



The Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management's Oil Advocacy Activity Report May – December 2006

1. The Challenge

This year SATIIM responded to a major challenge - proposed oil exploration and development in the Sarstoon Temash National Park (STNP) and surrounding communities. US Capital Energy (USCE), an American oil company, was given permission by the Belizean Forest Department in April 2006 to begin seismic testing in the National Park. Permission that SATIIM's Board and staff felt was illegal and unfair. In response, SATIIM mounted a multifaceted advocacy campaign that involved raising awareness of the oil exploration issue through public outreach and education, coalition building, legal action, policy research and analysis, mobilizing local supporters, lobbying Government ministers, generating international political, technical and financial support and preparing to monitor and mitigate activities in the STNP if oil exploration goes ahead.

We began the campaign with ambitious objectives- to halt or mitigate the impacts of oil exploration in the STNP and to incorporate biodiversity conservation and indigenous community concerns into Belize's relevant policies and regulations. Thanks to funding from IUCN, the Summit Foundation, Green Grants, Conservation International and the Oak Foundation, SATIIM has been able to carry out oil advocacy activities that support these objectives in a timely and effective way.

Overall, SATIIM's advocacy campaign has been remarkably successful, given the significant power imbalance between a small community-based indigenous organization and an international oil company in collusion with government. Our success has come at a high cost, however. When the oil company realized that SATIIM was serious about taking the GOB to court over this issue, and had the resources and wherewithal to do so, they went on the offensive against SATIIM and began a concerted campaign in the communities and the national media to discredit us. They used all manner of coercion, manipulation and outright bribery to carry much of the elected village leadership from the STNP buffer zone communities to Belmopan (the nation's capital), where they signed legal affidavits attacking SATIIM and its right to act on behalf of the communities. They paid villagers to carry out a protest march at the SATIIM office, and to go on national television and radio denouncing SATIIM and its leadership. One of SATIIM's elected Board Members, Mrs. Beatrice Canelo from Crique Sarco village, resigned from the SATIIM Board and is now working for USCE, and many community leaders have sided with the company, saying they prefer short term employment to the conservation of the STNP, or the long term protection of their rights. This has significantly undermined community support for the conservation of the STNP built up over the last nine years of SATIIM's work, and has divided the communities in a very unfortunate manner.

Despite these challenges, SATIIM remains committed to protection of the STNP and long term community rights and interests and has been working to galvanize support from those sectors of the communities not convinced by the oil company promises of

jobs and development. SATIIM has significantly strengthened its advocacy capacity through the process of this campaign, and has built a broad based, although still emerging, coalition of indigenous and conservation organizations interested in pursuing both the oil issue and the co-management issues raised by the STNP legal case. We have detailed activities and results below.

2. Results

Result: A legal case is put forward in the Supreme Court of Belize and SATIIM's Judicial Review finds EIA necessary before seismic testing begins in the Sarstoon Temash National Park

SATIIM successfully filed a lawsuit on May 15, 2006 challenging the government's issuance of permission to USCE for seismic testing, resulting in a judicial review in the Supreme Court of Belize of several aspects of the case, including whether oil exploration is allowed in protected areas under the National Parks System Act, what conditions are imposed by the Environmental Protection Act (EPA), whether the permit was issued correctly by the Forest Department (FD) and whether SATIIM has the "legitimate expectation" to be consulted in that decision as co-manager of the Park.

This resulted in the issuance by the court of an injunction halting USCE's seismic testing program. The court proceedings led to a very clear implication that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was required under law, and the following week the Government of Belize announced that they were requiring an EIA from Belize Natural Energy (BNE), who have been pumping oil in the Cayo District in western Belize for the past year without having ever prepared an EIA.



SATIIM received a lot of press national press coverage during our campaign, especially at Supreme Court decision time. One of our lawyers, Hon. Dean Barrow, is seen here with the press on September 27, 2006.

