

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



THE TOLEDO
EXPERIENCE BELIZE
2000-2004



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

*Regional Office of the
World Health Organization*



FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE TOLEDO EXPERIENCE BELIZE 2000 - 2004

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This publication documents the methodological processes applied in the development of the Project “Food and Nutrition Security at the Local Level” as a key strategy in the alleviation of poverty in marginalized communities of the Toledo District in Belize

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FOREWORD

Although the food and nutrition security situation in this region has seen some improvement over the years, there can be no disputing that, given the persistent high levels of poverty in all of the countries, much effort, cooperation and collaboration are needed to effectively address the food and nutrition needs of poor and disadvantaged populations. The Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama (INCAP) has been working with the Central American countries since 1949 to address these problems. INCAP has enhanced and promoted the concept of food and nutrition security. This concept goes beyond addressing immediate issues of food and nutrition, and embraces the overall development of people so that they can become self reliant and lead fully productive lives.

In Belize the evidence of INCAP in action, at the level where it matters most, could be seen in rural communities in the district of Toledo where the decentralized technical cooperation provided support to these communities in a manner that resulted in the realization of commendable results in addressing the nutrition and food security needs of that district. However, while some progress was made in terms of guiding the residents of those communities to grow and use the kinds of food that will help to improve nutritional status, there is still a long way to go to ensure real food and nutrition security. PAHO in general and INCAP in particular remains committed to the achievement of food and nutrition security not only for the district of Toledo but for all Belizeans as well as for the entire region of Central America.

One of the goals of the Pan American Health Organization is to promote the principle of equity and to this end; the organization strongly believes that food and nutrition security as an approach, will contribute significantly to poverty reduction and equity in health. The experiences gained and the lessons learned from the Toledo project have been very instructive and are worth sharing with other agencies, interested parties and stakeholders concerned with nutrition development and food security for marginalized communities. Consequently, we are pleased to present this publication, *Food and Nutrition Security at the Local level: The Toledo Experience 2000 – 2004*. We trust that this document will be useful to all those who work at the community level as we strive to improve the quality of life for all concerned.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The project on Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) at the local level was initiated in 2000 under the auspices of the Institute of Nutrition of Central America (INCAP) to respond to the nutritional problems identified in the district of Toledo. Five communities were selected based on vulnerability as identified in the Height for Age Census of 1996, among other criteria. The major activities have included nutrition education, organic vegetable production, food preparation, fruit and vegetable drying and preservation, as well as other nutrition related activities. Project interventions have been geared toward the control of malnutrition, micro-nutrient deficiencies and other consequences of under-nutrition, while at the same time, promoting empowerment of communities, self reliance and self sufficiency. Community members have been successful in completing diagnoses of their communities, have set up action plans and have begun to implement activities to address food and nutrition problems in those communities. About fifty per cent of these activities have been geared towards the women.

The ultimate goal of FNS goes beyond just issues of food and nutrition. Its interventions strive to facilitate overall development among people so that in the end they will be self reliant and possess the capacity and the skills to lead fully productive lives. FNS therefore employs a holistic approach to development. The project, so far has had success in realizing some very positive outcomes in this regard. After four years there is evidence of growth, self direction and clear indications of a desire to move toward greater realization of food and nutrition security and an improved quality of life. Women in particular, have come forward as leaders and have taken on some very responsible undertakings and projects. This publication seeks to document the methodological processes and chronicle the activities that have contributed to these positive developments in the selected communities during the period 2000 to 2004.

2. BACKGROUND

INCAP is a specialized center of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) focusing on food and nutrition. It is also an institution of integration among Central American countries. This institute supports the development of the nutritional sciences and promotes their application. It works with member states to strengthen their capacity to solve food and nutrition problems through direct technical cooperation, research, human resources development and dissemination of information.

Efforts to address Food and Nutrition Security at the sub-regional level were initiated in 1993 as a result of a directive from the Central American Presidents urging Ministers of Health of Central America to adopt the initiative together with the scientific and technical support of INCAP, the Pan American Health Organization and the General Secretariat of the System of Central American Integration to monitor its implementation.

In the August 1994, Presidential Summit held in Guácimo, Costa Rica, the Presidents incorporated resolution 38 into the subsystem of Social integration. This resolution called for the implementation of the Strategy of Food and Nutrition Security based on the principles of equity, productivity, sufficiency and stability. Later, in Honduras in October 1994, at the International Conference for Peace and Development in Central America, the Presidents instructed the Economic and Social Cabinets to identify the measures necessary to implement the Food and Nutrition Security Strategy and to support these measures.

Subsequent to these directives, INCAP has been working with the Central American countries to promote and operationalise Food and Nutrition Security as a means of improving the lives of the peoples of the sub-region. In order to operationally define the concept of Food and Nutrition Security, INCAP developed the following:

Food and Nutrition Security in the context of Central America is “A state in which all persons enjoy access to the food that they need in a timely and permanent way and in the quality and quantities which are adequate for both consumption and biological utilization, thus guaranteeing a state of general well-being”.

In Belize actions to promote the initiative have been taking place both at national and local levels. A national policy for Food and Nutrition Security was adopted by Government in 2001. In 2002 a Commission to coordinate and provide oversight to the implementation of the policy was established. This Commission supported by a coordinator is in the process of completing the National Plan of Action to facilitate the allocation of resources for the six programs of the policy and has commenced work on various food and nutrition related initiatives including an analysis of the recent poverty study completed in Belize in order to identify the tools necessary to guide its work. In terms of a response to needs at the local level, the Toledo District was identified in 2000 as the district which most requires the targeted response by the Central American Project on Food and Nutrition Security

at the local Level, in order to address issues of poverty, growth retardation and delayed development.

Specific Objectives were the following:

- To incorporate methods of operationalizing FNS into the regular functioning of village councils and village committees.
- To rationalize the use of the resources from Government, NGOs and other cooperation agencies operational in the country to facilitate community development
- To facilitate the delivery of basic services to communities involved in the project.

3. THE TOLEDO DISTRICT

3.1. General Background of Toledo District:

Toledo is the southernmost district of the country with an area of 1,795 square miles and a population of about 25,200 inhabitants. Approximately 82% of the population lives in the rural areas and some 49% of the population are women. A National Height Census done in 1996 of school children six to nine years old showed that 15.4% of children suffer from growth retardation. The highest levels of growth retardation occur in the Toledo District (39.0%), as compared to the other districts which ranged from 4% to 18%. In respect of nutrition, there is an across the board problem of inadequate dietary intake and poor infant feeding practices.

A poverty assessment study completed in 2002 identified the Toledo district as being the poorest in the country with a poverty index of 31.5%. This same study found 79% of the population in Toledo to be poor. This district has the highest total fertility rate (56%) when compared to other districts in the country. It also has the highest number of persons per households.

