

**C**ARIBBEAN  
**D**EVELOPMENT  
AND  
**C**O-OPERATION  
**C**OMMITTEE



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SOME ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN BELIZE  
PLANNING EXPERIENCES IN BELIZE

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## SOME ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN BELIZE

### PLANNING EXPERIENCES IN BELIZE

Planning is a relatively new exercise in Belize. It was not until the early 1960's that a World Bank Team carried out a comprehensive survey of the country's resources and potential and provided proposals for accelerated economic development. These proposals were later consolidated in the 1964-1970 Development Plan.

After its first two years in existence, the Plan was overtaken by a Tripartite Economic Survey, the main objective of which was "to analyse the economy of the country and its growth potential and to suggest guidelines for development over the next five years".

Neither the targets in the Plan nor the guidelines suggested by the Survey were consciously followed even though a Planning Unit was created in the late 1960's. It is safe to say therefore that whatever progress was made during the 1964-1970 period was due mainly to spontaneous developments rather than conscious and specific efforts.

This undesirable state of affairs resulted from three main factors as follows:

1. Staff: There was a serious shortage of trained and experienced personnel in development planning. Only one person was trained in Economics in the early 1960's, and a few others later, and none of these had any experience in planning;
2. Data: Even if trained and experienced staff could be recruited from overseas, there was a general shortage of statistical data particularly national accounts statistics on which any realistic planning could be based; and



3. Willingness to Plan: There was a general lack of enthusiasm about planning. Ignorance about planning on the part of many high officials led them to maintain the idea that planning is an unnecessary task which confines one to a specific path while ad hoc decisions are more able to meet the requirements of day to day affairs. A general unwillingness to plan or to follow a plan therefore prevailed at all levels of society.

It was not until the early 1970's that the idea of planning began to take root. This was due to the younger trained personnel becoming more experienced and more convinced that planning is an essential exercise for the growth and development of the economy in a path which serves the best interests of the society.

#### The Planning Machinery

The planning machinery of Belize consists of five bodies including the Central Planning Unit. The Cabinet Development Committee (CDC) is the supreme body responsible for planning, plan implementation and reporting to the Nation.

The Central Planning Unit acts as Secretariat to the CDC to which it provides advice on economic matters and on the co-ordination of proposals submitted by Ministries for inclusion in the Plan. The C.P.U. also liaise with Ministries and District Committees both in Plan preparation and implementation, and it keeps in touch with the private sector through the National Economic Development Committee (NEDC). (Please see Appendix I - The Organizational Framework for Plan Preparation and Implementation).

#### The 1977-1979 Plan

Preparation of the 1977-1979 Development Plan provided valuable experience to the CPU even though there were many moments of disappointments in making the Organizational Framework a workable reality.

Problems were first encountered with Ministries which delayed or did not establish their Development Committees. Even those which did have Committees did not prepare proposals for consideration and thereafter inclusion in the Plan. Proposals were therefore prepared by the C.P.U. and transmitted to the various Ministries for consideration. Only two Ministries held meetings to consider these proposals, others merely sent comments to the C.P.U. The burden of preparing the Plan therefore fell squarely on the Central Planning Unit.

Attempts by the Central Planning Unit to convene District Committees also met with fraught as it was often difficult to have a quorum. This was true of all other committees.

Failure to get co-operation from the various committees meant that the C.P.U. had to make its own investigations and consultations in both the public and private sector to compile and analyse the data required to prepare the Plan. It was only when the Plan as a Draft was submitted to Cabinet that Ministries became more active in airing their views and aspirations. But even these resulted in only minor changes in the draft before it was published.

### Recent Trends in Planning

#### A Changing Situation

Notwithstanding the difficulties experienced during the preparation of the 1977-1979 Plan, the general attitudes of Ministries and Departments appear to be changing and, responses for the 1979-1981 Plan should be more encouraging. This apparent, more favourable view towards planning resulted from a number of factors. Firstly, the Planning Unit is now involved in the establishment of priorities for capital projects and it administers overseas aid funds which form the greater part of capital expenditures. In carrying out these functions the Unit assists



Ministries and Departments in the preparation of their capital projects. Secondly, Ministries are aware of the fact that application for funds require planning on a long term basis and hence it is essential that sectoral programmes be prepared well in advance of any application. Ministries also recognise that a Plan is an essential document which is required by aid donors and other institutions which provide financial and technical assistance. Thirdly, the Planning Unit staff are now more experienced and it is better placed to provide the required statistical data for planning.

