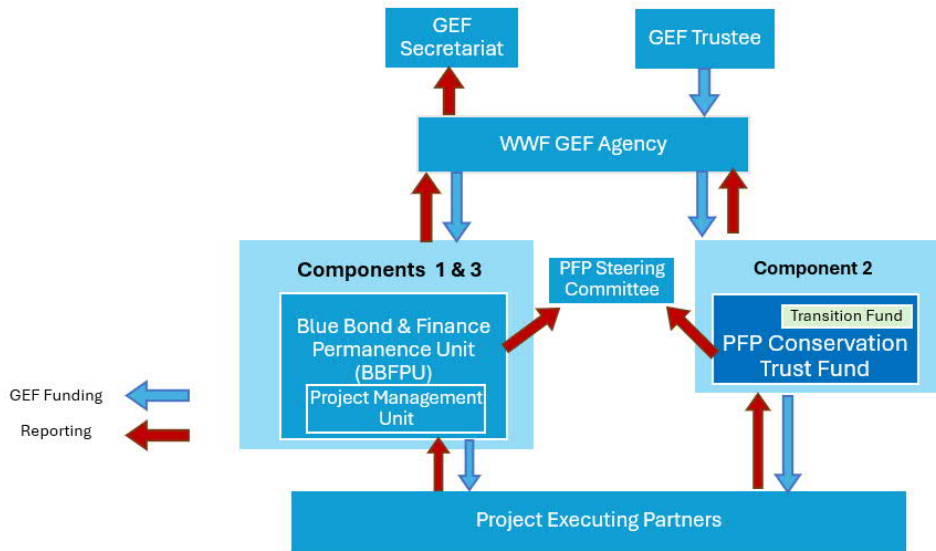


FIGURE 10: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR GEF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AFTER PFP CLOSING

Lead executing agency:

The Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit (BBFP Unit) will execute Components 1 and 3 of the proposed GEF project. Component 2 funding will go towards a transition fund managed by a conservation trust fund. The BBFP was established under the Office of the Prime Minister in February of 2022, is headed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the Office of the Prime Minister & Investment (OPM) and consists of a director and technical staff. The Project Management Unit will be hired by, and hosted within, the BBFP Unit. The PMU will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project, including project administration (including issuing sub-grants to project execution partners and contracting consultants), project management, and monitoring and reporting.

Project Management Unit (PMU):

The PMU will consist of the following staff positions:

Project Manager

The PM will be responsible for the overall management of the Project, including the mobilization of all project inputs, reporting to the WWF GEF agency, supervision over project staff, consultants and sub-contractors. The PM will report to the Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit Director for all of the Project’s substantive and administrative issues. From the strategic point of view of the Project, the PM will report on a periodic basis to the Project Steering Committee. The PM will perform a liaison role with the government, CSOs and project partners, and maintain close collaboration with other donor agencies providing co-financing.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Knowledge Management Officer

Under the guidance and supervision of the Project Manager, the MEK Officer will be responsible for project monitoring and evaluation activities including tracking and reporting project implementation against project work plans, which will be implemented by WWF and a diverse group of partner organizations, and reporting progress towards outcome indicator targets. The MEK Officer's time will be devoted to the GEF project Resilient Bold Belize.

Finance Assistant

The Finance Assistant will manage all financial and operational aspects of the Project including project budgeting, contracting, subrecipient monitoring and evaluations, financial tracking and reporting, and administrative functions in accordance with WWF policies, procedures, systems, and GEF requirements.

Safeguards and Gender Officer

The Safeguards and Gender Officer will lead implementation of the Gender Action plan and lead the implementation and monitoring of the Environmental and Social Management Framework/Process Framework (ESMF/PF) and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

Communications Specialist

Under the supervision of the Project Manager, the Communication Specialist will aim to increase overall visibility of the project and its achievements and ensure communications on and around the project actions and impacts are disseminated on national and international levels. The engagement of a dedicated communication staff member will provide consistent, high-quality and effective products that can strengthen the project implementation in Belize, and share best practices and key learnings with a wider audience.

For further details on positions within the PMU please see Annex 5: Terms of Reference for Key Project Staff.

WWF GEF Agency:

WWF-US, through its WWF GEF Agency will: (i) provide consistent and regular project oversight to ensure the achievement of project objectives; (ii) liaise between the project and the GEF Secretariat; (iii) report on project progress to GEF Secretariat (annual Project Implementation Report); (iv) ensure that both GEF and WWF policy requirements and standards are applied and met (i.e. reporting obligations, technical, fiduciary, M&E); (v) approve annual workplan and budget; (vi) approve budget revisions, certify fund availability and transfer funds; (vii) organize the terminal evaluation and review project audits; (viii) certify project operational and financial completion, and (ix) provide no-objection to key terms of reference for project management unit.

5.3.1 SAFEGUARDS IMPLEMENTATION

Specific arrangements and responsibilities related to the implementation of environmental and social safeguards requirements, as stated in this ESMF/PF are as follows:

WWF GEF Agency:

- Overall oversight and monitoring of compliance with safeguards commitments.
- Support and specific recommendations on specific safeguard issues if needed.
- Annual support missions to include an analysis of progress on the SEP, GAP and Results Framework indicators that are gender-disaggregated.
- Ensure that the PMU has a Grievance Redress Mechanism that is accessible to all project partners

BBFP PMU and Safeguards and Gender Officer:

- Overall responsibility for ensuring environmental safeguards are implemented.
- Implementing the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)
- Review annual work plans and budgets and provide recommendations to ensure that project activities are designed to include avoidance of potential social and environmental risks, as recommended in the ESMF; and that where such risks are not avoidable, mitigation plans or measures are in place to minimize or mitigate these risks;
- Communicate with Local Governments, sub-contractors and with the local communities to design, implement, document and report on environmental compliance, as indicated in ESMF;
- Monitor implementation of ESMF by any contractors to ensure that appropriate management process and procedures are in place, that Environmental and Social Safeguards related measures are adequately addressed and to ensure that in the event of a noncompliance agreed remedial actions are applied and documented;
- Review the government's requirements and process for environmental clearance, assist the executing and implementing agencies in securing environmental clearance certificates for each project component as required by the government, and prepare necessary information to comply with WWF and government guidelines as per the project processing schedule; and
- Develop simple ESR monitoring check list for project staffs (including data collection sheet and data management);

