



**SATIIM**  
**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2013-2017**





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# 1. SATIIM Introduction

The Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) was created in 1999, and for almost fifteen years has served the needs of the Q'eqchi' Maya and Garifuna villages and the wider community. Initially established to manage the Sarstoon Temash National Park (STNP), SATIIM has since evolved to address not only environmental concerns but also the wider political context, including defending the land rights of indigenous peoples against encroachment by prospecting energy firms and aiding the development of independent sustainable revenue streams for the communities in the Sarstoon Temash region.

SATIIM headquarters can be found in Punta Gorda, the administrative capital of the Toledo District in southern Belize.



The organization employs eleven people in a variety of roles. The Executive Director is responsible for overall management of the organization, and five staff members manage the SATIIM environmental, community development and human rights program. Five community Park Rangers are employed from within the Q'eqchi' Maya and Garifuna peoples and are responsible for patrolling the park boundaries, monitoring the health and abundance of flora and fauna and, increasingly, monitoring the actions of oil companies such as US Capital Energy. As such they are the first line of defense for protecting the biodiversity of the park and rights and interests of the communities around the park. This advocacy on behalf of the rights of indigenous communities is an important part of SATIIM's work.

SATIIM has a very close relationship with the communities with which it works. Delegates from each community come together in the General Gathering every two years to set the direction for the organization. The Board of Directors is comprised of elected members from the five communities near the STNP - Barranco, Midway, Conejo, Sunday Wood and Crique Sarco.

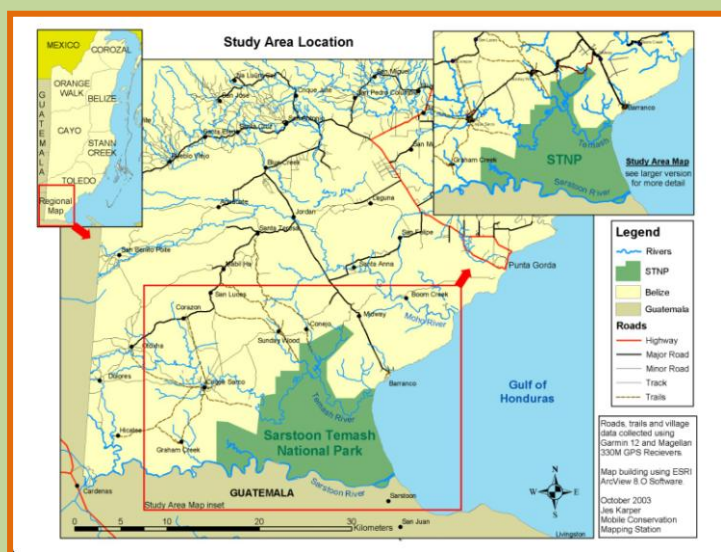
Additionally representatives of indigenous organizations including the National Garifuna Council (NGC), Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA - Maya Traditional leaders), the Q'eqchi' Council of Belize and the Forest Department sit on the Board of Directors. As SATIIM's role has evolved, it has also expanded its geographical scope of work, increasing the number of communities it works with to seventeen, to include other villages further from the park. The rationale for the expansion of SATIIM's geographical influence is primarily to support communities and strengthen the management of forests on their territories so as to safeguard the region's important watersheds.

Over the years SATIIM has achieved many impressive social and cultural results as well as landmark legal victories; in 2006 it played a pivotal role in forcing the government to comply with its obligation to ensure energy companies conduct proper environmental assessments in protected areas. In 2007 it then supported the Conejo and Santa Cruz communities in winning landmark legal victories for Mayan land rights. They also pioneered the introduction of Indigenous Use Zones in the Sarstoon Temash National Park, securing the park for the future of the indigenous communities on whose land the park was created, without their consent.

SATIIM has now come to a critical junction in deciding its future as an organization: on one hand it needs to continue the important work in protecting the natural resources of this precious and rare eco-system. On the other hand the economic interests of the Q'eqchi' Maya and Garifuna peoples must also be considered. SATIIM needs to find a way forward for green, sustainable, economic development that will allow the communities in the region to not only become economically independent but also help them to prosper without compromising the ecological integrity of the region's vast resources. Concomitantly, SATIIM is advocating for safeguarding the rights and interests of the indigenous communities as well as protecting the region from exploitative and possibly illegal oil development. To this end SATIIM has prepared the following Strategic Plan, to take the organization and the communities it serves through this period of change.

