APPENDIX ii

A VISION FOR CHANGE

A Social Plan for Belize City

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ABSTRACT

The plan is a two-year community action design for social change in Belize City. Delineated beyond Police Street, in St. Martin de Porres, and southwest of the southern end of the Central American Boulevard in Port Loyola of Belize City for this purpose, are distinct boundaries for two Empowerment Zones (EZ). These will be targeted as the arena for social action. It is aimed at altering the condition of powerlessness of the residents within these neighborhoods. Recent demographic findings disclose startling statistics that the entire St. Martins[71] and Port Loyola areas are socially "distressed". Nearly one-quarter (21%) of the Belize City population live below the poverty level; the incidence of poverty is highest among Garifuna-headed households (33%), with Creole-headed households a close third (22.4%); 62% of the population is below 19 years; infant mortality rate is 20; and 20% of all live births are to young adults. Some of these glaring statistics are the revelation of the first study on poverty in Belize (Lewis, 1994), and no doubt it is worse in the two targeted areas. At the same there are no structures in place to address the problem.

The thrust of this plan is community empowerment through "Partnership", whereby principal players namely, government,

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[71] This area has been recognized as "poor" by government, and was included in the poverty study on communities conducted in the country and financed by the Caribbean Development Bank.

citizens, and business sector, consolidate endeavors to ameliorate this predicament. The mission is social change utilizing a collaborative approach to social planning, and targeting households as social institutions for change.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Belize City, the target site for this social plan is the largest urban community, and is located on the east coast of the country (Fig. 1), bordering the Caribbean Sea. It is also the site for a fifty million dollar ($50M) physical infrastructure project, with very little trickling down in terms of jobs to city dwellers. The main source of economic activity is services, through the tourism industry, a major source of income and foreign exchange. Unemployment is high particularly among the youths. Government sources (Central Statistical Office) claimed 13%, but 'street' sources predict 20% plus.

The two specific areas targeted in Port Loyola and St. Martins are newly created underclass suburbia. These lack basic infrastructure, as streets, adequate housing, toilet facilities, and a yard that is devoid of water and 'bush' for children to play. To date, the residents comprise of African Belizeans of the Creole and Garifuna ethnicity. In other

words, it is also home to the GariKriols. Also it is commonly known that the schools, both at the primary and secondary levels, in these neighborhoods fall behind in academic performance relative to the rest of the city.

The devastating social, cultural, and economic effect of emigrating from rural to urban have brought on a sense of hopelessness, which is just now emerging. The next two years (1996-1998) are electioneering years, when the time is ripe for the community to bear pressure on government leaders for their own welfare.

This social plan will borrow some strategies and goals from the New Orleans Empowerment Zone Plan (EPZ). The reason is that New Orleans and Belize share some commonalities: Caribbean flavor, lies below water level by the sea, a multi-ethnic society, a large black population, and the ability of groups to live in 'harmony' with each other. Like New Orleans, Belize City's demographic data (Table 6) discloses some social distress: infant mortality rate is 20; 27.7% of the population is below poverty (Lewis, 1994), including 6.7% at extreme poverty; and 20% of births are to adolescents. This is compounded by rise in crime and North American type 'gang' activity. This action plan is the "vision" for social change, to develop the competence of residents, in order to deal with the problems of their neighborhoods.

Table 6

SOCIAL STATISTICS ON NEW ORLEANS AND BELIZE

Category	New Orleans	Belize Country	Belize City
Population	500,000	200,000	60,000
% Black pop.	62%	36.4%	71.2%
% pop. under 18	27.5%	55%	62%
% below poverty	30.6%	22.6%	21.0%
% at extreme poverty	--	6.7%	6.7%
Infant mortality rate	14.7	18.9	20
Unemployment	12.4%	13%	17%
Adolescent pregnancy	23.5%	19%	20%

Source: EPZ plan for New Orleans
Belize Census Report, 1991
Poverty Report for Belize, 1994

The Problem

Emerging from the rigid class structure of colonialism, social stratification in Belize is not a phenomenon. However, it was 'THEM'[71] versus 'US'[72]. Then independence (1981) brought about increased social stratification, when housing patterns and location were equated with socio-economic status, and now (1990's) urbanization. So one became familiar with the term 'low status' but not poverty. The 'P' word was introduced via a poverty profile report[73] for Belize funded by

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[71] 'THEM' refers to the Colonizers, the British type, and or the near white.