Safeguards and Gender Officer:

- Lead implementation of steps and procedures as outlined in the ESMF, including screening of annual budget/work plans, conduct consultations with local stakeholders, develop additional safeguards documents where relevant, and ensure the review, approval, and disclosure of safeguard documents;
- Monitor implementation of the ESMF/PF/IPPF including inputs and recommendations from related consultants;
- Provide overall Environmental and Social Management oversight during the implementation of the project activities and advise the PMU in addressing the environmental and social issues;
- Coordinate and track implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), under the supervision of the Project Manager;
- Ensure that all documents necessary for full compliance with ESMF/PF/IPPF, are prepared, implemented, regularly updated and are available to relevant stakeholders;
- Conduct ESS Screening on newly planned/revised project activities, as outlined in ESMF;
- Support establishment and lead implementation of a grievance redress mechanism (GRM) to handle complaints in an effective manner, including being a point of contact to receive grievances;
- Ensure the project team's understanding of environmental and social safeguards and how to support implementation of the ESMF/PF/IPPF;
- Provide training on safeguards requirements to PMU staff and relevant partners as required;
- Ensure full disclosure of existing and newly developed Plans with concerned stakeholders;
- Carry out regular monitoring and capacity building visits to the project sites;
- Provide inputs to project reports on the status of safeguards compliance and GRM implementation with the ESMF/PF/IPPF during implementation and any issues arising;

- Participate in monthly calls with the ESS Specialist in the WWF US GEF Agency; and
- Undertake any other tasks assigned by the project manager to support the project with respect to environmental and social safeguard issues.

Please note that, as is the case with stakeholder engagement (see SEP annexed to this project), responsibility for overall compliance with this ESMF as it relates to Component 2 will fall under the scope of the entity who will execute that component. Though as of this writing said executing entity is still undetermined, provisions will be made to ensure that there is a designated staff member whose responsibilities will include stakeholder engagement, safeguards and/or gender. In the event that BBFP's executing role is extended to incorporate Component 2, the Safeguards and Gender Officer identified here would be responsible for ensuring full implementation of the ESMF, in collaboration with any other supplemental staff hired for PFP implementation.

Project Steering Committee (PSC):

- Monitor implementation of this ESMF and compliance with national and international regulations, and WWF ESSF standards; including keeping track that all ESS requirements are effectively and timely met by the PMU, including oversight for safeguards and the implementation of this ESMF.
- Ensure coordination with relevant Government authorities.
- Consult and liaise with Safeguards and Gender Specialist to encourage project alignment with the ESMF and GAP

5.4. MONITORING AND REPORTING

Various entities will thoroughly monitor the compliance of Project activities with the ESMF at different stages of preparation and implementation.

5.4.1. MONITORING AT THE PROJECT LEVEL

The PMU is responsible for the overall implementation of the ESMF/PF/IPPF and for monitoring compliance with the Project's environmental safeguard activities. The Safeguards and Gender Officer procured by the PMU shall oversee the implementation of all field activities and ensure their compliance with the ESMF. The Officer shall also provide the executing entity and partners with technical support in carrying out environmental and social screenings and preparing ESMPs and any other necessary documentation. The Safeguards and Gender Officer shall also monitor the Project's grievance redress mechanism (GRM) and assess its effectiveness (i.e., to what extent grievances are resolved expeditiously and satisfactorily). Finally, the Safeguards and Gender Officer will also be responsible for reporting on overall safeguards compliance to the Project Coordinator, the Project Steering Committee, and the WWF GEF Agency.

5.4.2. MONITORING AT THE FIELD ACTIVITY LEVEL

The PMU and, specifically, the Safeguards and Gender Officer shall closely monitor all field activities and ensure that they fully comply with the ESMF/PF/IPPF. The PMU is also fully responsible for the compliance of all external contractors and service providers employed as part of the project with the safeguards requirements outlined in the ESMF/PF/IPPF. Disbursement of project funds will be contingent upon their full compliance with the safeguards requirements.

5.4.3. MONITORING AT THE AGENCY LEVEL

WWF, as the project's implementing agency, and the Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit, the executing agency, are responsible for overseeing compliance with the ESMF. To facilitate compliance monitoring, the Blue Bond and Finance Permanence Unit will include information on the status of ESMF implementation in the six-monthly Project Progress Reports (PPRs) and the annual Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports.

5.5. GRIEVANCE MECHANISM

This section describes the Grievance Mechanism (GRM) for “Resilient, Bold Belize,” outlining the procedures to address any comments, suggestions, questions, and complaints that stakeholders may have about the Project and its activities.

Under the RBB GEF-8 project, three GRMs will be available to those impacted by it. To be practical, time-efficient, and cost-effective, complaints should be resolved at the lowest possible level unless the nature of the complaint precludes it.

5.5.1. GRM PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Because the project will have a direct and tangible effect on local communities and individuals residing within or in the vicinity of project sites, there is a need for an efficient and effective Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) that collects and responds to stakeholders’ inquiries, suggestions, concerns, and complaints. This section will describe the details of the applicable GRM, including details on the process to submit a grievance, how long the PMU will have to respond, and who on the PMU will be responsible for its implementation and reporting.

The GRM will operate based on the following principles:

- **Fairness:** Grievances are assessed impartially and handled transparently.
- **Objectiveness and independence:** The GRM operates independently of all interested parties to guarantee fair, objective, and impartial treatment of each case.
- **Simplicity and accessibility:** Procedures to file grievances and seek action are simple enough that project beneficiaries can easily understand them and in a language that is accessible to everyone within a given community, especially those who are most vulnerable.
- **Responsiveness and efficiency:** The GRM is designed to respond to all complainants' needs. Accordingly, officials handling grievances must be trained to take effective action and respond quickly to grievances and suggestions.
- **Speed and proportionality:** All grievances, simple or complex, are addressed and resolved quickly. The action taken on the grievance or suggestion is swift, decisive, and constructive.
- **Participation and inclusiveness:** A wide range of affected people—communities and vulnerable groups—are encouraged to bring grievances and comments to the attention of the project implementers. Special attention is given to ensuring poor people and marginalized groups, including those with special needs, can access the GRM.
- **Accountability and closing the feedback loop:** All grievances are recorded and monitored, and no grievance remains unresolved. Complainants are always notified and given explanations regarding the results of their complaints. An appeal option shall always be available.