On Wednesday September 27, 2006, the Supreme Court of Belize completed their judicial review and ruled that the permission issued by the Forest Department to USCE to enter the National Park to conduct seismic surveys for oil exploration be quashed because an EIA was not done beforehand, and this violated the EPA. USCE now has to conduct an EIA for seismic testing and have it approved by Belize's National Environment Appraisal Committee (NEAC) before a permit can be issued. This decision signals to all oil prospectors and the Government that EIAs are absolutely necessary before oil exploration can begin in Belize. This sets an excellent precedent that will help to ensure future compliance with the Environmental Protection Act throughout Belize.

Although SATIIM celebrated this important victory, we were also hoping for a stronger judgment that would have found oil exploration – including seismic testing- to be illegal in National Parks as per the National Park Systems Act. This would have ensured that National Parks remain completely off limits for oil exploration and development in Belize. Instead, for the time being, they remain fair game for oil developers.

The Supreme Court also agreed with SATIIM's arguments that we had a "legitimate expectation" under the signed co-management agreement with the Forest Department, but that claims that the co-management agreement was breached were premature. He said that this legitimate expectation included consultation, but not necessarily participation in decisions. The court rejected the argument that there were irregularities in the way the USCE permit was issued by the Chief Forest Officer and not the Forest Department Administrator, as per the National Park Systems Act.

Lastly, the GOB also announced another policy change, raising the tax on oil companies to 40%, which has been widely seen an attempt to counteract the negative government image generated by so much positive media attention to the Sarstoon Temash case.



Mr. Loredo, Chair of SATIIM's Board of Directors, speaks at our first press conference in Belize City on May 15, 2006.

Each of these decisions has important policy implications for protected area managers and anyone interested in the strength and status of Belize's protected areas system.

Result: *Accurate, timely information was processed for NGO and community audiences on national law, international treaty obligations and international best practices with regard to oil development.*

Some limited funding for research was obtained from IUCN, the Summit and Oak Foundations and an intensive process was undertaken to develop policy positions around oil exploration in the national park during the months of May, June and July preceding and following the first hearing the Belizean Supreme Court. This included in-house research on the impact of oil development in other indigenous and protected areas, international best practices for biodiversity conservation and mitigation during oil exploration and background research on the oil issue in Belize. An initial policy document was refined and used in multiple press conferences, press releases, and public statements, and was also circulated widely within the NGO community in Belize and internationally through urgent action alerts.

Several important international policy initiatives were identified, including FIBA/WWF/IUCN and the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) which have both produced guidelines and recommendations around oil development in high biodiversity areas. Policy recommendations coming out of the IUCN, the Ramsar Secretariat and the Convention on Biological Diversity have been obtained and are being studied by staff to figure out their implication for our struggle. The pro bono services of an international expert were obtained through the US

based organization Earth Justice to produce a legal affidavit on the ecological impacts of seismic testing and a general policy back grounder was produced by colleagues from the Environmental Law Policy Group in the United States.

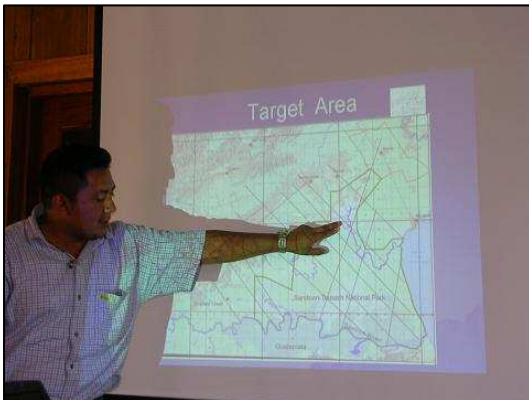
Following the Supreme Court decision in September, SATIIM's policy research and proposals focused on how SATIIM and the communities could best participate in and contribute to the EIA process. To ensure that the Terms of Reference (TORs) for the EIA require strong technical and scientific analysis we have proposed to the Government and the company a number of additions to the current approved TORs. SATIIM received free technical assistance from international experts, who reviewed the proposed Terms of Reference for the EIA to ensure that the highest international standards are met (Oct/Nov 2006).