[72] 'US' refers to the Belizeans--Black, Maya, Mestizo, etc.

[73] The method applied in this study is debatable for Belize, and is compounded by limitations cited that may have affected the outcome considerably.

USAID in November 1994. Since then the awareness to poverty has taken many forms, except united action.

The problem in this plan is the feeling of powerlessness in the community due to the high incidence of poverty, though this is still to be defined officially for Belize. The target population is two extreme areas in Port Loyola and St. Martins in Belize, because they demonstrate the beginnings of an 'enclaved' underclass, an ethnic poverty. As the recognition of the dilemma is recent there are no social and infrastructure services to deal with this, so no history of anti-poverty efforts. The government arm responsible for social services holds the smallest budget. However, the Prime Minister in his New Years' address to the nation pledged direct attention to the problem. An on-going 'poverty' assessment is presently being undertaken by consultants from the Caribbean Development Bank, which includes the St. Martin's area.

My assessment of the situation is that poverty is in a state of accretion, and the powerlessness perceived in the community is due to a loss of its 'spirit'. The community wants the opportunity to improve their situation. This can be done through developmental activities to remove the barriers that impede people from taking advantage. Presently there are six active community groups around Belize City, two are ethnic organizations (Garifuna and Creole), another is a woman for development type, two are church action oriented type

organizations, and the last is a perceived 'leftist' education organization.

ACTION STRATEGIES

The governing body for the Empowerment Zone will be a Zone Management Board (ZMB) whose members will comprise the Area Representative, the Mayor, three local business persons, a representative from the non-government organizations, and six indigenous leaders from the zone. The principal strategy is to create and nurture strong local organizations that encourage indigenous leadership, control, and self-sufficiency. The intent is effective community social action to motivate the Neighborhood Associations. This will be done through trained indigenous leaders, who are members of the communities, have rapport with the communities, and can gain legitimacy from the communities, all of which are advantages to the success of the plan. Although the feeling of powerlessness is unusually inconsistent with effective leadership, these communities are different in that: they want to improve their predicament; they are yet to be stigmatized by poverty; the community is young, but educated (high school level, 73%).

The Neighborhood Associations will provide a convenient communication channel through which the community members voice their objections and/or criticisms to public policy and programs. For the plan to be successful, the activities

should be opportunity oriented (Clarke and Hopkins: 1969) instead of service oriented; that is on a self-help, democratic basis, where community members are involved in decision making, policy making, and are placed in a position of influence. This is the opposite of condescending attitudes of 'outsiders' which increase powerlessness and dependency. The success of an organization is its strength and independence through self-help, and that "priorities are constant with the wishes of the poor people who are supposed to be helped" (Clarke and Hopkins, 1969: 27).

There are several potential partners some of whom are: Students and faculty of our tertiary level institutions, such as University of the West Indies, University College of Belize, and St. John's Jr. College, a large group of whom are Creoles and Garinagu who have "made" it; some non-governmental Organizations; and government through the office of the Area Representative. These will provide expertise as trainers and workers. They bring theoretical as well as practical experience in field work, implementation of community self-help projects, etc. Some are members of the community who are only too willing to reciprocate. Funds will be obtained through the Central Government and members of the business community.

The sub-themes are as follows:

1. To develop within the zone indigenous organizers and strong representatives for each NA

The purpose is awareness of problems by the community through indigenous leaders. When people know what their problems are, they may cooperate to effect appropriate action. They will be trained in leadership development, negotiation, advocacy, self-esteem, and management skills.

2. To create strong and independent Neighborhood Associations within the Empowerment Zone

The intent is to establish Neighborhood Associations (NA) with responsibility to spearhead community education ventures. These will be the forums for activities by the indigenous leaders.

3. To utilize student interns and work study participants to assist Neighborhood Associations mentioned above

The ambition is to tap into the inestimable but inexpensive labor of students, with interest in community issues.

3. Encourage political participation and to organize for action

The idea is to increase voter turn-out at elections and voter participation, as well as awareness of individual rights and responsibilities to government actions or lack thereof. Through exhortation individuals will be inspired into exercising their inalienable right. This is a form of empowerment.

GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the EZP is to "increase capacity" in "distressed neighborhoods" involving all three Community Players. The specific goal is community empowerment and grassroots participation with neighborhoods as the "building blocks" to maximize the power that exists within the community.

METHOD

Fact Finding

Although some baseline data have been collected, I would still conduct an environmental scan and collaborate findings with this and other existing data. The scan will be accomplished through voluntary efforts of students.

The advantage of this mini assessment is three-fold: First to gather information on facets in the environment that may impinge and/or impact on my plan. Secondly, it will generate a ripple effect through the community, and aid in heralding the plan. Thirdly, this exercise will give an insight into the nuances of the culture, the value climate within the community including group ethos and psychic relations, and the communication channels. Overall the advantage is to define as accurately as possible what community power exists.

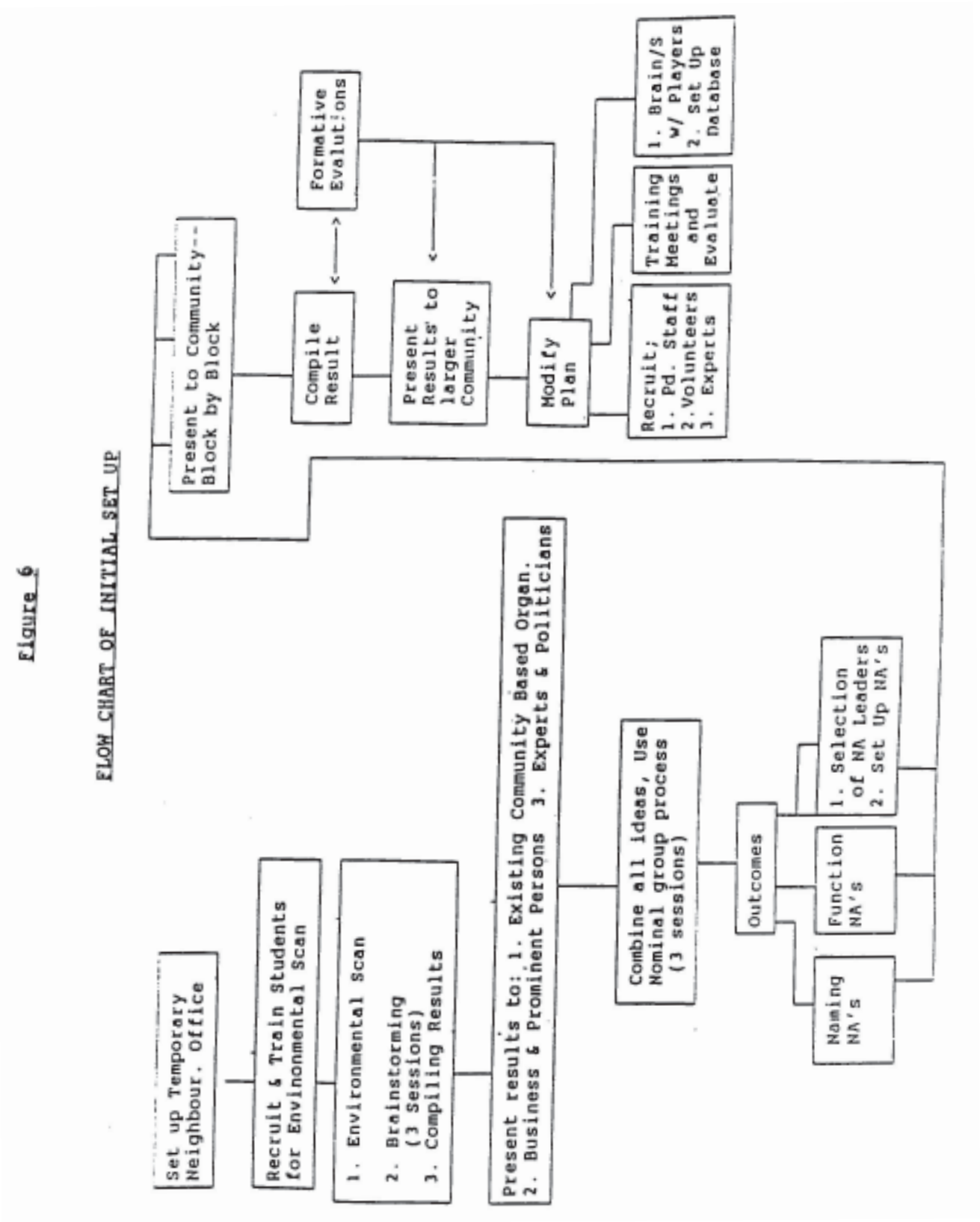
Lastly, a list of existing community based organizations, their leaders, and key informants, will be compiled. Key informants are those who influence the value climate.