Complaints may include, but not be limited to, the following issues:

- Allegations of fraud, malpractices, or corruption by staff or other stakeholders as part of any project or activity financed or implemented by the project, including allegations of gender-based violence or sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment;
- Environmental and/or social damages/harms caused by projects financed or implemented (including those in progress) by the project;
- Complaints and grievances by permanent or temporary workers engaged in project activities.

- Complaints could relate to pollution prevention and resource efficiency; negative impacts on public health, environment, or culture; destruction of natural habitats; disproportionate impact on marginalized and vulnerable groups; discrimination or physical or sexual harassment; violation of applicable laws and regulations; destruction of physical and cultural heritage; or any other issues which adversely impact communities or individuals in project areas.

The grievance redress mechanism will be implemented in a culturally sensitive way and facilitate access to vulnerable populations. The GRM seeks to complement, rather than substitute, the judicial system and other dispute resolution mechanisms. All complainants may therefore file their grievance in local courts or approach mediators or arbitrators, in accordance with the legislation of Belize.

1) Project-level Grievance Redress mechanism

The project-level GRM shall be designed considering the following guidelines

1. **Disseminating information about the GRM:** All materials describing the GRM, once approved by the PMU and cleared by WWF-US, will be made publicly available by posting them on the WWF and BBFP websites and disseminated as part of the Project stakeholder engagement activities. The GRM will be communicated with all communities and stakeholders by the Safeguards and Gender Officer, who will also develop GRM materials (brochures, flyers, etc.). Materials will include basic information on GRM and contact information on all grievance uptake locations as follows: 1. Name of locations/channels to receive grievance. 2. Address of locations. 3. Responsible person. 4. Telephone(s). 5. Email. 6. Days and hours for receiving verbal grievances. The materials will also include a summary of the process for registering, reviewing, and responding to grievances, including the estimated response time. The information about the GRM will also be presented as a chart to make it easy for people to view. The materials will be produced in English and Spanish.
2. **Submitting complaints:** Project-affected people, workers, or interested stakeholders can submit grievances, complaints, questions, or suggestions to this mechanism through various communication channels, including phone, regular mail, email, text messaging/SMS, or in person. The appropriate addresses and phone numbers will be identified within the first six months of project implementation.
3. **Processing complaints:** All grievances submitted shall be registered and considered. A tracking registration number should be provided to all complainants. To facilitate the investigation, complaints will be categorized into four types: (a) comments, suggestions, or queries; (b) complaints relating to non-performance of project obligations and safeguards-related complaints; (c) complaints referring to violations of law and/or corruption while implementing project activities; (d) complaints against authorities, officials or community members involved in the project management; and (e) any complaints/issues not falling in the above categories.
4. **Acknowledging the receipt of complaints:** Once a grievance is submitted, the designated official or the Safeguards and Gender Officer shall acknowledge its receipt, brief the complainant on the grievance resolution process, provide the contact details of the person in charge of handling the grievance (which should be said Safeguards and Gender Officer), and provide a registration number that would enable the complainant to track the status of the complaint.
5. **Investigating complaints:** The Safeguards and Gender Officer will gather all relevant information, conduct field visits as necessary, and communicate with all relevant stakeholders as part of the complaint investigation process. The PMU should ensure that the investigators are neutral and do not have any stake in the outcome of the investigation.
6. **Responding to complainants:** A written response to all grievances will be provided to the complainant within 15 working days. If further investigation is required, the complainant will be informed accordingly, and a final response will be provided after an additional period of 15

working days. Grievances that cannot be resolved by grievance receiving authorities/offices at their level should be referred to a higher level for verification and further investigation.

7. **Appeal:** If the parties are unsatisfied with the response provided through the project-level GRM, they can submit an appeal to BBFP U within ten days of the decision. If they are also unsatisfied with the appeal committee's decision, they can submit their grievances directly to WWF US, the GEF Agency, or the Court of Law for further adjudication.
8. **Monitoring and evaluation:** The Safeguards and Gender Officer will compile a quarterly report with full information on the grievances they received. The report shall describe the grievances and their status in the investigation. Summarized GRM reports shall constitute part of the regular project progress reporting and shall be submitted to the PMU and WWF GEF Agency. The GRM seeks to complement, rather than substitute, the judicial system and other dispute-resolution mechanisms. All complainants may, therefore, file their grievances in local courts or approach mediators or arbitrators through Belize legislation.

2) WWF GEF Agency GRM

In addition to the project-specific GRM, a complainant can submit a grievance to the WWF GEF Agency. A grievance can also be filed with the Project Complaints Officer (PCO), a WWF staff member fully independent from the Project Team, who is responsible for the WWF Accountability and Grievance Mechanism and who can be reached at:

Email: SafeguardsComplaint@wwfus.org

Mailing address:

Project Complaints Officer
Safeguards Complaints,
World Wildlife Fund
1250 24th Street NW
Washington, DC 20037

Stakeholder may also submit a complaint online through an independent third-party platform at <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/59041/index.html>

3) GEF CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMMISSIONER

In addition to the country-level, and WWF GEF Agency GRMs, a person concerned about a GEF-financed project or operation may submit a complaint to the GEF Resolution Commissioner, a readily accessible resource who plays a facilitation role and reports directly to the GEF CEO. The Commissioner, always ready to assist, can be reached at:

E-mail: plallas@thegef.org

Mailing Address:

Mr. Peter Lallas
Global Environment Facility
The World Bank Group,
MSN N8-800 1818 H Street,
NW Washington, DC 20433-002

Complaints submitted to the Commissioner should be in writing and any language. The complaints should provide at least a general description of the nature of the concerns, the type of harm that may result, and (where relevant) the GEF-funded projects or program at issue.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GRM

Special training will be provided to the ESS Specialists within the first 6 months of project implementation or before the GRM is finalized, whichever is sooner. This will help to ensure they have the capacity to address SEAH-related grievances in a culturally sensitive and victim-centered

5.6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.6.1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DURING PROJECT PREPARATION

Since 2007, WWF has been working with various communities and stakeholders on issues relating to ecosystem protection and restoration (particularly for mangrove and coral ecosystems), livelihood support (in the areas of fisheries and tourism) and protected area management. During the GEF project development phase, the Conservation Planning Working Group (CPWG), which includes representatives from over twenty organizations, met regularly (bi-monthly) to continue development of the PFP conservation plan as well as engage PFP stakeholders. In 2023 and 2024 as part of the development for this GEF project, WWF engaged with fishers and Fisher Associations as well as various NGOs and Government agencies to identify opportunities for collaboration, ensure alignment of initiatives and reduce duplicative efforts. Please refer to the SEP of a more detailed description of WWF's stakeholder engagement during project preparation.