The Toledo District is home to some 14,000 Mopan and Kekchi Mayan Indians, who first migrated from Guatemala in 1840. The Mayas live on communal land systems in which the land management is carried out through the village leader, the Alcalde in consultation

with the members of the village. They cultivate corn, beans, cocoa, rice and other food crops using the traditional “Slash and Burn”, Milpa system. The Garinagu or descendants of Carib Indians and African slaves are another prominent ethnic group in the Toledo District, having settled on the coastal areas of Barranco and Punta Gorda Town in 1832. Other minority ethnic groups to which Toledo is home include the Creoles and the East Indians.

4 METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

The methodology used for the implementation of the project was based primarily on community participation, community empowerment, and self reliance. The goal is for community members to develop the skills necessary for them to organize themselves and develop the capacity to lead productive lives through a gradual process of change, while at the same time, resolving problems related to food and nutrition insecurity. Stages in the process of implementation consistent with the overall methodology were:

- a) Selection of the communities
- b) Introduction of the Project
- c) Community self assessment and resource analysis
- d) Development of community action plans
- e) Community organization
- f) Training
- g) Implementation of Specific projects

Throughout these stages, special attention was paid to

- a) Community involvement
- b) Empowerment of Women

Work in the communities began in September 2000. The first step after completing the preparatory phase of the project was to identify the communities that are most vulnerable and which could benefit the most from the project. The National Height Census of 1996 identified communities which had high levels of growth retardation and as such, were classified as high risk communities, having high levels of malnutrition and limited access to basic services. Utilizing the results of this census, the project was initiated in the Toledo District, targeting these communities.

4.1 Selection of the Communities

Criteria for the selection of the communities were as follows:

- * Results of the height census – how the village–was ranked according to this census.
- * Population – number of people living in the community and population characteristic, elderly, working age, children, etc.
- * Poverty ranking – ranking in relation to other villages in the district based on the results of the poverty assessment and profiles done by other projects.
- * Availability of natural resources, availability of land for agriculture, land use patterns and land fertility.
- * Ethnicity/cultural features – level of ethnic diversification in the village.
- * Production Systems - explore how food is produced and in what quantities as well as the diversity of crops produced.
- * Health status of the community.
- * Level of community organization

Of the six communities identified utilizing these criteria, five agreed to work with the project from the beginning. These include: San Jose, Na. Luum Caj, Aguacate, Jordan and Saint Vincent's Block. San Vicente was later incorporated in 2003.

4.2 Introduction of the Project

The INCAP Coordinator along with the Community Organizer and the Health Educator of the Health Education and Communication Participation Bureau (HECOPAB) of the Ministry of Health made a series of visits and held meetings with six selected high risk communities, during the months of September to December, 2000. We met with the Chairmen of the Village Councils, Alcaldes and community members and gave a comprehensive summary of the project. We explained what the project was about and how it should benefit the communities.

Subsequently in meetings with the communities at large, we again went through the process of highlighting the benefits of the project. Members of each community were informed that through project activities, it was expected that education and action would take place in order for community members to improve their nutritional status by learning how to utilize

locally grown foods to enhance their diets and to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into the diets. It was also stressed that by participating in this project, they would have the opportunity to become better organized and would develop the skills to manage smaller projects which would ultimately lead to improved food security and the possibility of earning additional income in order to improve their standard of living.

There was a resounding interest to participate in the project by community members. In each community after the benefits of the project were explained, they dialogued among themselves in the Kekchi or Mopan language until there was a decision. They all felt that any initiative which would serve to improve the quality of life for their people would be worth trying. Some leaders indicated that they had very little experience in activities of this nature and would require training and support. Others indicated that they would prefer for most of the activities to be held in their own villages since there were problems with transportation some days of the week. Of those communities to which the project was introduced, only one declined citing the fact that they were more interested in trading than the kinds of activities being offered by the project

4.3 Communities Self Assessment and Resources Analysis

In order to set the stage for planning members of the communities became engaged in conducting needs assessments to help them to identify the problems that affect them. The participants did practical exercises in problem analysis and were led to see how this facilitates the identification of interventions in a logical way. For example these assessments identified a list of outputs that would help each community to improve food production. In some instances, the problems identified in a community were similar to those of other communities. In this way the assessments also served as a tool to stimulate collectivism in order to deal jointly with problems that affect development in the district.

The issue of available resources was discussed extensively. Participants felt that they had a large number of significant resources in their communities, such as land, experience in farming, and the discipline of hard work, among others. However they became conscious of the fact that they were not utilizing these resources optimally. Consequently they all agreed that the project should include interventions that would help them to learn how to make

better use of available resources. This Community Self Assessment and Resource Analysis was a useful tool in helping them to identify the principal problems and areas of need that affect their communities and what actions they should take in order to change and improve their situations.

4.4 Development of Community Action Plans

During the period January to May 2001, the members of the five selected communities worked on the development of community action plans. They agreed that the components of the Food and Nutrition security plans would be the following:

- Improving food production
- Improving food processing, preservation and storage techniques
- Improving nutrition through education.

Community members were first introduced to the logical approach to planning then taken through the process of developing outputs for the components of their plans. In the brainstorming sessions, participants along with the facilitators, agreed on the critical issues which affected their ability to produce food then agreed on the interventions and outputs which could reverse these situations.

4.5 Community Organization

To facilitate the work of the group involved in the project, interested persons in each community were encouraged to form a management committee. Workshops in leadership skills were carried out with the groups with the objective of helping them to understand the importance and advantages of collective work and the roles and functions of the management committee. The committee consisted of a president, secretary, treasurer and a councilor. The president provided leadership and represented the point of contact between the Community organizer and the community. He or she worked with community members to ensure that planned activities were carried out. The secretary kept records of meetings and other important events while the treasurer was responsible for the management of all income, expenses and kept the records and reports.

4.6 Training

Training was an important component in the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Security Project. It created awareness among community members on the range of problems affecting the growth of their children and food security in general and measures they can employ to address these problems. A series of training sessions were carried out with all community groups with the purpose of educating them in order to transfer skills in specific areas which were identified as being critical to the improvement of the food and nutrition status of the communities and to provide managerial skills and entrepreneurial skills and included: training in project planning, implementation and evaluation.