SATIIM volunteer, Megan Bennett, attended a national workshop on Strategic Environmental Assessment in Belize City in November 2006, in order to gather information on how this policy tool could be used in the petroleum industry in Belize.

SATIIM has also developed and presented proposals for potential benefit sharing arrangements for local communities to ensure that appropriate compensation measures are in place if and when oil exploration goes ahead in and around the National Park.

Result: Community and NGO stakeholders are aware of implications and policy options regarding oil development in protected areas and indigenous lands.

The background research we did in the spring allowed SATIIM staff to assemble a power point presentation on the potential impacts of oil exploration, which was presented in the five buffer zone villages around the STNP and to other groups in the Toledo District over the spring and summer as discussed below under the coalition building activities.



David Itch, SATIIM's GIS analyst demonstrates where the proposed seismic testing lines will go at a community meeting in Conejo village in June 2006.

During the Supreme Court hearings, the lawyers for the government argued that both the SATIIM co-management agreement with the Forestry Department (which requires prior informed consent for FD authorization of activities in the STNP) and the STNP management plan signed by the Minister of Environment John Briceño were characterized as “informal agreements” which carry “no legal weight”. These comments were widely reported in the national media and SATIIM made sure that NGO and CBO colleagues were aware of this GOB position. This has created significant concern from fellow protected area co-managers, all of whom have legal authority to manage their areas through similar co-

management agreements, and all of whom assumed that these documents were legally based. This has created momentum for reform of the policy framework governing co-management in Belize, an issue that was raised at an NGO forum in Punta Gorda attended by FD, and is being followed up through the work of the Association of

Protected Area Management Organizations (APAMO). Additionally, a public opinion poll carried out by the Belizean NGO SPEAR, documented that the majority of the Belizean public (61%) were opposed to oil exploration in protected areas, validating and supporting SATIIM's stance and further isolating the GOB.

SATIIM has achieved the following results from our multifaceted grassroots advocacy campaign:

Result: *Individuals and organizations at the community, district and national levels are aware of the important national policy issues raised by the Sarstoon Temash case and are taking action to support SATIIM and the Park.*

- The five communities that border the Sarstoon Temash National Park (STNP) were informed the first week of May by SATIIM staff of what seismic testing for oil exploration is, potential negative impacts and risks, and SATIIM's position on oil exploration in the park.
- On Wednesday May 10, 2006, Executive Director Mr. Greg Choc sent a letter to Minister Briceno, and the press, clarifying SATIIM's position against oil exploration in the National Park and calling on the Minister to respond to previous unanswered questions regarding oil exploration in the STNP. This letter was printed in a number of national papers and resulted in an invitation for Mr. Choc to meet with the Minister on Monday May 15, 2006.
- One village meeting, requested by the communities, that brought the five villages (approx 100 community members) together so that they could hear what members of other communities were thinking and what the situation was in their neighbouring communities (May 14, 2006)
- On Monday May 15, 2006 the legal team, including Hon. Dean Barrow, Ms. Antoinette Moore and Lois Young, with international support from Elaw, lodged a lawsuit in the Supreme Court of Belize challenging the issuance of a permit by the government of Belize for US Capital Energy Belize Ltd. to commence petroleum exploration in the Sarstoon Temash National Park in Toledo.
- That same day, SATIIM and a large delegation from Toledo, travelled to Belmopan and Belize City to participate in a press conference announcing the filing of the lawsuit. The press conference received good national media coverage and was



Greg Choc, ED for SATIIM, speaks to local supporters outside the Supreme Court in Belize City on June 5, 2006.