5.6.2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DURING ESMF/PF PREPARATION

During the ESMF/PF preparation, seven of the eight target communities were engaged in focus group and household surveys. The stakeholder engagement plan details the objectives and outcomes of these consultations.

5.6.3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan associated with this ESMF describes the engagement planned with community members and other key stakeholders.

5.7. GUIDANCE FOR SEAH RISK MITIGATION

A detailed plan to address SEAH risks will be developed within the first six months of project start-up, using both information already included in the GAP and updated procedures for SEAH-specific grievances outlined in Section 14 below. This will include:

- Include any identified SEAH-related risk mitigation measures in the project's annual work plan, budget, and reporting requirements.
 - This will require the entire PMU to participate in reviewing any identified risks and mitigation measures to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities and the responsibilities of EEs, project partners, contractors, and any other entities who will receive GCF funding for this project.
- Development of a communication mechanism between the local project partners and the PMU's Gender and SEAH Specialist to promptly address any SEAH situation that may arise at the territorial level. This early warning system will be included in the project's security protocol, and will require:
 - Reporting any such grievances or challenges within a defined period of no less than five business days. This shall hold true even if grievances are informally submitted (i.e., not through an official GRM)
 - The confidentiality of anyone who has received a complaint or become aware of a SEAH-related situation, including protecting the personally identifiable information of all parties—both the potential victim(s) and potential perpetrator (s).
- Strengthen the capacities of the project's implementing partners in preventing GBV and SEAH, as well as WWF policies and codes of conduct to address SEAH risk. These trainings will be done in partnership with the project's Safeguards and Gender Officer and should include:

- Training within the first three months of project implementation that has been prepared with oversight and final approval from the WWF GCF AE Safeguards and Gender Leads
 - This will be mandatory for all implementing partner staff involved in the GCF-financed activities.
- Strengthen the landscape technical committees so that they can establish rapid response mechanisms to address issues associated with threats to environmental leaders and gender-based violence. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - In cases of such threats, provide them with additional resources to ensure a timely response focused on the well-being of those threatened.
 - Provide the same GBV and SEAH training to these committees that the implementing partners will receive.
- Strengthen the capacities of the entities that participate in the multi-stakeholder bodies that will be strengthened by the project so that specific prevention and rapid response measures are included to address GBV and SEAH-specific threats, including to social and environmental leaders they may work with.
 - Provide the same GBV and SEAH training to these multi-stakeholder bodies that the implementing partners will receive.

5.8. COMMUNICATIONS AND DISCLOSURE

All affected communities and relevant stakeholders shall be informed about the ESMF requirements and commitments. The ESMF or, if not possible, its executive summary will be translated into Spanish and made available along with the SEP on the websites of BBFP U and the WWF GEF Agency. Hard copies of the ESMF will be placed in appropriate public locations and at BBFP. The Project Managers and the Safeguards and Gender Officer at BBFP U will be responsible for raising community awareness regarding the requirements of the ESMF. They will also ensure that all external contractors and service providers are fully familiar with and comply with the ESMF and other safeguards documents.

During the project's implementation, activity-specific ESMPs shall be prepared in consultation with affected communities and disclosed to all stakeholders before the project concept finalization. All draft ESMPs shall be reviewed and approved by BBFP in consultation with the temporary PSC or the CTF in consultation with the PFP PSC and WWF GEF Agency in advance of their public disclosure. The PMU must disclose any action plans prepared during project implementation to all affected parties, including gender mainstreaming.

The disclosure requirements are summarized in Table 13 below.

TABLE 13: DISCLOSURE FRAMEWORK FOR ESMF RELATED DOCUMENTS

Documents to be disclosed	Frequency	Where
Environment and Social Management Framework	Once in the entire project cycle. Must remain on the website and other public locations throughout the project period.	On the website of BBFP and WWF. Copies should be available at BBFP U's PMU office and in local municipal offices in project areas
Environmental and Social Management Plan/s	Once in the entire project cycle, for every activity that requires ESMP. Must remain on the website and other disclosure locations throughout the project period.	On the website of BBFP and WWF. Copies should be available at PMU Office and in local municipal offices in project areas

Safeguards Monthly Progress Report	Monthly	Copies should be available at the PMU office and in local municipal offices in project areas
Minutes of Formal Public Consultation Meetings	Within two weeks of the meeting	On the website of BBFP, Copies should be available at the PMU office and in local municipal offices in project areas
Grievance redress process	Quarterly, throughout the project cycle	On the website of BBFP. Copies and/or culturally appropriate materials should be available at the PMU office

5.9. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

WWF US will provide BBFP with capacity-building activities to provide the latter with ESMF/PF/IPPF implementation requirements and good practices. These will focus, in particular, on issues related to the preparation of ESMPs, LRPs, and IPPs, the organization of consultations, the operationalization of the GRM, and the monitoring of ESMF implementation. The budget for capacity-building shall be included in Component 1

5.10. EMSF BUDGET

The project budget will fully cover the ESMF implementation cost. The Safeguards and Gender Officer will ensure that a sufficient budget is available for all activity-specific mitigation measures that may be required in compliance with the ESMF.

A full-time Safeguards and Gender Officer will be employed, and 100% of their time will be dedicated to ensuring the ESMF and GAP implementation. The project manager in BBFP will oversee the implementation of the ESMF.

Budget for capacity building on ESMF/PF/IPPF implementation, travel costs, and workshops and meetings for safeguards monitoring (including travel, workshops, and meetings) will be included in the overall monitoring and evaluation budget and budget allocated within Components 1 and 3 of the project.

ANNEX 1. SAFEGUARD ELIGIBILITY AND IMPACTS SCREENING

This screening tool needs to be completed for each activity or category of activities included in the annual work plan and budget. In addition, the screening tool needs to be completed whenever management measures or management plans are developed and/or when project intervention areas are determined.