Plan of Action

Armed with the information above, I will prepare a mini impact report to guide the plan of action. This will include a flow chart of the first phase (Fig. 6). The statement will include the following:

Figure 6

FLOW CHART OF INITIAL SET UP



1. Lists

a) list of significant persons such as religious leaders, developers, prominent civic personalities, credible experts

b) List of existing community based organizations

c) A profile of the persons/groups listed above, including background in activism, potential interest, statutory powers, their organizational ties, and mission statements of organizations

d) Availability of persons/groups for example, time of day or night, location, and type of authority

2. Plan for resolving differences

This will include a list of outside experts and political leaders, all those with influence to intervene as third party neutrals in possible disputes, including committed partners.

3. Plan for Communication Stations

Action hot lines will be set up in store fronts and NAs. This will be monitored on a voluntary basis by trained citizens. The community stores will be awarded a stipend for store space. An additional incentive for these stores may be new business generated by the presence of the NAs.

4. Plan for training

a) Environmental Scan--This is a one time workshop style training for participants of the environmental scan. These will be student volunteers from a social science discipline. Simulations will be utilized in eliminating those who are not field work material. Preference will be given to black women over twenty-five. As "insiders" these students know the nuances of the culture to contribute a unique analysis of the situation. They should also have less problems gaining entry into the community, as well as acquiring legitimacy from the community.

b) Training of trainers--To encourage a spread effect, the incentive for participating at the top level, and to maintain a cadre of trainers. Trainers are community members or 'insiders'.

c) Training of volunteers--These are 'outsiders' who do not fully qualify as experts such as students.

d) Training of Experts--Training will be limited to the nuances of the neighborhood culture, and conducted by trained indigenous leaders. By reversing roles, the capacity to nourish robust partnerships is engendered.

e) Community Training--Training to be conducted in various blocks within the EZ to facilitate smaller groups. Emphasis will be on involvement and individual understanding of issues.

5. Topics for Training

Topics will encompass the following: management, and negotiation skills, community responsibility, leadership, problem solving methods (cooperation), economic development, how democracy works, functions of government, power of the vote. This will be conducted initially by committed partners. Trained indigenous leaders will assist experts in training the community on a block-by-block basis.

6. Method of Training

A mix of efforts will be utilized to capture the attention of the neighborhoods, as follows:

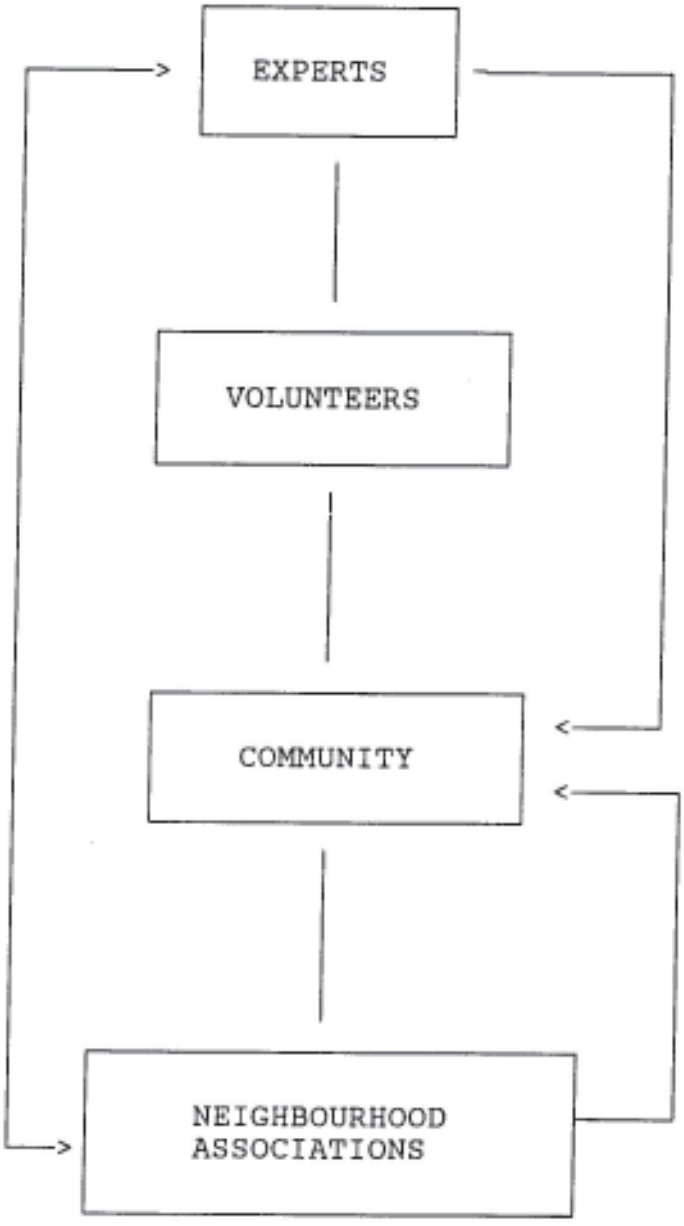
1. Formal Presentations--Workshops and panel discussions by experts. The workshops can also be conducted in an informal atmosphere with emphasis on individual participation.

2. Informal Presentations--Small group community seminars to benefit two way communication; for example, in brainstorming on specific projects or issues.

How will this be accomplished? A Speakers Bureau will be set up for faculty, students (university level), and citizens to participate. Training is to be open/entry to accommodate all participants with certificates issued as added incentive. Figure 7 demonstrates lines of communication for training.