- attended by a number of other conservation and community based organizations to show support.
- Also, on Monday May 15, Mr. Greg Choc, and Chairman of the Board, Mr. Alvin Loreda, met with the Minister of Natural Resources, Minister John Briceño in Belmopan. The delegation from Toledo was not allowed to enter the building and Minister Briceño did not come outside to address the delegation.
- SATIIM ED Greg Choc made a round of visits to national radio shows (Love FM and Krem) where he was interviewed on the oil

issue and took questions and comments from the public nationwide.

- SATIIM received substantial media coverage including a front page story in the national paper (the Amandala Sunday May 15); prime time coverage on TV news (Channel 5 and Channel 7), and articles in all of the major national online and paper news sources.
- On June 5, 2006 we mobilized two bus loads of community members to Belize City for the first hearing of our case in the Supreme Court
- On June 8, 2006 we took a bus load of SATIIM board members and supporters to Belize City for the judgment.
- June 20-23, 2006 SATIIM hosted Emily Yozell and Enrique Joseph, who have been involved in the campaign to stop oil exploration on the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica, Candy and George Gonzales from BACONGO, and Marconi Leal from Cayo as part of a "Unity Tour" to share experiences from similar legal and political struggles with the villages and PG community. As part of this tour the following meetings were held:
 - Guests participated in the SATIIM Board Meeting on June 21, 2006, showing DVDs from Ecuador, Peru and Costa Rica, describing their experiences with oil development;
 - Two (2) community meetings in Midway and Sundaywood were held on Thursday June 22 and Friday June 23 respectively. DVD documentaries were shown and followed by discussion;
 - One (1) NGO/tourism sector forum was held on Friday June 23 at which the documentaries were shown again and there was a good discussion on lessons learned from Costa Rica. Approximately 20 people attended

- A Public Forum was held in Punta Gorda on Wednesday June 28, with guest speakers from Spanish Lookout, Belmopan and SATIIM's legal team. There were approximately 150 members of the public in attendance for this 3 hour meeting.



Full house at Punta Gorda's Parish Hall for a public forum on oil development on June 28, 2006

- On Friday July 14, 2006 SATIIM hosted a meeting in PG that brought together the Toledo Alcaldes and Village Chair-people to discuss the issue of the affidavits that were signed by members of their organizations in support of the oil company. The week prior, the Chairman of the Toledo Alcalde Association (TAA) and exec members of District Association of Village Councils (DAVCO) visited each village in Toledo and spoke with the Alcaldes and Village Council members to see if they had known that those representing them had signed onto the affidavit. They found that the majority were not aware. They then signed a petition that stated that the affidavit signed on their behalf was not representative of their position on the issue. At the meeting on July 14 they came together and voted to submit another affidavit that would quash the first, stating that it did not represent their membership.
- On Friday July 14, 2006 SATIIM also hosted a "Media Tour" which brought representatives from Belize's national new services Channel 7 News, Channel 5, the Amandala newspaper, the Reporter, and Krem radio (all major National news

services were invited) to Toledo to cover the STNP story and speak with local community members. The media covered a meeting with Toledo's Alcaldes and Village Councils in Punta Gorda which was followed by a boat tour of the Park. This event resulted in some excellent national coverage of the issue- a balanced story, with some excellent images of the Park and some interviews with various villagers in support of SATIIM, and those who are opposed.