## 2. The Sarstoon Temash Region, its peoples and their rights

The Sarstoon Temash National Park (STNP) sits in the very south of Belize's southernmost district, along the border of Guatemala, framed by the Sarstoon and Temash river watersheds south of the Moho River.



STNP covers 41,898 acres of relatively undisturbed wetland and is renowned as a center for diverse and endangered wildlife. The park contains fourteen different eco-system types, including ten miles of coastline along Amatique Bay, part of the tri-national Gulf of Honduras. Documented fauna alone, based on the limited research already conducted, include two hundred and twenty species of birds, twenty-four mammal species including the endangered Jaguar, twenty -two reptile species,

forty-two fish species and forty-six species of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). STNP contains the only comfrey palm forest in Belize and the only known lowland Sphagnum moss bog in Central America (an area which was recently devastated by fires caused by prospecting oil companies). The park is also said to contain one of the best regional examples of undisturbed red mangrove forest and was declared a RAMSAR site in 2005 - marking it as a wetland of global importance. This is just a snapshot indication of what this region has to offer.





The park is within the Sarstoon Temash region. Five indigenous communities have traditional lands extending into the park, and SATIIM also works with another twelve communities in the upper watershed of the region. In recent years the poverty levels of these communities have risen, due in part to growing population pressures, limited economic opportunities and the impact of climate change. Climate change has a direct impact here as it has resulted in noticeably shortened fallow periods in traditional 'milpa' farming, leading to lower yields and decreasing food security.

In addition to the threat from climate change, the communities are also facing a growing threat from oil exploration. Despite the Supreme Court affirming land rights, and strong opposition from the communities, the government allowed US Capital Energy to enter the park and cut over 200 miles of seismic testing trails around, and even through, villages. These lines caused immediate damage to the environment through the cutting down of trees and undergrowth. US Capital Energy equipment also caused a fire that destroyed the majority of the Sphagnum moss bog. Furthermore, the lines also



facilitated the growth of illegal activities such as poaching and logging in the region.



The government of Belize has failed to protect its indigenous peoples from exploitation by energy companies. Many high-level government representatives, including the Prime Minister, regularly go on record to actively support US Capital Energy.

In the face of these challenges, the indigenous communities are struggling to see how they can protect the park and their ancestral lands. At the same time they need to find ways to improve revenue streams and food security whilst still protecting the sustainability of their land and forest. It is to this end that SATIIM, with the guidance of the Board of Directors, has developed the new mission statement and strategic goals.

### 3. Mission

Based on the needs of the communities it represents, SATIIM has recently adopted an expanded mission statement to reflect the threats facing the Q'eqchi' Maya and Garifuna people and their aims moving forward. SATIIM's mission is:

**To promote and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and safeguard the ecological integrity of the Sarstoon Temash Region and promote the sustainable use of its resources for its Indigenous Peoples' economic, social, cultural, environmental, and spiritual advancement.**

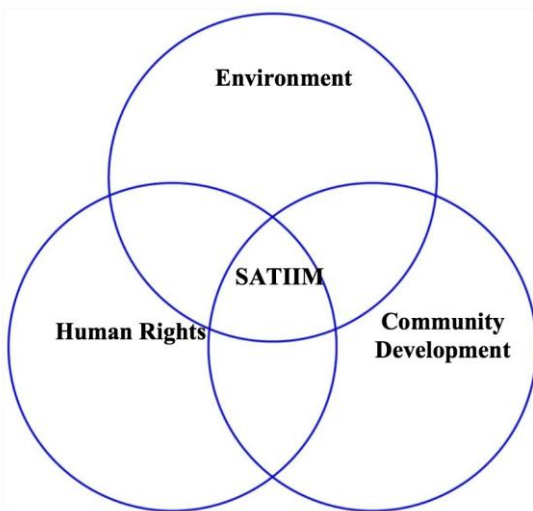
This mission is based on the recognition that economic development must integrate the norms, principles and standards of human rights and that poverty itself is based on marginalization, discrimination, and exploitation and disregard for peoples' cultures. Furthermore, SATIIM recognizes

that poverty is about more than economic needs alone and that growth centered development must address the more complex and fundamental causes of poverty and inequality such as discrimination, exploitation and abuse. SATIIM believes that poverty cannot be seen merely as individual circumstances or capacities, but rather should be perceived within the structures of power and inequity embedded in the local and national context.