As a result of these workshops participants have obtained information on the available technologies, and are developing the capacity to analyze and make choices which are beneficial to them. To date the following workshops have been conducted:

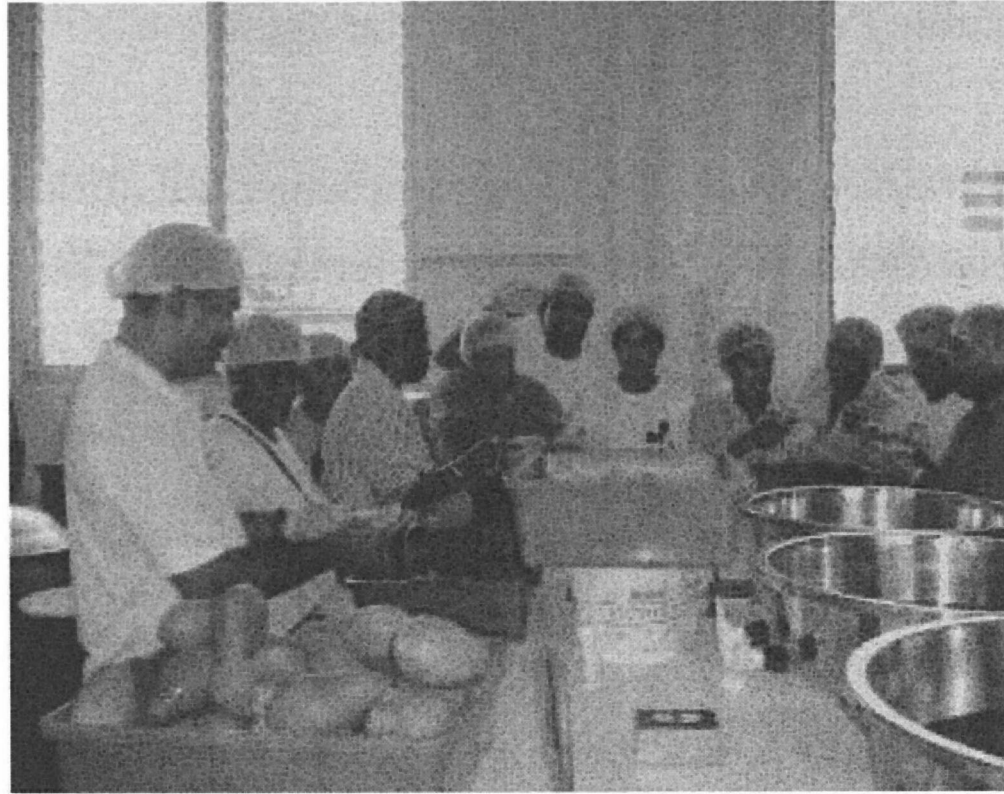
4.6.1 Planning and Logical Framework

A Planning and Logical Framework Workshop was held with each community group during February and March 2001, in order to train them about the importance of planning and the use of the logical approach to planning.

The workshop covered areas such as: What is planning? the importance of planning; principles of planning; the process and phases of planning; defining and setting objectives and programming, utilizing the Logical Framework Approach. Community action plans were developed based on this methodology.

4.6.2 Food Drying Technology

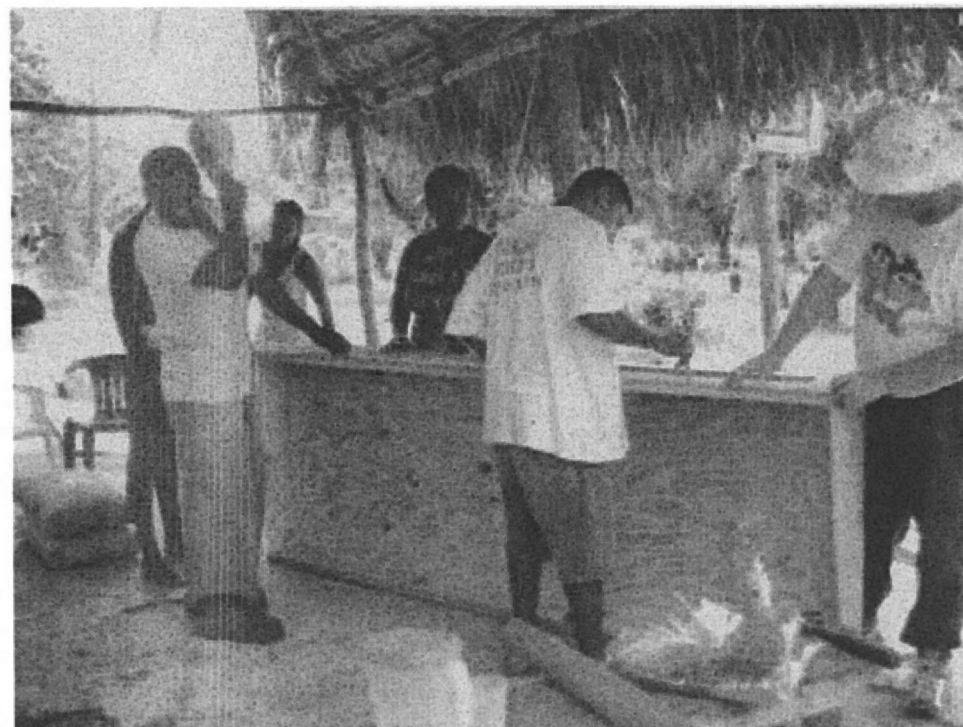
In collaboration with the Technical Mission of the Government of Taiwan, participants were also exposed to training in Food Drying Technology. These training sessions were carried out twice, in March and October of 2002, with the objective of providing information on other methods of food drying, utilizing equipment available through the Technical Mission.



Participants were trained in the use and operation of the equipment and were also taught how to clean, slice and prepare the food items to facilitate uniform drying. Principles of food safety were also emphasized.

4.6.3 Solar Dryer Construction and Food Drying

In Toledo, fruits such as mangoes, pineapples and papayas are eaten only during their season. Community members requested training in the use of solar dryers so that these fruits and vegetables could be dried and made available all year round. The Direct Solar Dryer was selected for use in the project. In addition to construction methods, they were also taught how to prepare the fruits and vegetables for drying in a hygienic manner. Training sessions in the construction of the dryers were carried out in 2002.



Community members from St. Vincent's Block constructing their solar dryer.

4.6.3 Vegetable Production and Pest Management

These training workshops were implemented during October and November of 2002 with the objective of providing group members with information and techniques for vegetable production. Aspects covered included: Seedbed preparation; importance of seedbed sterilization; seedbed protection; transplanting; uses of barriers; fertilization; agricultural pests; common pests affecting cabbages; tomatoes and sweet peppers; chemical cultural and biological control of pests; pesticide classification; pesticide labels and cost and sensitivity analyses for the production of one acre of vegetables. In addition to this, a brochure covering the basic concepts taught was prepared and distributed among members.