The tool will be filled out by the Safeguards Consultant Specialist and reviewed by the M&E Officer. The decision on whether a Site-Specific Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) or Livelihood Restoration Plan (LRP) is required shall be made by the Safeguards Specialist in consultation with the WWF GEF Agency Safeguards Specialists and PFP Conservation Planning Working Group based on the information provided in this screening form and interviews with the PMU staff, local communities, and any other relevant stakeholders.

Part 1: Basic Information

1	Activity Name	
	Description of Activity ("sub-activities")	
2	Type of Activity:	New activity <input type="checkbox"/> Continuation of activity <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Activity location:	
4	Total size of site area	
5	Activity implementation dates	
6	Total cost	

(Move to Part 2 after filling in all information in the table above)

Part 2: Eligibility Screening

No.	Screening Questions: <i>Would the project activity</i>	Yes	No	Comments/ Explanation
1	Lead to land management practices that cause soil and water degradation (biological or physical)? Examples include, but are not limited to, the falling of trees in core zones and critical watersheds; activities involving quarrying and mining; commercial logging; or dredge fishing.			
2	Negatively affect areas of critical natural habitats or breeding grounds of known rare/endangered species?			
3	Significantly increase GHG emissions?			
4	Use genetically modified organisms or modern biotechnologies or their products?			
5	Involve the procurement and/or use of pesticides and other chemicals specified as persistent organic pollutants under the Stockholm Convention or within categories IA, IB, or II by the World Health Organization?			
6	Develop forest plantations?			
7	Result in the loss of biodiversity, alteration of the functioning of ecosystems, and introduction of new invasive alien species?			

No.	Screening Questions: <i>Would the project activity</i>	Yes	No	Comments/ Explanation
8	Involve the procurement or use of weapons and munitions or fund military activities?			
9	Lead to private land acquisition and/or the physical displacement and voluntary or involuntary relocation of people, including non-titled and migrant people?			
10	Contribute to exacerbating any inequality or gender gap that may exist?			
11	Involve illegal child labor, forced labor, sexual exploitation, or other forms of exploitation?			
12	Adversely affect Indigenous peoples' rights, lands, natural resources, territories, livelihoods, knowledge, social fabric, traditions, governance systems, and culture or heritage (physical and non-physical or intangible) inside and/or outside the project area?			
13	Negatively impact areas with cultural, historical, or transcendent values for individuals and communities?			
Please provide any further information that can be relevant:				

If all answers are "No", project activity is eligible and move to Part 3.

If at least one question answered as "yes", the project activity is ineligible and the proponent can reselect the site of project activity and do screening again.

Part 3: Impacts Screening

Answer the questions below and follow the guidance to provide basic information regarding the suggested activity and describe its potential impacts

No.	Would the project activity:	Yes/No	Explain and provide supporting documents, if needed
<i>Environmental Impacts</i>			
1	Result in permanent or temporary change in land use, land cover, or topography.		
2	Involve clearance of existing land vegetation		
3	Involve reforestation or modification of natural habitat? If yes, will it involve the use or introduction of non-native species into the project area?		
4	Use pesticides? If so, are they on the list of those excluded by the Stockholm Convention?		
5	Result in environmental pollution? This may include air pollution, liquid waste, solid waste, or waste from earth moving or excavation, etc..		

6	Trigger land disturbance, erosion, subsidence, or instability?		
7	Result in significant use of water, such as for construction?		
8	Produce dust during construction and operation?		
9	Generate significant ambient noise?		
10	Increase the sediment load in the local water bodies?		
11	Change on-site or downstream water flows?		
12	Negatively affect water dynamics, river connectivity or the hydrological cycle in ways other than direct changes of water flows (e.g. water filtration and aquifer recharge, sedimentation)?		
13	Result in negative impacts to any endemic, rare, or threatened species, such as species identified as significant through global, regional, national, or local laws?		
14	Could the activity potentially increase the vulnerability of local communities to climate variability and changes (e.g., through risks and events such as landslides, erosion, flooding, or droughts)?		
Socio-Economic Impacts			
15	Negatively impact existing tenure rights (formal and informal) of individuals, communities or others to land, fishery and forest resources?		
16	Operate where there are indigenous peoples and their lands/territories/waters are located? OR Operate where any indigenous communities have close cultural/spiritual or land use relationships? If yes to either, answer questions below:		
	a. Has an FPIC process been started? b. Will any restrictions on their use of land/territories/water/natural resources be restricted?		
17	Restrict access to natural resources (e.g., watersheds or rivers, grazing areas, forestry, non-timber forest products) or restrict the way natural resources are used, in ways that will impact livelihoods?		

18	Restrict access to sacred sites of local communities (including ethnic minorities) and/or places relevant for women's or men's religious or cultural practices?		
19	Operate where there are any cultural heritage or religious or sacred sites that may be impacted by the project?		
20	Undermine the customary rights of local communities to participate in consultations in a free, prior, and informed manner to address interventions directly affecting their lands, territories or resources?		
<i>Labor and Working Conditions</i>			
21	Involve hiring of workers or contracting with labor agencies to provide labor? If yes, answer questions a-b below.		
	a. Are labor management issues prevalent in the landscape? b. Are illegal child labor issues prevalent in the landscape?		
22	Involve working in hazardous environments such as steep, rocky slopes, areas infested with poisonous animals and/or disease vectors?		
<i>Minorities and Vulnerable Groups</i>			
23	Negatively affect vulnerable groups (such as ethnic minorities, women, poorer households, migrants, and assistant herders) in terms of impact on their economic or social life conditions or contribute to their discrimination or marginalization?		
24	Stir or exacerbate conflicts among communities, groups or individuals? Also considering dynamics of recent or expected migration including displaced people, as well as those who are most vulnerable to threats of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment.		
<i>Occupational and Community Health and Safety</i>			
25	Involve any risks related to the usage of construction materials, working high above the ground or in canals where slopes are unstable?		

