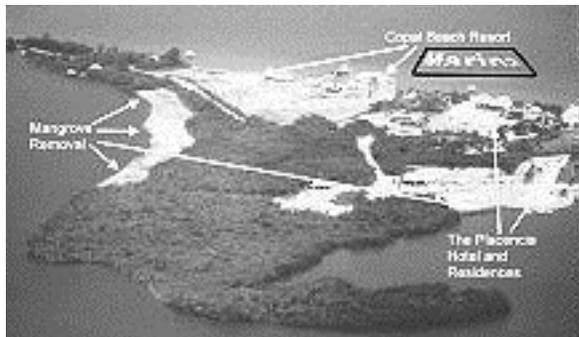


Roots and Reef

22 June 2010

FREE

DOE Approves Casino and Marina



On 6 April 2010, the Department of the Environment (DOE) confirmed a rumor that has been floating around the Placencia Peninsula for a long time when it approved a casino for the Placencia marina development located between The Placencia Hotel and the under-construction Copal Beach Resort.

In addition to a casino, the Environmental Compliance Plan (ECP) issued by DOE for this project allows development of a 700 foot long pier attached to a marina with 300 slips for boats up to 210' long, a 50 room boutique hotel, a fitness center, a commercial retail area, a parking area and amenity areas for pools, bars, "etc." (as actually stated in the ECP). The ECP gives the size of the marina as 34 acres, but says the marina's dimensions are 2000' x 1300' – which is just under 60 acres.

(Note: an ECP is a legal contract between DOE and a developer. It dictates the conditions of a given project and legally is a public document, available to everyone. However, DOE refuses to release this document to the public, even after the Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development (PCSD) filed a formal Freedom of Information Act request for the ECP.)

At a public meeting last year, DOE presented details only about the proposed marina. In addition, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the marina does not mention any development other than the marina and pier. Thus, the public has never received any information about the casino, boutique hotel and other components of the project, nor was the public consulted about them.

Consequently, the calculations for the project's use of water, garbage, electricity and other public services and utilities presented in the EIA and at the public consultation for the marina alone did not take into account these additional project components.

Also, DOE and the National Environmental Appraisal Committee (NEAC, a committee that DOE is legally required to consult) initially required very important tests of water supply and studies of sea currents to be submitted BEFORE project approval.

These tests would have allowed DOE and NEAC to determine whether the marina will cause erosion on the Peninsula's beaches and analyze the effects of the marina, casino, 50 room hotel, and "etc." on the Peninsula's water supply.

However, DOE and NEAC are now allowing the developer to do these tests AFTER the project has already been approved.

Even if the tests show that the marina will cause significant erosion to beaches and private property on the Placencia Peninsula or that the existing water supply for the project is inadequate, the project cannot be stopped without legal action because it has already been formally approved.

What's Going on at Hatchet Caye? DOE Won't Tell!



Crimson Park Stalled?



Crimson Park Properties after Rain

According to Karim Berges, principal of Crimson Development Ltd., lack of money has stalled development of lots in Crimson Park, a "low cost" development for Placencia Village residents who are unable to purchase land because of extremely high land costs within the Village.

Under the Crimson Park development plan created by the Honourable Melvin Hulse, Area Representative for Stann Creek West, which includes Placencia Village, payments made by lot purchasers fund all development costs, including infrastructure and dredging to create the land. According to Mr. Hulse, over BZ\$7 million is needed to complete the 190-lot project, or BZ\$36,000 per lot (originally BZ \$38,000).

As reported by Placencia Village Council members, Berges told the Council in a meeting called by the developer that he has already invested BZ\$1.8 million in Crimson Park, and that the project could not advance any further without people paying for their lots.

Mr. Berges also informed the Council that Crimson Development had already spent the entire BZ\$350,000 it received from the proceeds of the sale by the Government of Belize (GOB) of underwater land in the Placencia Lagoon for a private development. (In 2009, Placencia Village residents voted for these funds to be used for local projects (primary school,

preschool, clinic). However, in early 2010, GOB decided instead to give the funds to Crimson Development.)

GOB owns the land on which Crimson Park lots will be located after filling. Crimson Development has been dredging and filling the Crimson Park lots, but Mr. Berges categorically denies that Crimson Development has a contract with GOB to develop Crimson Park. As previously reported in Roots and Reef, Mr. Berges also refuses to provide copies of legally required mangrove removal and dredging permits for the development.

As of 15 June 2010, the first 70 lots in Phase I of the Crimson Park have not been completed. The projected date of Phase I completion was November 2009. No work has started on the 70 lots in Phase II, nor on the 50 lots in Phase III.

Charles Leslie, Jr., Placencia Village Council Chairman, told Roots and Reef that the Council is concerned that GOB might sell the lots to international investors for private development if Crimson Development withdraws from the project because of lack of funding. Mr. Leslie also stated in a phone conversation that, "We [the Village Council] are trying to work out a way to get money for the development."

Lot purchasers do not know what will happen to payments they have already made if development stops.

At the beginning of the development process, the Placencia Village Lots Committee selected specific Placencia residents as eligible to purchase lots in the Crimson Park subdivision for BZ \$38,000 per lot.

Under the Crimson Park development plan, each purchaser must deposit payments directly into the bank account of Crimson Development, but the purchaser does not receive a written contract detailing the terms of the lot purchase. A lot purchaser also does not receive a deed until paying in full for a lot.