Therefore the work SATIIM does, while essential, cannot take place in isolation. Sound environmental management practices must be implemented to provide the Q'eqchi' Maya and Garifuna with food security and sources of income to further their development without degrading the ecological integrity and biodiversity of the region. The communities must also be protected from exploitation, informed of their rights, and supported

in securing economically beneficial, legally sound and environmentally friendly development. To this end advocacy for indigenous people's rights will continue to be an important part of SATIIM's work to alleviate poverty in the region without abandoning its environmental principles.

As the United Nations Indigenous People's Partnership states: 'Indigenous Peoples are in a unique position to contribute to addressing the most pressing environmental and social challenges of our time' and it is in the this spirit of working with communities, not just for them, that SATIIM aims to move forward.



## 4. SATIIM's objectives and goals:

Based on the expanded mission statement, and in close cooperation with partner communities, SATIIM has developed the following four objectives to enable the organization to deliver on its stated mission over the next five years.

### **1. To advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples with particular emphasis on Maya Customary Land Rights and Garifuna Land Rights.**

**Supporting Strategy:** Support communities contemplating action to secure implementation of Maya Customary Land Rights as well as Garifuna Land claims in Toledo, setting the foundation for their future economic prosperity for culturally sensitive green development of the region and assist in negotiations and - if necessary - litigate violations of these rights by the government or any other offender.

#### **Targets:**

- 1.1 Build awareness and knowledge among indigenous communities – through radio programming, radio spots, discussions, capacity building workshops, exchanges, village meetings and summits - of the full spectrum of their rights, and specifically implications of Maya customary land rights.
- 1.2 Conduct various publicity campaigns (media outreach); and
- 1.3 Inform Belize's legislative and government institutions about indigenous people's rights and the government's obligation to execute the stipulations of the court judgment concerning Maya land titles;
- 1.4 Cooperate with other advocacy organizations in Belize and abroad which have similar goals.

## **2. Support culturally sensitive green economic development of indigenous communities in the Sarstoon Temash Region.**

**Supporting Strategy:** Intensify engagement in green economic activities with indigenous communities to advance culturally and ecologically suitable economic development.

### **Targets:**

- 2.1 Integrate - vertically and horizontally - community based sustainable forest management enterprises as a livelihood model, to improve incomes of indigenous peoples while protecting the environment by expanding participation in forest management and developing support services for forest enterprises.
- 2.2 Develop and manage community based sustainable agriculture and agroforestry to increase food production and promote food security by introducing organic farming projects utilizing mechanized preparation of soil and improving community post-harvest crop drying and storage facilities to protect against crop losses throughout the year.
- 2.3 Facilitate greater participation of women in economic activities by promoting their full and effective participation in decision making processes regarding communities economic initiatives, building their capacity and including them in the production chain of economic initiatives undertaken in the communities and supporting the development of specific economic initiatives to be led by women.
- 2.4 Assist indigenous communities in creating infrastructure and capacity building for ecological and cultural tourism.

## **3: Preserve the ecological integrity and biodiversity of the Sarstoon Temash Region.**

**Supporting Strategy:** Protect the ecological integrity and biodiversity of the Sarstoon Temash Region, including the Sarstoon Temash National Park, and create economic incentives for the region's inhabitants to strengthen indigenous management of natural resources.

### **Targets:**

- 3.1 Continue managing Sarstoon Temash National Park according to the STNP management plan.
- 3.2 Continue environmental education and advocacy within the communities in the region through outreach programs in the schools and informational gatherings.
- 3.3 Create incentives for communities in the Sarstoon Temash Region to strengthen indigenous management of natural resources.
- 3.4 Encourage further scientific research in STNP.