*Mr. Francisco
Tush from
Aguacate
attending his
seedlings.*



4.6.5 Food Preservation

In March 2003, training in food preservation was carried out among communities as another method of conserving fruits for out-of-season periods. Utilizing available tomatoes, papayas, pineapples and water melons participants were taught how to prepare jams, fruit cocktail and preserves.

4.6.6 Food Preparation:

We learnt that although vegetables were being produced, community members were not utilizing them because they did not have the knowledge necessary to prepare them. This training was conducted in order to teach them how to prepare the vegetables that were produced. The importance of vegetables in the diet was discussed and how to prepare them hygienically was emphasized. The women and men who participated in the training sessions were then taught how to prepare various dishes utilizing the vegetables and a number of recipes were shared with them. In particular the participants learned how to incorporate vegetables into the traditional “caldo” which is a soup made of home grown chicken, seasoned with cilantro and other spices making it tastier and more nutritious.

4.6.7 Nutrition Education:

Training on the importance of good nutrition was carried out in the communities on a regular basis. In December 2003, a training workshop was carried out with all groups in order to provide information on basic nutrition such as the importance of good nutrition the food groups, consequences of under-nutrition and over-nutrition, breastfeeding, infant feeding



and infant nutrition in situations of HIV/AIDS. Concepts in Food and Nutrition Security were presented and common nutrition related problems were discussed. Participants drafted action plans to respond to these food and nutrition related problems.

4.6.8 Project Development

The objective of this training was to help teach community members the logic of the proposal writing process, the components and basic steps in proposal design in order to provide the tools for them to be able to interact with donors and other funding or lending agencies. Several small proposals have been developed by community members as a result of the training.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC PROJECTS

An important approach utilized in this project was to reinforce information with practice. Therefore along with the training that was provided in each area, participants were encouraged to put into practice what they had learnt. In developing their action plans community groups identified specific projects which they saw as feasible and which would provide alternatives to problems of food and nutrition insecurity. The expectation was that the resources provided by INCAP, PAHO and other sources would be multiplied; put to good use and the investments made would generate a higher level of development and independence for all those involved.

5.1 School Feeding Programs

In early 2001, we began working with schools in the project communities to assist them with setting up and strengthening their feeding programs. Visits were made to the schools to assess the kind of support that would be needed, and then training was provided to them in menu planning, improving the nutritional value of the meals served and food safety. In some communities, particularly where the children lived a great distance from the schools this support was welcomed. Parents brought staples to help with food supply and some volunteered in the kitchens. After Hurricane Iris later in 2001 we collaborated with Plenty, an NGO working in the district to help set up school gardens to provide vegetables for the school kitchens.

5.2 Water and Sanitation

Cognizant of the fact that food and nutrition security is a state in which people are self sufficient and have access to the food that they need, when they need it and that the approach considers all aspects of development such as the availability of water and appropriate means of sanitation roads etc., efforts were made to ensure that communities have access to water and sanitation. Funds from PAHO were secured for the construction of community latrines and water tanks in Jordan, Aguacate, Na-Luum-Caj and San Jose.



5.3 Vegetable Gardens:

Vegetable production is an ongoing activity of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme and is being implemented with all groups in order to encourage incorporation of vegetables into their daily diets. Since January of 2002, activities were undertaken to promote the cultivation of organically grown vegetables with all communities with the purpose of teaching them production using the integrated pest management approach. Since then, communities have produced cabbages, tomatoes, sweet peppers, cucumbers, water melons and carrots for home consumption and the surplus is sold in the market.

In collaboration with “Plenty Belize” a non-governmental organization, based in Toledo, vegetable production was also carried out in schools in the project villages. Students, teachers and parents became involved in the vegetable production and yields were utilized in the school feeding programs.

Women were incorporated into the project in 2002. After they received the training in vegetable production, several of them with the help of their husbands cleared land either in their backyards or nearby. The involvement of women has been significant, because they have particularly made an effort to utilize the vegetables in the preparation of meals. Income made from the surplus was translated into clothing, school supplies and other purchases which directly improved the well-being of their families.



Vegetable Gardens



5.4 Food Drying and Food Preservation

Food Drying was another major component of the project which was implemented with all community groups involved. During the period, ten (10) solar dryers were constructed and are being utilized to dry fruits and vegetables according to their seasonal availability. Likewise, as a result of the training in food preservation, small projects to preserve fruits and vegetables were carried out from time to time. Community members have demonstrated interest in entering into small enterprise projects to produce, package and market the dried and preserved fruits and vegetables. They are working on forming a cooperative so that they can pool profits from the sale of vegetables to purchase fruits, bottles and other utensils necessary for a joint community project to dry and preserve fruits and vegetables



5.5 Food and Nutrition Security Fair

As a means of showcasing the results of the project and its products, a Food and Nutrition Security and Agriculture Fair was held October 16 & 17, 2003 in collaboration with the Community Initiated Rural and Agriculture Project and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The fair brought community groups from all over the Toledo district and other parts of the country together in an exchange of foods, food production methods, appropriate technology and information on food and nutrition security. Special recognition was given to a participant from San Jose, one of the project communities for having made an outstanding contribution to food and nutrition security in the Toledo District.



5.6 Chicken Rearing:

Four of the five groups included chicken rearing in their plans of action. The training was provided to them and some groups, by pooling their own resources were able to start small project in their communities. Additional funds from the project have helped San Jose and Aguacate to expand to carry out larger scale projects. Community members see the projects as having a dual purpose: in the first instance as food security for each family involved by consuming chickens and eggs and secondly as an income generating activity from the sales of the excess chicken and eggs, to be put back into the procurement of raw material for continuation and strengthening of this activity.

5.7 Pig Rearing

A small project on pig rearing was started in San Jose in early 2000. As for chicken projects, groups also saw this as a viable activity which could enhance food security for families and as a possible income earner. The other communities have also included this activity in their action plans should funds become available

6. LINKAGES AND COORDINATION

Collaboration was an important aspect of the process. It helped to avoid duplication of work, build relations, share resources and to coordinate with organizations that had similar goals and objectives. From the inception of the project, meetings were held with local Government agencies and NGOS to explain the objectives of the Food and Nutrition Security Project and to get their support. From 2000 to the present, the project has built up collaborative relationships with several agencies. These include the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Human Development and Fisheries and the Community Initiated Agriculture and Rural Development Project of the Ministry of Agriculture (CARD).

Among the NGOs, much of the work has been coordinated with PLENTY Belize, Jericho Road Foundation International, along with several others.

The PAHO/WHO country office has provided significant support to the project through financial, technical and human resources. PAHO resources in particular were instrumental in supporting water and sanitation projects in the communities. These complementary funds facilitated a more holistic approach to the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Security Initiative at the local level. Following Hurricane Iris in 2001, there was much collaboration with the World Food Program (WFP). Most of the communities involved in the project were affected by this hurricane and food donations were provided to them from the WFP. Other non-food related support also came from WFP to strengthen the vegetable production component of the project and for small water and sanitation initiatives.