- On August 30, 2006, a letter to the editor was published on the differences between Spanish Lookout (where oil development is proceeding in northern Belize) and the Sarstoon Temash area in the Amandala newspaper. The letter highlighted the different eco-systems and land tenure issues between the two locations.
- On September 27, a delegation of supporters went to Belize City for the final decision of the Supreme Court and to participate in a press conference at the Radisson Fort George with APAMO supporters.
- On October 6, Ms. Antoinette Moore, one of our lawyers, met with SATIIM staff to explain the Supreme Court decision. This information was then processed and sent to local NGOs, supporters, media, donors and the international community.
- On October 11, a letter to the editor was published in the Reporter newspaper on the importance of a strong EIA process for oil exploration in the STNP.
- On October 18, 2006, SATIIM hosted a meeting with community leaders from the five villages buffering the Park in PG to discuss and explain the Supreme Court decision (Ms. Moore explained the judgment), the EIA process (M. Windsor and P. Cho spoke from Forestry Department) and SATIIM's benefit sharing proposals (A. Loreda facilitated).
- October 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27, SATIIM held community meetings in each of the five villages bordering the Park, explaining the Supreme Court decision and discussing the EIA process.
- On November 29, 2006, SATIIM had a meeting with the newly elected and outgoing village Alcaldes to discuss benefit sharing proposals to negotiate for compensation if oil exploration goes ahead on indigenous lands. The leaders supported the proposals and agreed to meet with the PM to lobby further for these proposals.
- On November 30, 2006, SATIIM ED and members of the staff met with Mr. Martin Alegria at the Department of Environment to discuss our proposals for engagement in the EIA process and our proposed revisions to the EIA Terms of Reference.

Ministerial Lobbying

During the months of October through December, Executive Director Greg Choc embarked on a campaign to sensitize members of cabinet of SATIIM's concerns and proposals on oil development in the Sarstoon Temash area. All ministers including the Prime Minister expressed the view that the SATIIM's proposals were rational and in fact needed to be carried out to ensure full and informed participation of the affected communities. All ministers agreed that the proposals are achievable and in fact the Attorney General said that the legal counsel should already be developing some aspects of the proposals.

While the meetings were cordial and all expressed their support to SATIIM's proposal, no ministers suggested a way forward. Therefore two requests were tabled as a means to commit the Ministers to take concrete steps to implement their support.

The first was the establishment of a Ministerial Sub-Committee to deal with what could potentially be larger politically contentious impact/benefit sharing proposal. While all the Ministers agreed to have communities benefit directly, none suggested how these benefits will actually happen. SATIIM has proposed the establishment of trust or endowment funds for the affected communities. This is to be established through 10% proceeds from the annual gross oil production of US Capital Energy.

The other request was for the establishment of a technical subcommittee to deal with the amendments to the EIA TORs and the consultation mechanisms. The aim is to get SATIIM, US Capital Energy and supervising state agencies to agree on the structures and methods of the consultation process. SATIIM's feels that it is imperative for all parties to agree on the EIA process to ensure the full and informed participation of the communities. This will also ensure that the development of the EIA will yield a product that will be acceptable by all parties.

On December 11, 2006 the Prime Minister informed SATIIM Executive Director that a subcommittee made up of Minister Briceño, Minister Francis Fonseca and Mike Espot had been formed. A letter has been sent to Minister Briceño and members of the subcommittee requesting a meeting at the earliest possible time. SATIIM's legal team has also been copied. Below is a list of the meetings G. Choc had with the Ministers:

- Oct 16, and Nov 13, 2006, Hon. Said Musa, Prime Minister of Belize and Minister of Finance
- October 16, 2006, Hon. Vildo Marin, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Nov 24, 2006, Hon. Cordel Hyde, Minister of Youth, Sport and Defense
- Nov 24, 2006, Hon. Mark Espot, Minister of National Development and Culture
- Dec 1, 2006, Hon. Francis Fonseca, Attorney General and Minister of Education
- Dec 6, 2006, Hon. Sylvia Flores, Minister of Human Development

All cabinet members listed above were met individually and the following proposals were presented to them.

1. SATIIM's conditions and guidelines for US Capital Energy Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) consultation process proposal.
2. SATIIM's amendments to the US Capital Energy EIA terms of reference.
3. Impact/Benefit sharing agreement proposal for SATIIM and communities.