#### Sectoral Planning

Although there is generally a more favourable attitude towards planning, very little is being done at the sectoral level. This is mainly because of the shortage of planning personnel in the Ministries. To help to meet this need it was proposed that each Ministry designate one of its officers to liaise with the Planning Unit. The Unit itself should designate one of its officers to give particular attention to particular sectors. In this way the Unit will be able to work closely with a particular officer in preparing sectoral plans for the Ministries. This proposal will also ensure the co-ordination of efforts from all Ministries with the Unit.

During the last planning period only limited success was made in carrying out this proposal; the position should improve in preparing the next Plan as the staffing problems in the Ministries are being dealt with more effectively.

#### Project Planning

Much work has been done by the Unit regarding the preparation of projects identified in the 1977-1979 Plan. But very little has been done in the planning of projects in the real sense. Again this is due mainly to the shortage of trained staff,

particularly in the Ministries. But the need for project planning is recognized and during the next planning period this should be an increasingly important aspect of the planning system.

### Sub-Regional Planning

#### a) Energy

Although there is no specific 'energy plan' in Belize, the need to consider and explore sources of energy is fully recognized. Towards this end the present development plan makes provision for the exploration of oil resources and the development of hydro-power.

At the sub-regional level both these sources of energy can be developed to meet the mutual needs of Belize and neighbouring countries. This can be done in terms of technical assistance and expertise in petroleum exploration from say, Mexico and Trinidad and the establishment of hydro-plants on the streams which are adjacent to the borders of two or more countries. The possibilities of hydro-power is being actively pursued in Belize and joint missions from two or more countries, including the UN could well determine its outcome.

#### b) Natural Resources

Land for the continued development of forestry and agriculture is the country's major natural resource. Areas suitable for agriculture and forestry are already being identified and further studies are being undertaken to ensure that these lands are utilized in the best interest of the nation.

Natural Resource Planning in Belize is much concerned with activities in the Region. In fact the development plan made specific reference to the production of foodstuffs and manufactured goods for export to the Region. The Plan also made specific mention of possible joint development projects with Regional partners. One of these projects is now in the pipeline.



Since Belize is relatively under-populated as compared with most other territories in the Region the planning and execution of joint projects could be instrumental in the further development of Belizean lands, in reducing population pressures particularly in the islands and in providing a sound source of employment for their growing populations. Further land development in Belize will also mean a growing supply of foodstuffs for the Region, and will lessen the Region's dependence on extra-regional sources for food supplies.

c) Industrial Development

The importance of the industrial sector in the economy is clearly recognized by the Government and continued efforts are being made to attract industrial enterprises to produce both for the domestic market and for export. In this regard, generous concessions are granted to newly established enterprises; also extension of concessions are sometimes granted to existing ones.

The position of the industrial sector of the economy improved consistently during the 1970-1976 period the only exception was in 1975 when, due to a prolonged drought, the largest industry, sugar, was affected adversely. The sector grew at an annual compound rate of 13.4 per cent during 1970-1974 as compared with the total economy which grew at 5.6 per cent. This was due mainly to the establishment of new industries e.g. battery assembly, paper products, garments and beer and stout. The increase in 1976 was again due to new industries e.g. flour milling and metal products.

The position in 1977 should have improved considerably as supplies of sugar cane to the sugar factories increased by 54.1 per cent over the 1976 level. Several smaller industries also expanded during 1976-1977. These included meat products, bakery products and fishery products.

During 1977 the Government, through UNDP Technical Assistance obtained the services of two experts. One was assigned to develop an operation plan for the industrial sector and the other to explore to what extent Government can attract more industries through the provision of incentives. The reports of these experts were considered and positive action is now being taken to get new industries to be established e.g. clay products, charcoal, meat and vegetable canning, leather products etc.

The Plan made specific reference to the Region as a source of capital funds and technical skills for the industrial sector, and a market for industrial goods. But while regional industrial planning has not taken place in any meaningful way, this exercise could be most useful in identifying possible areas of co-operation and assistance, not only in areas of trade but also in the implementation of industrial projects. Regional industrial planning could also ensure that industries are more equitably distributed in the Region and that industrial plants are more effectively utilized to meet the demands of the Regional markets. Planning experiences during the last few years indicate that Regional efforts in the industrial sector could provide a major thrust towards the economic development of the Region and future planning will no doubt be influenced in this direction.

d) The Role of Women

Women have always been involved in all aspects of development in Belize. There is, however, much scope for expanding their activities, particularly at the technical and managerial levels. And, while no real plans are afoot towards this end it is generally accepted that women should form an integral part of the country's developmental activities.