Coordination with other agencies have proven to be beneficial to the project in terms of mobilizing additional resources thereby increasing the scope of the project and helping to ensure

that the holistic approach adopted by FNS was addressed. These linkages also provided the opportunity for the adoption of the approach by other entities and therefore increased chances for sustainability.

7. SUCCESSES OF THE PROJECT

- There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the objectives of the project have been met.
- There have been other benefits of the project which were not specified in the project document
- Water supply has been improved and services provided where there were none originally.
- Sanitation has improved in most communities.
- Post hurricane support facilitated rapid return to normalcy in the affected communities.
- Production surpluses have been utilized to purchase food, educational supplies and other household necessities.
- Strategic alliances have been formed to the benefit of the communities. Collaboration with CARD and Plenty has greatly facilitated outreach and implementation of project activities.
- The project has contributed significantly to the operationalization of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy
- Local action plans have been developed
- There is increased capacity for production, food preservation, food drying and other techniques in the communities.
- Improved nutritional status of families
- Increased consciousness of the role of nutrition in family and community health

8. CONSTRAINTS

- The project was forecast to start in early 2000; however activities did not get off the ground until later in the year.
- The communities of the Toledo district are widely dispersed. This resulted in difficulty reaching them as transportation was available only some days of the week.
- There was a change of Community Organizer during the course of 2001. This resulted in a period of limited activity until the outgoing organizer was replaced.
- Hurricane Iris which struck the Toledo district in October, 2001 slowed down project activities as work had to be directed toward emergency and rehabilitation efforts.
- The project got adequate support at the local level, however more involvement of the MOH is required to facilitate continuity when the project finishes.
- PAHO administrative procedures are not set up to facilitate work at the local level. Implementation, in some cases was delayed while mechanisms to facilitate transfer of resources to the local level were sought.
- Although there is a need for this project in other communities in the Toledo District, scarce resources has prevented its expansion to other marginalized communities.
- No baseline was conducted at the beginning of the project; it was therefore not possible to conduct a precise evaluation.
- More involvement of the Food and Nutrition Security Commission is needed

9. LESSONS LEARNED AND KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Through the implementation of this project, Food and Nutrition Security has been proven to be a viable tool in the promotion of community development. This approach should be promoted as a strategy for the alleviation of poverty on a wider scale.
- Provided the right environment and given the necessary guidance and support, communities are able to identify and harness resources which otherwise they would not have made use of.
- The strategy of Food and Nutrition Security provides an integrated methodology to the improvement of food and nutrition because it addresses the cycle from production through to utilization making it an effective approach.
- The multi-dimensional approach adopted in FNS allows for the infusion of external resources which otherwise would not be possible had the methodology taken a narrower approach.
- FNS allows for the participation of all segments of the community including women and children thereby increasing chances for greater success.
- It is possible for FNS can be implemented in a defined geographical area, despite cultural and language differences
- Communities are better organized for action and development through the establishment of management groups to solve problems and meet community needs.
- Communities have become proactive and are developing small initiatives that could lead to further development and sustainability.
- Women are becoming better empowered. They are now involved in activities which they would not have traditionally undertaken, such as vegetable production, nutrition education and involvement in community life in general.

- Communities involved in the project have an improved capacity for production of vegetables and there is evidence of their incorporation into the traditional meals.
- There is greater understanding of the importance of good nutrition and its impact on health and the environment.
- A complete evaluation of this project will be useful in order to determine the magnitude of its impact and to assess the level of sustainability.

10. THE WAY FORWARD

It is clear that a significant impact has been made on the lives of the people who have been involved in this project. However due to limited resources actions were therefore limited. Recent studies indicate that the Toledo District continues to be affected by higher levels of poverty than other parts of the country. It is important to replicate this methodology in other needy communities. Many of these communities having seen the results have made petitions for the project to be expanded to include them.

As a way of moving forward, the project will host a district wide forum involving policy makers, partners, NGOs, and the communities to discuss the methodology utilized by the project and to share its results and lessons learned. FNS will be promoted as a poverty alleviation strategy for district-wide application. It is the hope that other agencies will be convinced of this approach and will adopt it for work with other communities that we will not be able to reach.

The plan is to secure additional funds in order to incorporate at least ten more communities in the project, in the short term. The idea communities have of forming a cooperative among them, should be pursued. The pooling of resources will allow the communities to further apply the principles and skills learned for the development and implementation of specific projects which can further enhance food and nutrition security and bridge the equity gap which will thus improve the quality of life for all people living in Toledo. Ultimately the goal of INCAP/PAHO is that FNS will be utilized at the national level as a strategy for development, thus joining the other Central American countries in generalizing this approach.