## **4: Further SATIIM's institutional sustainability.**

**Supporting Strategy:** Secure core funding capacity and growth capital to sustain a viable organization able to competently execute its objectives and accomplish its goals in a sustainable and long-term manner.

### **Targets:**

- 4.1 Concentrate on attracting initial capacity and growth capital in addition to program funding by implementing the five-year fundraising plan.
- 4.2 Introduce fee-based services including creating and managing social enterprises in value-added products and services related to agriculture, forestry, cultural and eco-tourism and traditional knowledge and medicines.
- 4.3 Advance SATIIM's institutional efficiency through new hires and strengthening staff's leadership capacity and professional competence through further feedback and training systems.
- 4.4 Increase participation in key national and international Indigenous Peoples movements and agencies to facilitate greater outreach and build our capacity in the area of Indigenous Peoples' Rights, as well as procuring international support and benefiting from change at the international level.
- 4.5 Increase the use of social media to gain wider exposure and attract individual donors and smaller foundations in the USA and elsewhere.

## **5. Funding**

Like many non-governmental organizations, SATIIM frequently faces challenges obtaining adequate funding. Not only does this jeopardize the important work being done in and for the communities, it also puts at risk the future of the organization itself. SATIIM is operating in a difficult financial and

political environment. The government of Belize is driving forward oil exploration projects without due regard for their legal obligations under the Maya Land Rights and recently, despite strong public opposition, parceled up Belize territories, both on ground and off shore, between competing energy companies for exploratory purposes. SATIIM plays an important role both in educating indigenous peoples about their rights in the face of exploitative, and in some cases illegal, exploration by energy companies, and also provides communities with assistance in pursuing legal cases against the firms involved.

While funding for individual projects is always valuable, it is important to also procure funding for the capital costs of the organization as a whole. SATIIM cannot function without its project managers, support staff and park rangers. It needs to be able to utilize the services of legal experts as necessary. Furthermore, it needs to be able to access the assistance of scientific experts; in one recent example a fire caused by US Capital Energy destroyed an extremely rare ecosystem and it is now SATIIM's duty to assess the amount of damage caused and what, if anything, can be done to rectify it.

Moving forward therefore, SATIIM is of necessity seeking to secure capital funding not only for specific projects being undertaken but also for the organization as a whole. Such funding would not only allow SATIIM to confidently continue the vital work already being done, it will also allow the organization to fund more ambitious green development initiatives. Such initiatives require more initial capital and more capacity than the communities themselves could be able to deliver, yet, when undertaken with SATIIM, would exponentially increase SATIIM's ability to achieve long-term impact. These initiatives will also provide – after some time – an independent income stream for SATIIM, in addition to alleviating poverty among the poorest communities.

Below is a summarized version of the project budget for SATIIM for the next five years. This budget shows the funding required for individual programs. Funds are needed to support the three main strands of work conducted by SATIIM - Human Rights, Community Development and Environmental Protection. These figures do not include the administrative costs of the organization.

<b>Project</b>	<b>2013 USD</b>	<b>2014 USD</b>	<b>2015 USD</b>	<b>2016 USD</b>	<b>2017 USD</b>
Human rights	\$184,000	\$87,000	\$121,500	\$101,000	\$150,000
Community development	\$200,000	\$171,000	\$141,000	\$148,000	\$175,000
Environmental	\$273,258	\$337,366	\$328,954	\$356,542	\$190,000

## 7. Conclusion

It is clear that SATIIM has reached a stage where adaptability and growth are necessary to continue the vital advocacy and development work it has been carrying out in the Sarstoon Temash region - an area of global ecological importance. Working closely with the communities in the region, SATIIM has developed this strategic plan to carry it forward through the next few years and build on the years of work already accomplished.

SATIIM's work will increase the economic integrity of the Q'eqchi Maya and Garifuna people in an environmentally sustainable manner. This cannot be done without also protecting the region from destructive oil development and defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Engagement with the international community and integration into the global Indigenous People movement is integral to the future of the people in this region. Without building a strong organizational capacity, SATIIM will not be able to continue this work and achieve the objectives outlined in this plan.