

DM2009 Project Summary

Project Number: 1401

Booth Number: 10

Helping the Q'eqchi Maya Thrive with Sustainable Forest Management

COUNTRY: Belize

ORGANIZATION: Sarstoon Temash Institute for
Indigenous Management

FUNDING REQUEST: \$200,000

OBJECTIVE: To diminish effects of poverty and environmental degradations in rural indigenous communities and habitats in the Toledo District by promoting a community-based, sustainable forest-management enterprise. A three-phased initiative that encompasses conservation, sustainable-development, and income-generating strategies begins in Crique Sarco. The community will develop sustainable use of its forest resources, participating directly in management and efforts to preserve species depleted to near-extinction. Reduced-impact logging, a key element of sustainable forest management (SFM), will maintain economically viable log yields, improve the condition of regenerating forests, and alleviate negative effects. Forest cover will mitigate climate change, harbor biodiversity, and protect soil and watersheds.

RATIONALE: The Q'eqchi Maya of southern Belize have sustained a century-long, intimate relationship with the rainforests they inhabit. Despite neglect of their rights and marginalization, as guardians of the forest they have remarkable knowledge of unique properties of countless plants. The consequences of uncontrolled development beyond the forest frontier (part of national plans) emphasize the growing hazards of climate change. A new approach is needed: sustainable development maximizing well-being of people without prejudicing interests of future generations.

INNOVATION: Identification and pursuit of community-based solutions for SFM and conservation will provide innovative social and tangible benefits to the families of Crique Sarco. The growing impact of climate change requires involvement but demands understanding and knowledge related to the importance of conservation. A systematic forestry inventory developed to determine the rainforest potential takes into account assets: abundance of natural forest conditions. Technical assistance provides skills in enterprise management, forest planning, commercial marketing, and reduced-impact forest harvesting.

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