11. ANNEXES

Annex 11.1 – Profiles of the Selected Communities*

AGUACATE VILLAGE PROFILE

Community:	Aguacate
Location:	27 miles west of Punta Gorda Town, Toledo
EXISTING CONDITIONS	
Administration:	Village Council and Alcalde System
Political Constituency:	Toledo West
SOCIAL FACTORS	
Population:	312 inhabitants/ 57 families
Ethnicity/ Background:	Predominantly Kekchi Maya with some families being Mopan Maya. An old community settled about one hundred years ago. Aguacate is the Spanish for Avocado but it is not known why this name was given to the village.
Education:	Aguacate has a three classroom primary school managed by the Roman Catholic Mission. The Building is in fair condition but was shaken by Hurricane Iris. It has an enrollment of 76 students and 3 teachers. The teacher's housing quarters is in fair condition.
Health:	Aguacate has a Health Post and a Community Nurse's Aide. Mobile clinics from Punta Gorda Town visit the community every two months.
Prevalent disease/condition:	Malaria, eczema and diarrhea.
Housing:	Houses are usually of wooden walls, earthen floor and thatched roof. Some houses have concrete flooring and zinc roofing.
Community Group:	One Women's Group, one Youth Group,
Comment:	Aguacate is one of the oldest communities in the Toledo district with a stable population
ECONOMIC FACTORS	
Source of income:	Primarily farming. Some men have sought work in Punta Gorda Town.
Business Initiatives:	Three small grocery shops and a Corn Mill
Comment:	
UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
Water Supply:	Five water pumps but only two are used for drinking purposes. There is a water system but water is not chlorinated
Power Supply:	No Electricity
Means of Communication:	Public Transportation, a community telephone
Access:	The Community is accessible to Punta Gorda Town most of the year. Access is affected during rainy season when both the Aguacate and Blue Creek rivers are flooded.
LAND	
Relief:	Flat with hills in some areas
Land settlement/tenure:	Aguacate is situated on leased land. The land is used for residential and agricultural purposes.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
Solid Waste:	Each family disposes of its wastes by burning.
Liquid Waste:	Most people use the bush to dispose their human wastes. Very few use latrines.
Pollution	There may be fecal contamination of the creeks and rivers
Pesticides:	Used in small amounts by farmers in rice fields. Community members have been trained in Pesticide use.
Logging:	There is no logging in the area
Important Habitats:	Rainforest and waterways
NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY	
Administrative and institutional development:	No needs identified
Social development:	Latrines for all families, Better health center with medications
Economic Development:	Income Generating Projects, Rice huller
Utilities and Infrastructure:	Improved water supply system, Construct feeder roads
Land Use:	No needs identified
Environmental Improvement:	Develop and implement a latrine Project
PROGRESS 2001-2004	
☉	Planning workshop with 28 community members in order to define a development plan for the community. Chairman and Alcalde participated.
☉	Training of 28 men and women in the cultivation of vegetables and pest management and cost analyses of the cultivation of vegetables particularly that of cabbages.
☉	Involvement of 28 members of the community in the cultivation of vegetables for home consumption.
☉	Training of 20 women in food preparation using the available grown vegetables. Women learned to prepare other dishes in addition to traditional ones.
☉	Training of 24 women and men in food preservation. Participants learned how to preserve tomatoes, papayas, pineapples and how to make jams.
☉	Training of 4 community members in food technology at the Taiwanese Center in Central Farm. They are skilled in the preparation of corn cracker, corn flour, dried pineapples and papayas and juice from the pineapple skin. They also learned how to operate the equipment.
☉	Training in Hydroponics and organic fertilizers to 15 members of the community.
☉	Construction of two direct solar dryers by the community members and training in food drying utilizing this type of dryer.
☉	Training of 28 members in the rearing of local chickens. Members now have knowledge in feed preparation, cost analysis and management of chickens.
☉	Preparation of a chicken project by members of the community as a food security and income generation project.
☉	Securing of funds for the chicken project which is being implemented by 28 members of the Aguacate community group.
☉	Purchasing of 2,400 local chicks which was distributed among 28 members of the community.
☉	Training in Food and Nutrition with community members now knowledgeable on the benefits of proper nutrition.
☉	Procurement of a small chicken incubator by 28 members of the community group. They are now able to hatch their own chickens using the incubator.
☉	Construction of a platform and installation of two water tanks for the school and the community.
WORKING GROUP	
Felix Cucul	Salvador Ica
Evangelisto Cholom	Jose Tush
Juan Choc	Manuel Cal
Louis Cucul	Francisco Cal
Jose Shol	Oswaldo Choc
Abelino Ack	Julieta Cucul
WOMEN'S GROUP	
Demetria Cucul	Agustina Cal
Teresa Cucul	Candelaria Cucul
Serafina Choc	Petrona Choc
Angelina Tush	Petrona Cucul
Maria Cholom	Maria Cucul
Vicenta Choc	

ST. VINCENT'S BLOCK COMMUNITY PROFILE

Community:	St. Vincent's Block
Location:	2 1/2 Miles north of Punta Gorda Town
EXISTING CONDITIONS	
Administration:	Managed by A Board of Trustees
Political Constituency:	Toledo East Constituency
SOCIAL FACTORS	
Population:	Twenty Families or approximately 100 people
Ethnicity/Background:	Predominantly a Garifuna community with some Mayan and East Indian families
Education:	St. Vincent has no school and the children attend schools in Punta Gorda Town and nearby Forest Home village. The Schools are administered by the Roman Catholic Mission
Health:	There is no health post and the people travel to the Punta Gorda Hospital for medical services
Prevalent disease/conditions:	Diarrhea, colds
Housing:	The houses are made of wood, cement floor and roof of zinc. There are also some houses made of cement with Zinc roofing
Community Group:	The St. Vincent's Block Group is headed by Ms. Lorraine Arzu
Comment:	St. Vincent's Block is a Garifuna reserve and lies within 860 acres of reserve land with each family having its own parcel. It is managed by a Board of Trustees comprised of 7 persons
ECONOMIC FACTORS	
Source of income:–	Primarily from working outside of the community, Some are involved in farming.
Business Initiatives:	There are two small grocery shops and a small pig rearing enterprise
Comment:	
UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
Water Supply:	Water from the Belize Water Services is piped into the homes
Power Supply:	Power supplied to the community by Belize Electricity Limited
Means of Communication:	Telephone, Vehicles
Access:	New Road which joins Punta Gorda and Elridgeville, All weather road
LAND	
Relief:	Flat land with hills
Land settlement/tenure:	St. Vincent's Block is situated on 860 acres of Garifuna Reserve land. The land is used for housing and farming
Comment:	
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
Solid Waste:	Each family disposes of its wastes by burning
Liquid Waste:	Every family has a latrine and some use a septic latrine sewer system
Pollution:	None
Pesticides:	Used only in small quantities for farming

Logging:	No logging in the area
Important Habitats:	Rainforest and waterways
NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY	
Administrative and institutional development:	No needs identified
Social development:	none identified
Economic Development:	Stated interest in venturing into income generating projects such as chicken rearing
Utilities and Infrastructure:	Construction of feeder roads
Land Use:	Specifically a Carib reserve and available only to the Garifuna people
Environmental Improvement:	None identified
PROGRESS 2000-2004	
☉	Workshop in the cultivation of vegetables and pest management with community members
☉	Four community members trained in Food Technology at the Taiwanese Center in Central Farm. They are skilled in the preparation of corn cracker, corn flour, dried pineapples and papayas and juice from the pineapple skin.
☉	Training in food preservation. 10 community members were trained in the preparation of preserved pineapples, papayas & tomatoes and how to make fruit cocktail & jams.
☉	Construction of two direct solar dryers and training in fruit and vegetable drying.
☉	Community members trained in how to incorporate locally grown vegetables in their daily diet.
☉	Community members trained in food and nutrition and knowledgeable about the importance of good nutrition.
☉	Involvement of 6 families in the cultivation of vegetables for home consumption.
WORKING GROUP	
Leonard Petillo	Avelina Cucul
Savina Coleman	Raquel Parchue
Lorraine Arzu	Maria Cucul
	Norman Benguche