26	Expose local community to risks related to construction works or use of machinery (e.g., loading and unloading of construction materials, excavated areas, fuel storage and usage, electrical use, machinery operations)		
27	Generate societal conflicts, increased risk of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment or pressure on local resources between temporary workers and local communities?		
28	Work in areas where forest fires are a threat? If yes, how recently was the last one?		
29	Work in areas where there the presence or history of vector-borne diseases (some examples include malaria, yellow fever, encephalitis)		
GBV/SEAH Risks			
30	Is there a risk that the project could pose a greater burden on women by restricting the use, development, and protection of natural resources by women compared with that of men?		
31	Is there a risk that persons employed by or engaged directly in the project might engage in gender-based violence (including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment)? The response must consider risks not only at the beneficiary level, but also to workers within all the organizations receiving GEF funding.		
32	Does the project increase the risk of GBV and/or SEAH for women and girls, for example by changing resource use practices or singling out women and girls for training without complimentary training/education for men? The response must consider all workers within the organizations receiving GEF funding.		
33	Does any mandated training for any individuals associated with the project (including project staff, government officials, park rangers and guards, other park staff, consultants, partner organizations and contractors) cover GBV/SEAH (along with human rights, etc.)?		
Conflict Sensitivity and Risks			
34	Are there any major underlying tensions or open conflicts in the landscape/seascape or in the country where the landscape/seascape is situated? If yes, answer a-d below		

	<p>a. Is there a risk that the activities interact with or exacerbate existing tensions and conflicts in the landscape/seascape?</p> <p>b. Do stakeholders (e.g. implementing partners, rights holders, other stakeholder groups) take a specific position in relation to the conflicts or tensions in the landscape/seascape or are they perceived as taking a position?</p> <p>c. How do stakeholders perceive the WWF Country Office, the implementing entity and its partners in relation to existing conflicts or tensions?</p> <p>d. Could the conflicts or tensions in the landscape/seascape have a negative impact on the activities?</p>		
35	Could the activities create conflicts among communities, groups or individuals?		
36	Are some groups (stakeholders, rights holders) benefiting more than others from the activities? And if so, how is that affecting power dynamics and mutual dependencies?		
37	Do the activities provide opportunities to bring different groups with diverging interests positively together?		

List of documents to be attached with the Screening form (if applicable):

1	Layout plan of the activity and photos
2	Summary of the activity proposal
3	No objection certificate from various departments and others relevant stakeholders

SCREENING TOOL COMPLETED BY:

SIGNED:

NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

DATE: _____

SCREENING CONCLUSIONS

- i. The main environmental issues are:

- ii. Permits/ clearance needed are:

- iii. The main social issues are:

- iv. Further assessment/ investigation is needed, and the next step.
 - a. Need for any special study:

 - b. Preparation of ESMP (main issue to be addressed by the ESMP):.....

 - c. Preparation of LRP (main issue to be addressed by the LRP):.....

 - d. Any other requirements/ need/ issue etc:

Screening Tool Reviewed by:

Signed:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

EXCLUSION LIST

The project will not support the following practices and activities:

1. Land or water management practices that cause soil and water degradation (biological or physical).
2. Activities that negatively affect areas of critical natural habitats or breeding grounds of known rare/ endangered species.
3. Actions that represent a significant increase in GHG emissions.
4. Use of genetically modified organisms, or the supply or use of modern biotechnologies or their products in crops.
5. Introduction of crops and varieties that previously did not grow in the implementation areas, including seed import/transfer.
6. Actions resulting in loss of biodiversity, alteration of the functioning of ecosystems, and introduction of new invasive alien species.
7. Procurement of pesticides or activities that increase the use of pesticides.
8. Activities that would lead to physical displacement and voluntary or involuntary relocation.
9. Activities that do not consider gender aspects or contribute to exacerbating any inequality or gender gap that may exist.
10. Child Labour.
11. Activities that would adversely affect IPs' rights, lands, natural resources, territories, livelihoods, knowledge, social fabric, traditions, governance systems, and culture or heritage (physical and non-physical or intangible) inside and/or outside the project area.
12. Activities that negatively impact areas with cultural, historical, or transcendent values for individuals and communities.

ANNEX 2. COMMUNITY PROFILES

Town/Settlement Name	Barranco
Access to town	It's a 1.5-hour drive from Punta Gorda via dirt roads in a bad condition. One can also take a 20-minute boat ride from Punta Gorda to access the village via the sea.
Education Access	The small community only has one primary-level school. Students must attend high school in other communities, several hours away by bus.
Infrastructure	This small Garifuna Village has a very small population and few houses compared to other communities. It has about three streets that run horizontally and two that run vertically. It takes about 5 minutes to walk from one end to the other end. Has a mix between concrete houses and wooden houses. The village has one small shop where you can buy snacks and drinks, one bar opening on weekends, and two guest houses. The concrete houses are well-kept and beautiful, the wooden houses are a bit old, and most of the yards in the entire village are overgrown with grass. There is a police station.
Culture and Attractions	Garifuna village. There is a Garifuna Museum, with very few other attractions for tourism.
Economy & Commerce	Two guest houses were present in the community. There are no large-scale shops in the village. A single restaurant is present, but you must call ahead to see if it's open. A few locals sell food out of their houses. The village lacks gas stations, butane shops, hardware stores, and home goods stores. However, several places sell illegal contraband originating from Guatemala, including beer, deli products, grains, and canned goods, often half the price or cheaper than their Belizean counterparts. No mechanic shops were present in the village.
Ethnicities	Barranco is a mainly a Garifuna Village
Languages	They speak both Garifuna and Creole
Associations	
Climate	This city has a tropical climate. Even in the driest month, there is a lot of rain in Punta Gorda. Köppen and Geiger classify this location as Af. According to the available data, the mean yearly temperature recorded in Punta Gorda is 25.4 °C 77.7 °F. The rainfall is around 2730 mm 107.5 inches per year.
Ecosystem	Lowland broadleaf forest.