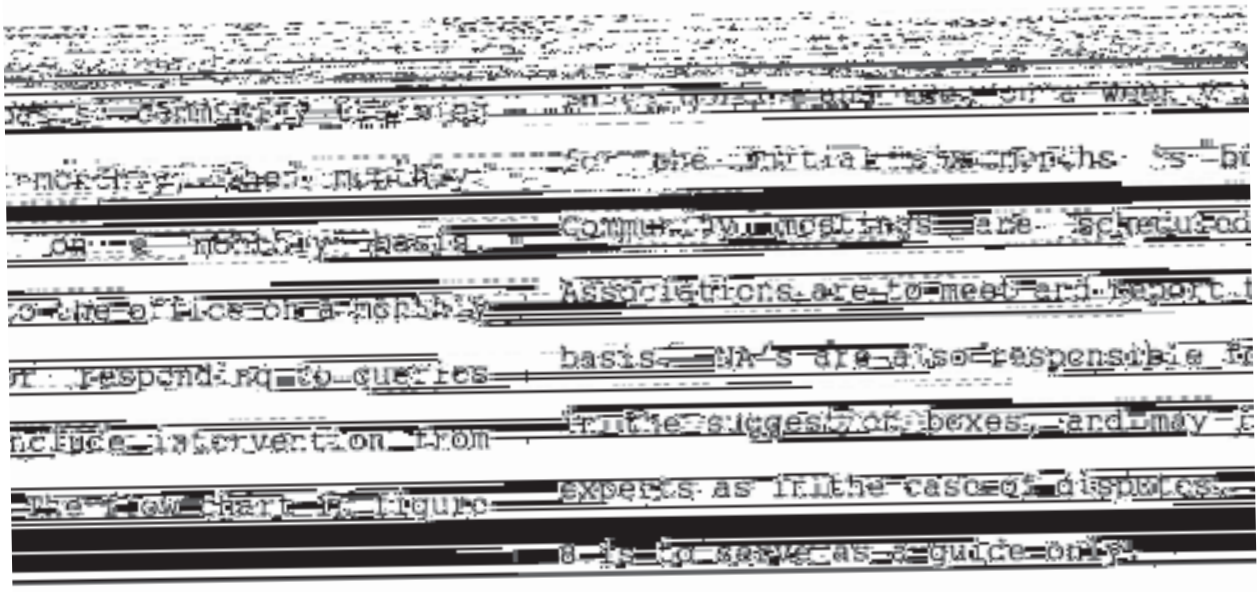
Figure 7

Training Flow Chart



SCHEDULE

Figure 9 represents a twelve-month schedule, but will be



EVALUATION

conducted throughout its
oals are being met, if
ly, and the extent of
ly the methods are being
ed from a sample of all
community members, NA's
loyed such as, quarterly
community meetings,
training session, by
visits. The information
uture directions.

Formative evaluations will be
five-year life, to monitor if g
resources are being used efficient
change--how effectively or efficient
applied. Information will be obtain
actors namely, experts, volunteers,
leaders. A mix of methods will be emp
questionnaires implemented during
questionnaires at the end of every
monitoring hotlines, and through home
will be used by NA's as a guide to f

Figure 9

SCHEDULE OF TASKS FOR 1 YEAR

TASKS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	BUDGET
1. Start Up														$ 35,200
Office Procedures Set Up	*													
Coordination with Partners	*	*												
Staff Recruitment	*													
2. Environmental Scan														$ 4,000
Recruit and Train Students	***													
Field Work		*	*											
Brain Storming (3X)		**	*											
Consulting Leaders (3X)		**	*											
Consult w/ Commercial and Property owners		*	**											
Consulting Community			*	*										
3. Neighbourhood Associations														$138,000
Set Up by function 10			*											
Identify Space			*											
Identify Storefronts			*											
Identify Leaders			*	*	*									
Staff Recruitment (1 & 3)			**											
Formation of Advisory Committee			*											
4. Volunteers and Experts														$ 14,000
Recruitment/Database			*	*	*	*	*				*	*	*	
Meet w/NA's				*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	
Meet with Community				*	*	*	*					*	*	
Familiarize w/Training Programmes				*	*	*								
				**			**							
EZP Site Visit				*	*									
Evaluation		**	*	*								*	*	
							*		*			*	*	
5. Training														$ 44,000
Trainers -feedback				>										
Volunteers - feedback				>			>		>			>		
Experts (7)- feedback				>	>			>		>				
Community - feedback					>							>	>	
Leaders - feedback			>		>		>				>		>	
6. Meeting														$ 6,500
NA Report			**	**	**	**	**	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Advisory Com. - Report			**	**	**	*	*	*	*		*		*	
Community				*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*		
7. Formative Evaluation														$ 10,000
Monthly/Report		>											>	
Quarterly/Report				*			*			*			*	
Annually/Report												*		
8. Modifications														$ 10,000
As needed		>											>	
9. Events														$ 20,000
Awards night						*							*	
City-wide Events			*		*				*			*		
Open House							*			*				
TOTAL														$277,500

A needs assessment will be conducted at the end of the first and second years, to identify unmet needs, and to measure the responsiveness of the programme to the previous needs identified. As a result new goals will be set, and old ones prioritized for the coming years. In the middle of the first and the commencement of the second, outside evaluators will be invited, and their findings compared with given benchmarks. This will demonstrate whether the programme is on target and then effect the necessary modifications. The Office and the NA will be audited annually.

VITA

Myrtle Palacio is a Belizean of Creole/Garifuna descent. She is married to Joseph, and together they have two children, Aniki and Arreini. Her university education was received at UC Berkeley and Armstrong University both in Berkeley, California. She graduated from the latter with a B.Sc. in accounting and business management, with cum laude honors in 1981.

She has participated in social science research projects in Belize and abroad on wide ranging topics including ethnicity. Her involvement in these projects extended from the level of field worker to coordinator, final report preparation, public presentation, and publication.

As an educator and business person she worked with a cross-section of the Belize City community. Her one attempt at direct political involvement in 1984 allowed her to take a critical look at the situation of Belizeans in one of the low socio-economic areas of Belize City. Hence she founded Glessima Research & Services Ltd. in 1984. Glessima pioneered the way for the computer industry in Belize. As a grassroots institution it utilizes the computer for research, and also assists students to gain economic self-sufficiency through the attainment of marketable skills.