JORDAN COMMUNITY PROFILE

Community:	Jordan Village
Location:	28 miles west of Punta Gorda Town, Toledo
EXISTING CONDITIONS	
Administration:	Village Committee consists of three Persons
Political Constituency:	Toledo West
SOCIAL FACTORS	
Population:	98 people/ 18 families
Ethnicity:	Predominantly Kekchi Mayas and some Mopan Maya
Education:	One Primary School administered by the Mennonites
Health:	No health facility. Residents use the Santa Theresa Health Center approximately 3 miles away and the mobile clinic from the Punta Gorda Hospital
Prevalent disease/ condition:	Malaria, Cough and Fever
Housing:	Traditional Mayan homes, wooden walls, earthen floor and thatched roofing
Community Groups:	Jordan Village Committee and Food and Nutrition Group
Comment:	A new community founded in 1978. Jordan has not yet acquired village status
ECONOMIC FACTORS	
Source of Income:	Farming. Some community members work in Punta Gorda.
Business initiatives:	One small grocery shop
Comment:	There are no employment opportunities other than farming in the village
UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
Water Supply and Use:	River and rain water catchments tanks
Power Supply and Use:	There is electricity in the Community
Means of Communications:	Public transportation available
Access:	Accessible to Punta Gorda most of the year except during the rainy season due to flooding
LAND	
Relief:	Flat terrain
Land Settlement/tenure:	Government land used mainly for residence and farming
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
Solid Waste:	Each family disposes of its wastes by burning.
Liquid waste:	75% of the community use latrines but new ones are needed
Pollution:	Dust pollution from the road, Water contamination by the use of detergents
Pesticides:	Used on farms. Farmers need a license to use pesticides.
Logging:	None
Important habitats:	River and Rainforest

NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY	
Administrative and Institutional Development:	Organize for leadership
Social Development:	Construct a community center
Economic development:	Need to set up a Corn mill
Utilities and infrastructure:	Construction of drains, develop farm land, need some form of water supply
Land Use:	No needs identified
Land tenure and management:	Acquire leases
Environmental improvements:	Improve existing latrines and build new ones
PROGRESS 2000-2004	
☉	Training of 20 members in the cultivation of vegetables and pest management. Training had a cabbage cost analysis component to determine its feasibility.
☉	Training in planning along with the chairman and 14 members of the community group. Planning section identified problems and possible solutions.
☉	Involvement of 15 members in the cultivation of tomatoes, sweet peppers, cabbages, cucumbers and watermelons.
☉	Training of 4 members in food technology at the Taiwanese center in Central Farm. Community members are now skilled in the preparation of cracker corn, corn flour, dried papaya and pineapple, juice from the pineapple skin and how to operate the equipment.
☉	Training of 20 people in Food preparation with emphasis on good hygiene practices using their locally grown vegetables.
☉	Training of 20 people in Food Preservation. Both men and women learned to preserve tomatoes, pineapples, papayas, cocktails and jams using the available fruits and vegetables.
☉	Construction of two direct solar dryers by the community and members trained in how to dry tomatoes, bananas, herbs, yams, meat and sapote.
☉	Given assistance with garden tools such as spraying pump, hoe, fork and spade to use in their gardens.
☉	The community was given assistance with materials for the setting up of a community water project, water tank, pipes, water pump, glue etc. were provided. Community members have provided the labor for construction of the system
☉	Training in food and nutrition provided to 15 members from the community group.
☉	Training in project development to 15 members of the community. Members were provided with the necessary information to allow them to develop community projects
WORKING GROUP	
Domingo Teul	Juan Caal
Eduardo Teck	Nicolas Cholon
Celestino Choc	Santiago Teul
Vicente Ack	Manuel Bolon
Mateo Bolon	Tito Choco
Mariano Choc	Pedro Bolon

NA-LUUM-CAJ VILLAGE PROFILE

Community:	Na-Luum-Caj Village (Mother Earth)
Location:	29 miles northwest of Punta Gorda Town, Toledo
EXISTING CONDITIONS	
Administration:	Village Council and Alcalde System
SOCIAL FACTORS	
Population:	17 families/ 86 people
Ethnicity:	Mainly Mopan Maya with some families being Kekchi
Education:	One Government primary school with two teachers and an enrollment of 20 children. The teachers' housing Quarter is in good condition
Health:	No health post and no Community Nurse's Aide
Prevalent diseases/conditions:	loose stool, cough and fever
Housing:	Thatch roofing, earthen floor and lumber walls. Some houses are made of concrete are made of concrete with zinc roofing
Community Groups:	Food and Nutrition Group, Toledo Eco-tourism Association
Comment:	Na-Luum-Caj is twelve years old and was created by villagers with the idea of acquiring the idea of acquiring leased land
ECONOMIC FACTORS	
Source of income:	Primarily subsistence farming, few teachers and some seek employment in the Belize Defence Force
Business initiatives:	One grocery shop, and the Toledo Eco-Tourism Association
Comment:	
UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
Water Supply and Use:	Water Catchments and a small creek which is used during the dry season
Power Supply:	There is no electricity
Means of Communication:	Public transportation, no public telephone.
Access:	Accessibility to Punta Gorda Town all year round
LAND	
Relief:	High hills and gently rolling
Land settlement/tenure:	The village lies on 2,500 acres of national land. It was given to villagers in parcels of fifty acres. The land is used for residential and agricultural purposes.
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
Solid Waste:	Each family is responsible for disposing household wastes by burning or burying
Liquid Waste:	85% of families have latrines; there is a need to build new ones.
Pollution:	The creek is polluted by use of detergents
Pesticides:	Used in small amounts to control weeds on farms
Logging:	Is being carried out by one family but presently the community in general is involved

Important habitat:	with some Government assistance		
Comment:	Cave and rain forest		
NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY			
Administrative and Institutional Development:	Village Group needs training in planning, Food processing and Vegetable gardening		
Social Development:	Health Post with trained Community Nurse's Aide, Hurricane Shelter		
Economic Development:	Market for produce		
Utilities and infrastructure:	Construct feeder road, street and football field		
Land Use:	Training in land use		
Land Tenure and Management:	Define village boundaries to secure farm land		
Environmental Improvement:	Assistance to rebuild or improve all latrines, water system		
PROGRESS 2000 - 2004			
☉	Training to all community members including the Alcalde and the chairman in planning an action plan for the community was defined.		
☉	Training of 4 members in food drying technology at the Taiwanese Center in Central Farm. They are now skilled in the preparation of corn cracker, corn flour, dried papayas, pineapples, juice from pineapple skin and how to operate the equipment.		
☉	Construction of two direct solar dryers by the community. Training was provided in the drying of locally grown fruits and vegetables using the dryers.		
☉	Training of 20 men and women in food preparation using the locally grown vegetables. Members learned how to incorporate vegetables in their meals in order to improve their nutritional intake		
☉	Training of 20 men and women in food preservation. Participants are capable of preparing preserved tomatoes, papayas, pineapples, jippy jappa, meat and also how to make jams and fruit cocktail.		
☉	Involvement of all members in the cultivation of vegetables for home consumption.		
☉	Training of 15 members in the cultivation of vegetables and pest management and cost analysis in the cultivation of cabbages.		
☉	Construction of a double VIP latrine for the community and the school children.		
☉	Construction of a platform and installation of water tanks for the School		
☉	Training of 12 members in leadership skills.		
WORKING GROUP			
Thomas Sho	Benito Sho	Emeterio Sho	Abelino Oh
Hilario Sho	Clemento Sho	Gregorio Oh	Antonio Sho