Result: *There is a district level coalition of stakeholders with strong community support to actively oppose oil exploration in the region's protected areas.*

- A forum in Punta Gorda with the Toledo Alcalde Association (TAA) and the Toledo Village Council Association (TVCA) at which SATIIM informed the members of the TAA and TVCA about oil exploration in their communities. A resolution stating that both of these associations supported SATIIM was drafted and signed (May 13, 2006).
- At a national press conference in Belize City held on June 8, 2006, Cristina Coc, Program Director of the Julian Cho Society and Spokesperson for the Maya Leaders Alliance, made a statement of support for SATIIM, linking the defence of the STNP to

the defence of indigenous rights to land and natural resources more generally. The speech was aired on national radio.

- On August 2, 2006 the Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA) Board of Directors met to discuss the oil issue and issued a strong public statement in support of SATIIM and against oil exploration in the STNP. The TCGA represents over 1,000 indigenous small farmers in the district.

Result: Existing national coalitions (i.e. BACONGO and APAMO) are strengthened and coordinated to advocate for effective implementation of environmental policies and practices with respect to oil exploration and indigenous peoples issues in Belize.

- On May 9, 2006 a meeting of community leaders and managers of protected areas met in Punta Gorda to discuss the oil situation, and a resolution was developed in support of SATIIM that was released and published in the national print media.



- In mid May, Godsman Ellis, the Executive Director of BACONGO, penned an editorial for the national news media raising many of the key policy issues around the issue and challenging the GOB to proceed with respect for the law and the environment.

NGO stakeholders participate in a coalition building meeting in PG on June 23, 2006.

- On June 14, 2006 two of SATIIM's staff participated in a meeting with Protected Area Managers, government, business and civil society organizations to discuss the oil exploration issue and the implications it has on protected areas. This event was hosted by APAMO member Ya'ache Conservation Trust (YCT) in Punta Gorda.
- In July 2006, the Belize Audubon Society (BAS), Belize's oldest and largest environmental conservation organization, published their newsletter (Volume 38, Number 2) on the theme of "Protected Areas and Oil". This newsletter reprinted some of SATIIM's materials, including information about the SATIIM case, SATIIM's position on oil, as well as a public statement from BAS on oil exploration in protected areas. Part of their statement was that "...BAS also believes that oil exploration within the marine areas should have extremely stringent conditions applied due to the high vulnerability of the marine ecosystems. Oil exploration should be excluded from the protected marine areas as the Belize Barrier Reef and the three atolls are invaluable to the tourism and fisheries sectors, and for protection of coastal communities. Oil exploration could place the Belizean reefs and coastal areas at unacceptable risks."
- On August 22nd SATIIM attended an APAMO meeting in Belize City, raising the oil issue and providing assistance in the effort to legalize and raise funds for APAMO as part of an initiative to strengthen the coalition.

- On September 15th, SATIIM hosted the second meeting of the newly formed Indigenous Peoples Conservation Alliance (IPCA) to begin discussions on indigenous people's interest in protected areas at a national level.
- The Association of Protected Area Managers (APAMO) released a statement in our joint press conference on September 27, 2006 which supported SATIIM's position, "...APAMO therefore expresses its solidarity with SATIIM and does not support any activity that would compromise the protected areas, especially national parks, and the ability of our natural systems to maintain a healthy environment that is critical to sustaining the population and economy of Belize,"

Result: *An international campaign is launched and co-ordinated to oppose oil exploration in the Toledo district and support the incorporation of biodiversity and indigenous community concerns in national oil policy.*

Internationally, important progress has been made at raising awareness of the issues, with some specific results attained, and others pending. Coordination with international allies has been one key strategy, while regular dissemination of information has been another.