It is understood that organizations for the development of Women are already operating in some countries of the Region while in Belize the



formation of Womens' Associations is a continuous exercise. Possibilities exist therefore, for the development of joint projects among these Womens' groups and Associations of the Region, particularly since it is recognized that women can play an increasingly important role not only in the homes or offices but also in the more productive enterprises such as agriculture, industry and tourism.

Role of the UN System in Development  
Planning in Individual Countries and  
on a Sub-Regional Basis

During the last three years two UN Missions were provided to Belize to assist in development planning. These Missions were certainly appreciated, but it is felt in many places that the periods they covered were too short to enable their assistance to make any significant contribution to the local planning organization.

Development planning is a long term exercise which requires an intimate knowledge of the human and physical resources of the country, the constraints to growth and the potential for further development. It is essential therefore that any assistance in this field should be on a continuous basis for 2 - 3 years with short missions say 2 - 3 months per year over another 2 - 3 years. Only in this way will the few and little experienced local personnel be able to develop the techniques required for carrying on the exercise in the future.

In the regional context, Belize did get two short Missions from the Regional Economic Adviser (ECA) but again these were hardly long enough for the Missions to be acquainted with the particular conditions of the country.

While development planning should involve regional efforts to ensure co-ordination at the regional level and to avoid duplication of production in some fields, this could only be

achieved if individual planning agencies are strengthened. It is apparent therefore that any UN assistance in planning should be aimed firstly at developing individual agencies and with only limited regional integration. Only when practical results can be had from these agencies separately, should regional assistance be granted more intensively.



ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PREPARATION  
OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1979-1981

(Chart attached)

Cabinet Development Committee

1. To meet as frequently as Chairman requests

Chairman: The Premier

Membership: Ministers of Finance and Economic  
Planning, Works, Agriculture, Education  
and Trade and Industry.  
Other Ministers to be invited as required.

Secretary: Head of Central Planning Unit

Functions - Supreme body responsible for planning, implementing  
the Plan, maintaining a constant watch on progress,  
and reporting to the nation.

a) Secreatariat - Central Planning Unit

Functions - Executive arm of the Cabinet Development Committee  
and under its direction - advise on economic matters,  
planning, help to co-ordinate proposals of the  
Ministries in the Plan, keep the Plan up-to-date;  
report to C.D.C. on general economic situation and  
on progress of Plan preparation, revision and  
implementation; make studies as bases for policy  
recommendations; collect, compile and interpret  
statistical data; have representation on all  
Ministry Development Committees; convene the  
Central Co-ordinating Committee, maintain liaison  
with the District Committees.

b) National Economic Development Committee

Composition: 10 members from major interest group e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Trade Unions, Co-operative bodies etc. (should include at least one private person from each District).

Chairman - elected from among members

Secretary - Head of Central Planning Unit to meet at least twice a year - each meeting should be in a different district.

Functions - A testing ground for the possible reaction of different sections of the population to Government's policies and programmes.

2. Ministry Development Committees

To meet at least every four months.

Chairman: The Minister

Dep. Chairman: The Parliamentary or Permanent Secretary

Secretary: The Assistant Secretary

Membership: A representative of the Central Planning Unit, Heads of Departments and such other persons as the Minister may invite.

Functions - To outline the various programmes and projects contemplated by the various Ministries for the Plan period and monitoring of progress in the implementation of projects under the general supervision of Permanent Secretaries.

3. Central Co-ordination Committee

To meet at least every four months.

Convenor: Head of Central Planning Unit

Membership: Permanent Secretaries - Finance, Works, Agriculture, Education and Trade and Industry. (Other Permanent Secretaries invited as required).

Functions - To ensure co-ordination of the programmes of Ministries and Departments where necessary, in the execution of projects. For example, rural community



development and agricultural extension need to  
work in hand.