SAN JOSE VILLAGE PROFILE

Community:	San Jose Village
Location:	29 miles north west of Punta Gorda Town
EXISTING CONDITIONS	
Administration:	Village Council and Alcalde System
Political Constituency:	Toledo West
SOCIAL FACTORS	
Population:	900 inhabitants
Ethnicity:	Predominantly Maya with some Kekchi Maya
Education:	One Primary School Managed by the Roman Catholic Mission. The School Building is in fair condition. Has eight classrooms with 9 teachers and 241 students. Resident teachers are provided with living quarters.
Health:	There is a community health post whose roof was recently refurbished and is in fair condition. There is a Community Nurse's Aide, but there is a lack of equipment and medical supplies. The mobile clinic from Punta Gorda Town visits every 8 weeks
Prevalent Disease/condition:	Diarrhea, parasites, scabies & conjunctivitis. Women and Men complain of weakness
Housing:	Mostly traditional houses of thatched roof, wooden walls and earthen floors. Some houses are of concrete and wooden walls with zinc roofing
Community Group:	Four Women's Groups (Morning Star, Shining Moon, Hummingbird and Southside Kanagre) PAHO/ INCAP Group, Green Creek Group, Maya Rainforest
ECONOMIC FACTORS	
Source of income:	Primarily farming (grains, root crops and vegetables). Women sell handicrafts and embroidery. Young men join the Belize Defence Force
Business Initiatives:	3 Grocery shops, Sale of Art and Crafts
Comment:	Community members depend on market day to sell their produce in Punta Gorda. Corn and black beans are sold across the border in the Guatemala area
UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
Water Supply and use:	Two functional hand pumps. A rudimentary water system is near completion. The community faces shortage of water during the dry season.
Power Supply and use:	The community does not have electricity.
Means of Communication:	Public transportation and community telephone. A school bus travels daily between San Jose and Punta Gorda Town
LAND	
Relief:	Gently rolling and high hills
Land Settlement/tenure:	San Jose is located in the Columbia Forest Reserve. However some individuals hold leases while others farm on national land. The land is used for farming and residential purposes
Comments:	Farmers are concerned about land security

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
Solid Wastes:	Each family is responsible for the disposal of its own wastes. Burning is the most common method of waste disposal
Liquid Waste:	Some 15% of households use pit latrines, 85% use the bush
Pollution:	Fecal contamination of creeks and waterways
Pesticides:	Used in small quantities in the corn and rice fields
Logging:	Presently hauling and processing the fallen trees under an agreement with the Village Council
Important Habitat:	Water falls, caves, ruins, sink holes and rainforest
Comment:	These attractions are not promoted by the villagers
NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY	
Administrative and institutional development:	Training in management
Social Factors:	Construction of a new Health Center, construction of a new school Need to provide Health worker with supplies and equipment
Economic Development:	Food Drying Technology project, Local chicken rearing as food security, Land and farm management and market accessibility
Utilities and Infrastructure:	Complete rudimentary water system
Land Use:	Land lease for farmers, Training in pesticide management
Environmental Improvement:	Training session in environmental protection completed by community members, new agriculture initiative needed, Train and use local tour guides Need latrine project
PROGRESS 2000 -2004	
☉	Workshop in planning with 20 members to analyze the community situation and formulate a development plan for the community group as well as for the Village Council.
☉	Workshop in the cultivation of vegetables and pest management with 43 participants including 15 women. Members were trained to cultivate tomatoes, cabbages, sweet peppers, cucumber and hot habanera peppers. A Cost Analysis for the cultivation of one acre of cabbages was done
☉	Training of four members in Food Technology at the Taiwanese center in Central Farm. Participants learned to make corn flour, corn cracker dry pineapple, papaya and to manage the equipment.
☉	Construction of two direct solar dryers and training in their use for the dehydration of locally grown vegetables and fruits.
☉	Workshop in project development for 15 community members.
☉	15 women trained in Food and Nutrition
☉	Two Workshops in Food Preparation conducted with 20 women in which they learned how to prepare meals using their own locally grown vegetables.
☉	Training of 20 women in Food preservation. Women obtained skills in preserving tomatoes, pineapples, papayas and how to make jams.
☉	Training of 25 men in Hydroponics and in the preparation of organic fertilizer. Members obtained skills in preparing the fertilizer to be used in the production of cacao and vegetables.
☉	Training of 15 men in Chicken Rearing. Members acquired skills in the management, feed conversion and cost analysis involved in chicken rearing.
☉	Training of 13 women in pig rearing from the selection of gilts to the management of piglets and disease prevention.
☉	Securing of funds for the implementation of the chicken project by 15 families. Each family received 15 yards of chicken wire and 25 chicks.
☉	Securing of funds for the implementation of a pig project by 13 women, each of whom received three piglets, zinc, sand and cement.
☉	Training in leadership skills for 15 women.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of 15 home organic vegetable gardens by 15 women in order to produce vegetables and incorporate them into their daily diet. Cultivation of vegetables as well as hot habanero peppers by 15 men. Training as well as seeds was provided. Participation of one member of San Jose community in the 3rd Food and Nutrition Fair held in San Vito, Coto Brus, Costa Rica. Participation of both men and women in the Food and Nutrition Training held in Punta Gorda Town. Participation of 20 community members both men and women in the Food and Nutrition Security and Agricultural Fair held in October, 2003 in Punta Gorda Town. Assistance in the construction of a platform and installation of two water tanks for the school. 	
WORKING GROUP	WOMEN'S GROUP
Justino Peck	Thomas Coh
Madonio Cal	Candido Coh
Salustino Peck	Catarino Tzub
Isidoro Peck	Guillermo Ical
Alejandro Ical	Janelee Pop
	Gregoria Teck
	Georgina Cal
	Silveria Tsub
	Ansensiona Teul
	Susie Cal
	Olga Coh
	Martina Pop
	Segundina Cho
	Patricia Bolon
	Justina Cal
	Arista Cal
	Agapita Tsub
	Valentino Pop

*Profile format adapted from the Environmental and Social Technical Assistance Project (ESTAP)

11.2 Map of the Toledo District