- In May, SATIIM sent a formal letter to the Ramsar Secretariat (informal communications had been going on for several months) expressing concerns over the prospect of oil exploration in a Ramsar wetland, and asking that the Montreux Protocol be initiated, placing the STNP on a list of sites under threat. The Secretariat responded with a very strong letter to the Prime Minister expressing their view that oil development was not consistent with wetland conservation and urging caution in proceeding with plan to explore the STNP.
- During May and June an urgent action international letter writing campaign and online petition site was launched and signed by close to 4,000 individuals around the world, with help from our international partner, the EcoLogic Development Fund. A copy of the petition and a cover letter asking for continued protection of the STNP was sent to the Minister of Environment and Chief Forestry and Geology and Petroleum Officers as well as the head of USCE in the United States.
- In July the Tri-National Alliance for the Conservation of the Gulf of Honduras (TRIGOH) a fifteen member coalition of protected area managers from Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, issued a public statement supporting SATIIM and send letters to key GOB officials urging protection of the core zone of the STNP.
- During the period letters were also sent to World Bank officials involved with Belize, to the UN Special Rappaporteur on Indigenous People's, to the UN Permanent Forum



Greg Choc was in Ecuador for an Oilwatch conference in October 2006, where he visited the site of oil development in the Amazon.

on Indigenous Peoples and the Organization of American States Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, from which we have yet to receive responses.

- Information updates summarizing activities and advances in the advocacy campaign and legal case were produced for Spring (May), Summer (July) and Fall (September) and were circulated to a wide list of supporters both in Belize and internationally.
- 500 copies of an advocacy update newsletter were printed in August by SATIIM and have almost all been distributed,
- In September 2006, the US based Global Response Network, which specializes in international urgent action letter campaigns, launched their campaign to support the STNP case (more information available at www.globalresponse.org). This campaign encouraged both youth and adults to write the Prime Minister of Belize and ask him to protect the National Parks from oil development.
- October 18- 26, 2006, Executive Director Greg Choc travelled to Quito, Ecuador to participate in a human rights workshop and Oilwatch General Assembly. SATIIM's struggle against oil development in a National Park was presented to the General Assembly. In addition, three days were spent visiting communities affected by oil exploration and development in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Many resources were gathered and contacts made. This trip was made possible by Oil Watch Mesoamerica.
- On October 20th and 27th, a story about SATIIM's struggle and legal case was published in the Infopress Centro Americana in English and Spanish.

Result: *The ranger station at the entrance of the STNP is staffed by rangers with special constable powers around the clock with a boat, radio communications to the central office*



Thomas Ishim, the ranger from Midway Village, monitors the Park for illegal activities- including exploring for oil without a permit.

Because SATIIM was able to get the Supreme Court of Belize to issue an injunction stopping all seismic testing work in the STNP and now the company needs to have an approved EIA to begin seismic work, constant monitoring of USCE activities in the park has not become an urgent necessity. Funding for new radio systems at the Temash Ranger Station has been secured and additional equipment in being procured. One joint two day patrol (with the Belize Defence Forces) of the Temash and Sarstoon River areas was carried out on August 1st and 2nd, 2006. Plans are now being developed to ensure that when the EIA researchers enter the Park, they are accompanied by SATIIM rangers.

Result: *A monitoring, protection and mitigation framework is designed and agreed upon with the Oil Company and Forest Department, should exploration proceed.*

US Capital Energy, despite several letters and verbal requests from SATIIM, has refused to meet with us, so there has been no dialogue about the mitigation framework. The Forest Department, on the other hand, imposed some 25 conditions on USCE when they issued the permission granting authorization to conduct seismic testing in the STNP. SATIIM obtained the permit in mid-May, as the court case was being filed, and has met informally with several key allies in the Forest Department to discuss its terms and conditions. It is assumed that if the Supreme Court allows USCE to proceed with seismic after an EIA is conducted, negotiations with the company will begin at that point.

SATIIM is also working to develop a monitoring and mitigation plan for the EIA process itself. Proposals have been presented to the Department of Environment, Forest Department and Company. One meeting was held with the Chief Environmental Officer, Mr. Alegria, we are awaiting further commitments from the Department.