Town/Settlement Name	Monkey River
Access to town	The village was one of the most remote visited during field operations. The town is over an hour and a half drive from Dangriga, and once there, one must traverse the river via boat as there are no roads to the village.
Education Access	A single school with primary and secondary classes was present. Still, residents mentioned that students must leave the village for tertiary and high school education as no options are available. We visited while the school was in session, and part of the school's yard was overgrown (during the community focus group, it was mentioned that they did not have enough funds to do basic maintenance around the community).
Infrastructure	<p>Severely lacking. Several houses were in a bad state of disrepair. They were either not connected to the electrical grid or had electricity because they were illegally connected to the neighbor's electrical supply. All roads in the village were overgrown. The children's park was overgrown, and several houses were abandoned. Erosion was an ever-present issue as several houses along the beach were either almost at the high-water mark or already affected. The community center was in disrepair as termite buildup was in the roof and some windows. Several houses in the area were abandoned, shelled, and looted for material or derelict and unfit for human accommodations. Fuel, butane, oil, and kerosene must be purchased outside the village and transported into it.</p> <p>Of the two national cell phone providers (Digicell and Smart), only Smart is available in the village. Digicell phones lose coverage when entering the village's road. Residents commented that they only got Smart coverage because of a private donor. Most people in the village communicate via WhatsApp, and an internet connection can be accessed at one of the town's restaurants.</p>
Culture and Attractions	Monkey River tours are popular among tourists and operators across the south (from Hopkins to Punta Gorda). Cruise ships send two or more tour boats a day to the area. Several arts and crafts vendors have set up tents and stores at the village's entrance and near a dock in the back. Eco-tours and fishing tours are available in the village, but do not see as much traffic as in other parts of the area.
Economy & Commerce	There is only one shop in the village, which only stocks the basics and low-shelf alcohol. Three restaurants were in the village, but all were akin to small dives or diners and had either a single item on the menu (whatever the chef prepared that day) or a minimal local food menu. No large hotels or rental properties were still operating, although they had been in the past. The only option for overnight visitors is to rent rooms and private accommodations. No mechanic shops were present in the village.
Ethnicities	Monkey River is mainly a Creole Village
Languages	They speak Creole
Associations	Fishing Association
Climate	Elevation of 8.01 meters (26.28 feet) above sea level, with Tropical

	rainforest climate. The yearly temperature is 26.86°C (80.35°F) Monkey River Town typically receives about 120.06 millimeters (4.73 inches) of precipitation and has 228.78 rainy days (62.68% of the time) annually.
Ecosystem	It includes coastal mangroves, broadleaf primary forests, the Monkey River ecosystem.
Other Important Details	It's an important tourist area (river tours), but the community thinks it doesn't receive economic benefits. The town is also affected by erosion.

Town/Settlement Name	Seine Bight
Access to town	<p>Easy; Paved roads lead in and out of the village. Access by private boat is an option. Several bus lines run in the village during the day and allow passengers without a private vehicle to access the village.</p> <p>Flights to the nearby village of Placencia allow people to cut the lengthy road travel time by flying into Placencia and then taking a short trip up the peninsula.</p>
Education Access	The village can only offer up to primary-level education
Infrastructure	The main road is paved, back roads are in disrepair, and several houses are derelict or abandoned. The canals in the back of the community are filled with physical and chemical pollution.
Culture and Attractions	This is one of the least tourist-oriented places on the peninsula. Some cultural and culinary tours are available.
Economy & Commerce	Mostly centers around domestic production and commercial fishing.
Ethnicities	Mainly Garifuna and Creole. Some East Indians.
Languages	English, Creole, and Garifuna.
Associations	Fishing Association. Defunct tourism and women's association.
Climate	Average low temperature is 79F while the average high is 88F. It consists of two main seasons: the dry season, which runs from December to May, with February to May being the driest. The rainy season usually starts during the first week of May and continues into the first week of June. The average rainfall is 2843 mm. Trade winds blow onshore most of the year, and from September to December, northerly winds bring cooler, drier air. ¹⁰¹
Ecosystem	Surrounding ecosystems include mangrove lagoons, coastal flats, barrier reefs, seagrass flats.
Other Important Details	Seine Bight used to be a touristic town but has steadily declined

¹⁰¹<https://www.britannica.com/place/Belize/Climate>
<https://belize.com/belize-annual-rainfall/>
[https://en.climate-data.org/north-america/belize/stann-creek/seine-bight-873547/#:~:text=Seine%20Bight%20Climate%20\(Belize\)&text=The%20average%20annual%20temperature%20i,s,occurs%20on%20a%20yearly%20basis.](https://en.climate-data.org/north-america/belize/stann-creek/seine-bight-873547/#:~:text=Seine%20Bight%20Climate%20(Belize)&text=The%20average%20annual%20temperature%20i,s,occurs%20on%20a%20yearly%20basis.)
https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-ecosystems-map-of-Belize-showing-the-9-broad-ecosystem-categories-which_fig7_308969589

Town/Settlement Name	Riversdale
Access to town	Fairly easy, paved roads lead to the village's entrance. But once in the community, no roads were paved. The community is not directly serviced by any bus line, but from the drop-off point on the main highways, it's a short walk into the village.
Education Access	None
Infrastructure	No pharmacies or clinics are present in the village. Some houses did not seem to be connected to the power grid. Several yards had stagnant water and garbage piles. Roads in the village ranged from moderately bad to severe states of disrepair.
Culture and Attractions	A single resort
Economy & Commerce	Predominantly a commercial fishing community.
Ethnicities	Mestizo, Creole and Garifuna
Languages	Spanish, Creole, and English
Associations	Fishermen Association
Climate	The average low temperature is 69F, while the average high is 84F. There are two main seasons: the dry season, which runs from December to May, of which June is the wettest, while April is the driest. The rainy season usually starts during the first week of May and continues into the first week of June. The average rainfall is 2202 mm. Trade winds blow onshore most of the year, and from September to December, northerly winds bring cooler, drier air.
Ecosystem	Coastal and lowland savannahs, lowland broadleaf forest, and coastal flats. ¹⁰²
Other Important Details	During the focus group it was mentioned that Riversdale began as a squatter community, as much of the land is owned by foreign interests.

¹⁰²https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-ecosystems-map-of-Belize-showing-the-9-broad-ecosystem-categories-which_fig7_308969589
<https://en.climate-data.org/north-america/belize/stann-creek/riversdale-873551/>

Town/Settlement Name	Gales Point
Access to town	is lengthy but easy, and the road into the village is paved.
Education Access	Only primary-level education is available.
Infrastructure	The main road (the only road) is not paved and in slight to moderate disrepair. Several homes were not connected to the power grid, and cellular service was lacking. Several homes were in disrepair or derelict. No bus line directly services the community. There are no pharmacies or clinics in the village, no supermarkets or major shops, and no gas or butane shops.
Culture and Attractions	Cultural towns, lagoons, and eco-tours are a big draw for day visitors.
Economy & Commerce	Primarily fishing.
Ethnicities	Garifuna and Creole
Languages	English, Creole and Garifuna
Associations	Information not available
Climate	Average low temperature is 70.72F while the average high is 88.38F. It consists of two main seasons: the dry season, which runs from December to May, of which June is the wettest, while April is the driest. The rainy season usually starts during the first week of May and continues into the first week of June. The average rainfall is 1178 mm. ¹⁰³
Ecosystem	Coastal lagoon, broadleaf forest ¹⁰⁴
Other Important Details	Heavy levels of erosion, a community under severe threat from climate change.