4. District Co-ordination Committees

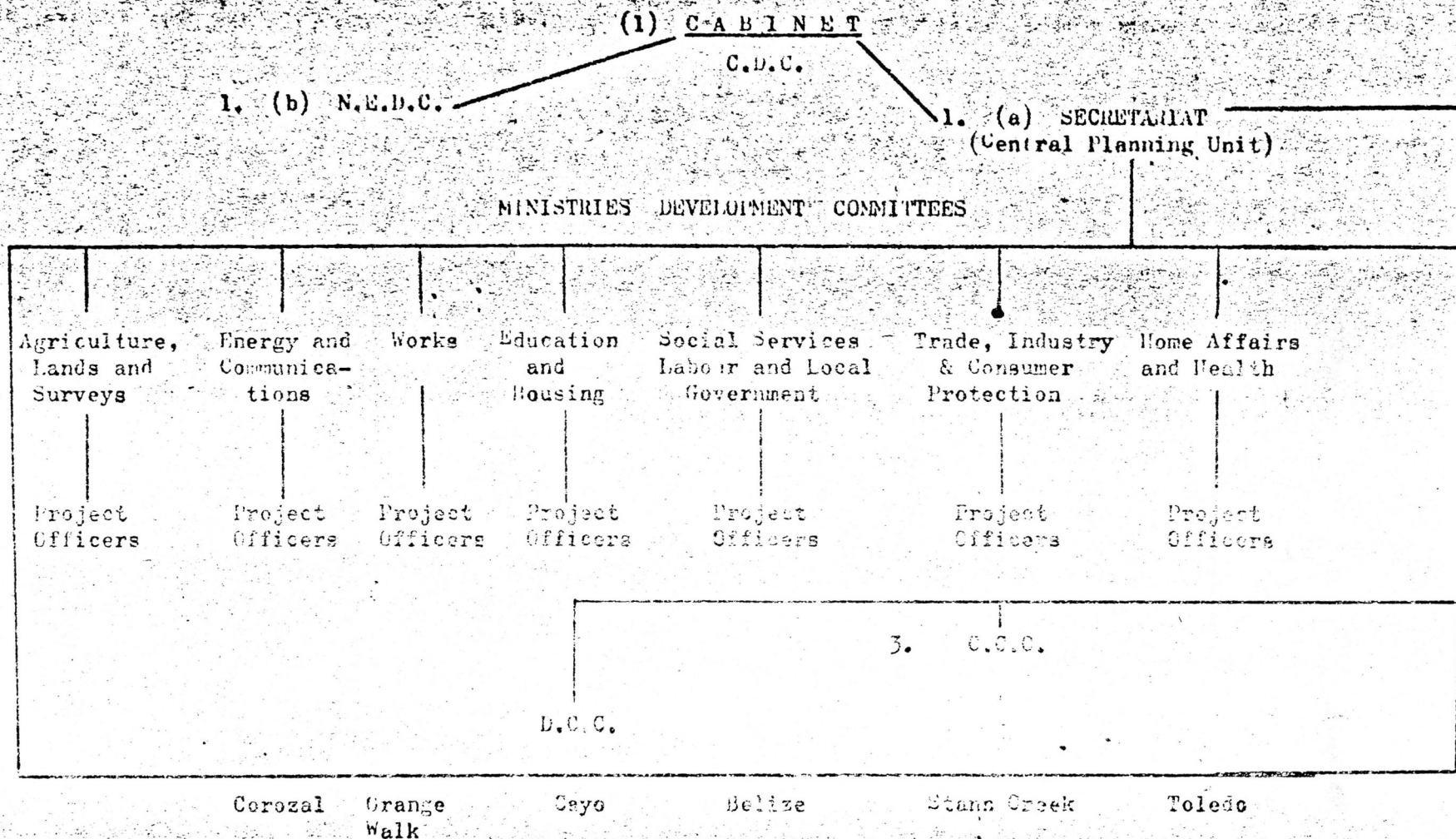
To meet at least every three months.

**Convenor:** Head of Planning Unit or his nominee

**Secretary:** To be elected from among members

**Membership:** District Officer and Senior Extension  
staff in the District.

Functions - To ensure proper co-ordination of the Plan at the  
District level and channel the views and aspirations  
of the village councils to the C.C.C. during the  
process of Plan preparation and implementation  
through the Central Planning Unit.



(Chart)

- N.E.D.C. - National Economic Development Council
- C.C.C. - Central Co-ordinating Committee
- C.D.C. - Cabinet Development Committee
- D.C.C. - District Co-ordinating Committee