Result: *SATIIM staffs, Board of Directors and volunteers help to co-ordinate oil advocacy activities*

Funding was not obtained to hire a full time Advocacy Coordinator; rather responsibilities were divided among SATIIM's existing staff, volunteers and partners. All SATIIM staff, including Executive Director Gregorio Choc, Technical Coordinator Lynette Gomez, Park Manager Seleem Chan, Education Coordinator Peter Shol, Data Analyst David Itch as well as our four Park Rangers, participated and helped coordinate advocacy activities over this period. Volunteer Megan Bennett from Canada, as well as SATIIM Board Members and a variety of community volunteers also participated actively in advocacy efforts. Lack of sufficient office space and additional computers remains a limiting factor in terms of bringing on more staff and/or volunteers. Fundraising continues to secure additional human resources for the advocacy campaign.

Result: *SATIIM Board of Directors, staff and volunteers receive advocacy training to facilitate their leadership of and active participation in this campaign.*

Formal advocacy training has not been carried out during this period despite having both financial resources and in-house advocacy training capacity (EcoLogic's Program Officer for Belize, housed with SATIIM, is a professional advocacy trainer), due to a lack of time for it. Rather, practical hands-on training has been carried out through implementation of campaign activities, through planning and evaluation sessions, and in informal conversations among the staff, board and volunteers.

3. Factors for success

A number of factors have coalesced to contribute to the attainment of some of the policy goals, in part because of SATIIM actions, in part because of the weakness of the GOB position which was permitting oil exploration without attention to national law or public opinion. SATIIM staff, despite very little practical advocacy experience, rose to the

challenge and all assumed responsibilities in the campaign. This permitted SATIIM to carry out a wide range of activities simultaneously, e.g. press work, coalition building, community outreach, research, and lobbying. Both the GOB and USCE were unprepared for the aggressive outreach efforts we made with the national media and other protected area managers, which led to some heavy handed responses which did not play well with the national media and many local stakeholders, who viewed them as manipulating local indigenous leaders. The GOB was also unprepared for the international pressure, from institutions like the Ramsar Secretariat, the World Bank and the OAS, which we think, combined with the outcry from other protected area managers in Belize, has lead many lower level (technical) staff within the FD and the Environment Ministry to question the government's course of action. This no doubt fed into the desire by the GOB to make some positive policy changes, such as requiring an EIA from BNE and raising taxes on the oil companies. Key to successes so far has also been the international donor community support, which has come from IUCN, Oak and Summit Foundations, Conservation International, Greengrants and the EcoLogic Development Fund. The timely presence of financial resources allowed SATIIM to file the court case in the Supreme Court, to mobilize large groups of community supporters to Belmopan and Belize City as well as the myriad of other activities over the past few months.

4. Next steps

Although we have had a very busy and productive year, there continues to be a significant amount of work to be done on this oil advocacy campaign. In fact, in many ways we are only beginning what will likely be a long struggle to ensure the rich biodiversity and status of the Sarstoon Temash National Park remains intact and the communities that live around the park are consulted and compensated if any oil exploration or development were to go ahead.

In 2007, SATIIM plans to carry out a number of advocacy activities including lobbying the National Cabinet for technical and political support for our benefit sharing proposals and continued participation in the EIA process. To continue our outreach and education on oil development risks and mitigation we are planning to take local community leaders to visit the Laguna del Tigre national park in northern Guatemala, where oil development has caused much devastation. We will be designing, printing and distributing another newsletter, t-shirts and bumper stickers to be distributed locally that promote the campaign. We are planning to hold additional national and local forums on issues that still require substantive public debate and dialogue. SATIIM staff and representatives will continue to consult and engage with communities on the EIA process and benefit sharing proposals. Finally, we will continue to communicate with our international donors and supporters through email updates, new links and documents on our website.

We look forward to the ongoing support from our donors, allies, and supporters, as we continue this very challenging and important struggle to protect the Sarstoon Temash National Park and the communities around the park from the threats of oil and gas exploration and development.