¹⁰³[https://weatherandclimate.com/belize/belize/gales-point#:~:text=The%20district's%20yearly%20temperature%20is,%25%20of%20the%20time\)%20annually](https://weatherandclimate.com/belize/belize/gales-point#:~:text=The%20district's%20yearly%20temperature%20is,%25%20of%20the%20time)%20annually)

¹⁰⁴https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-ecosystems-map-of-Belize-showing-the-9-broad-ecosystem-categories-which_fig7_308969589

Town/Settlement Name	Copper Bank
Access to town	<p>Difficult.</p> <p>If one takes the road from San Estevan to the village, it takes approximately 1.45 hours to Copper Bank via unpaved rough roads.</p> <p>If one travels into the village through Corozal, some of the road is paved, but one has to cross patches of rough roads and a ferry (which, in an emergency, can prove extremely problematic).</p>
Education Access	Only up to the primary level of education
Infrastructure	Unpaved roads are in a slight state of disrepair. Public areas on the lagoon side were well-kept. Most of the village seemed to be connected to the electrical grid: there were no pharmacies, clinics, or large shops. No gas or butane stations.
Culture and Attractions	Lagoon and nearby protected areas
Economy & Commerce	Primary industry
Ethnicities	Predominantly Mestizo
Languages	Predominantly Spanish, some English
Associations	Information not available
Climate	consists of two main seasons: the dry season, which runs from December to May, and the rains, which usually begin in June. The village receives an annual average of 1540 mm of rain.
Ecosystem	There is a high level of deforestation and land clearing for agriculture. ¹⁰⁵
Other Important Details	

¹⁰⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-ecosystems-map-of-Belize-showing-the-9-broad-ecosystem-categories-which_fig7_308969589

Town/Settlement Name	Copper Bank
Access to town	<p>Difficult.</p> <p>If one takes the road from San Estevan to the village it takes approximately 1.45 hours to Copper Bank via unpaved rough roads.</p> <p>If one travels into the village through Corozal, some of the road is paved, but one has to cross patches of rough roads and a ferry (which, in an emergency, can prove extremely problematic). The new road will make access to town easy and fast.</p>
Education Access	Only up to the primary level of education
Infrastructure	Unpaved roads are in a slight state of disrepair. Public areas on the lagoon side were well-kept. Most of the village seemed to be connected to the electrical grid: there were no pharmacies, clinics, or large shops. No gas or butane stations.
Culture and Attractions	Lagoon and nearby protected areas
Economy & Commerce	Primary industry
Ethnicities	Predominantly Mestizo
Languages	Predominantly Spanish, some English
Associations	Information not available
Climate	Consists of two main seasons: the dry season, which runs from December to May, and the rainy season, which usually begins in June. The village receives an annual average of 1540 mm of rain.
Ecosystem	There is a high level of deforestation and land clearing for agriculture. ¹⁰⁶
Other Important Details	

¹⁰⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-ecosystems-map-of-Belize-showing-the-9-broad-ecosystem-categories-which_fig7_308969589

Town/Settlement Name	Chunox
Access to town	<p>Difficult. But the new road will help to have less travel time to Corozal.</p> <p>If one takes the road from San Estevan to the village, it takes approximately 1.45 hours to Copper Bank via unpaved rough roads.</p> <p>If one travels into the village through Corozal, some of the road is paved, but one has to cross patches of rough roads and a ferry (which, in an emergency, can prove extremely problematic).</p>
Education Access	Primary and secondary-level education is available. A vocational high school is also available.
Infrastructure	Roads in town are unpaved and range from okay to severe. The village has a polyclinic but no private clinics or pharmacies. There are no restaurants in the village. The outskirts of the village seemed to be disconnected from the power grid. There were no large shops in the village.
Culture and Attractions	No attractions.
Economy & Commerce	Primary industries, agriculture and fishing.
Ethnicities	Predominantly Mestizo
Languages	Predominantly Spanish, some English
Associations	Fishing and farmer associations are present.
Climate	consists of two main seasons: the dry season, which runs from December to May, and the rains, which usually begin in June. The village receives an annual average of 1540 mm of rain. The wettest month of the year is September, while the driest is April. Average temperatures range from 69 - 90 F.
Ecosystem	Lowland broadleaf forests, lagoon wetlands. ¹⁰⁷
Other Important Details	The community is near Little Belize (Mennonite site), and some locals have sold or rented agricultural lands to the Mononites.

¹⁰⁷https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-ecosystems-map-of-Belize-showing-the-9-broad-ecosystem-categories-which_fig7_308969589

Town/Settlement Name	Sarteneja
Access to town	Difficult. Most of the road from Corozal is paved, but it's a lengthy trip involving portions of unpaved road and a ferry.
Education Access	Primary, secondary, and vocational high schools are present in the village.
Infrastructure	Roads are mostly dirt and sand but well-kept. The town has a small tourism strip containing hotels and restaurants. Shops were less well stocked than in other parts of Belize.
Culture and Attractions	Tourist attractions consist of things such as eco-tours and maritime recreational activities.
Economy & Commerce	Primary industry.
Ethnicities	Predominantly Mestizo
Languages	Predominantly Spanish, some English
Associations	Fishing and farmer associations are present in the community.
Climate	It consists of two main seasons: the dry season, which runs from December to May. Rains usually begin in June, and the village receives an annual average of 1540 mm of rain. The wettest month of the year is October, while the driest is February. Average temperatures range from 73 - 86 F. ¹⁰⁸
Ecosystem	Broadleaf forests, coastal flats, estuaries and wetlands. ¹⁰⁹
Other Important Details	The community has tourist potential.

¹⁰⁸ <https://en.climate-data.org/north-america/belize/corozal/sarteneja-520228/>

¹⁰⁹ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Generalised-ecosystems-map-of-Belize-showing-the-9-broad-ecosystem-categories-which_fig7_308969589