(cont. on page 3)

Facts about Off-Shore Drilling: Belize and Beyond



Placencia

How beautiful, peaceful and tranquil you were
When first I saw you in nineteen forty-four.

The coconut palms concealed houses from view,
I pray that today I could that scene renew.

With sailboats and doreys, the smell of fresh fish,
To have them again is now my fondest wish.

A fisherman with his son and a helper or two
Beaching his boat some hull-painting to do.

Another tanned fisher 'neath a coconut tree
Mending a net so no catch could wrest free.

The women-folk cooking or grating some nuts;
A cat and dog fighting for discarded fish guts.

Two or three other men having nothing to do
Relating a tale of an experience gone through.

The moonlit sea and your long sandy beach
Cause poets for words deep down within to reach.

On a week-end a fine game of cricket you'd see,
A village so peaceful of police presence free.

Cast your sprat-baited line off the beach on a night,
A crevali well-hooked can give you a good fight.

I will never forget the old back-landing coves,
Protected from storms by lush stands of mangroves.

When So-Wester's are coming to the back boats will steer,
Until maybe tomorrow when the weather gets fair.

Near the Point lived a good hearted villager who
Leaves a light burning to guide some mariner through.

Almost every home in the mornings will bake
Their own kneading bowl full of hot Johnny cake.

You could bathe and swim in the sea all day long,
In fact life on the whole was just a sweet song.

You need not have fear of traffic on a street,
All day and all night you walked on bare feet.

Today how I hate the raping that's being done
To that once breath-taking vision in the sun.

Buildings now dwarf the coconut palms
Cutting off the breezes leaving only calms.

The youth scarcely for the sea do they care,
That fishing may be dying to them is no scare.

The church that once with folks would be o'erflowing
Is near empty; to the hot spots is where they're now going

All that remain now are memories sweet
Of Placencia once bless'd crumbling now in defeat,

Defeat by the greed of insatiable men
Who don't care if they ne'er see her beauty again.

*By Ed. A. Panting
December 5, 2009*

*The Government of Belize (GOB) has divided up most of our land and sea into nineteen petroleum concessions and granted oil exploration rights to foreign companies. Each company has up to eight years to explore for oil. If it finds oil during those 8 years, each company then has twenty five more years to produce oil. If no oil is found in the eight years exploration phase, the contract is terminated unless GOB chooses to extend it.

*Offshore drilling concessions in the Sea off Belize include the entire length of Belize's coastline from as far north as Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve, to Glovers Reef and South Water Marine Reserves, all the way down south to the Port Honduras Marine Reserve.

*The Belize Barrier Reef is on UNESCO's list of endangered World Heritage Sites. Many of the off-shore drilling concessions are in our World Heritage Site. According to Marc Patry, UNESCO program specialist, World Heritage Sites should be off limits to mining and hydrocarbon exploitation, and if offshore exploration continues, the Belize Barrier Reef could be removed from the list of World Heritage Sites.

*Rodwell Williams, a senior partner in the private law practice of Prime Minister Dean Barrow, legally created and sits on the Board of Directors of Princess Petroleum Limited, one of the companies in line to start exploration and drilling on its 1.8 million acre concession, the largest offshore concession granted in Belize. Barrow told reporters in a public interview that, "any professional work that Barrow and Williams does will benefit me [Barrow]"

*Since 2007, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAS) are not required for oil exploration. Instead, the Belize Department of the Environment (DOE) decides whether it thinks an EIA is required. An EIA would require an oil company to perform studies before approval, and would allow public input and comment. If no EIA is required, the public receives no information regarding the oil project, nor are the public's voices heard.

*On July 16, 2007, a man from Independence Village, Stann Creek, was killed when an oil rig he was working on collapsed. Island Oil Belize, Ltd. (Guatemala) owned this rig. After two failed attempts at finding oil off the coast of Monkey River, the rig was being brought back to Big Creek when it apparently snagged on the sea bottom, causing it to over-turn.

*A Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) is a contract between the GOB and an oil company. It sets out the terms of when, where and how oil can be drilled in Belize. The environmental obligations of the contractor vary from project to project – some PSAs do not even require the oil company to obey the environmental laws of Belize. The terms of most of the PSAs between the GOB and oil companies also forbid making the PSA available to the public. In addition, the PSAs do not require the oil companies to obtain insurance from reputable and financially sound insurance companies, and, most importantly, do not require the oil companies to have a disaster plan in place in case of a blow-out - - such as occurred with BP Oil in the Gulf of Mexico!!!!

*Over its lifetime, a single oilrig can:

*Dump more than 90,000 metric tons of drilling fluid and metal cuttings into the ocean;

*Dump 25,000 pounds of toxic metals, such as lead, chromium and mercury, and potent carcinogens (cancer producing toxins) into the sea; and

*Pollute the air as much as 7,000 cars driving 50 miles a day.

*To find offshore oil reserves, seismic waves are sent into the ground, which disorient marine life. For whales, this can lead to beachings and to hearing loss in dolphins.

*The majority of rigs are located close to shore, so oil spills and seepage are common and move quickly on the water. About 300 to 500 oil spills occur each year, on various scales. Spills are also caused by tankers transporting oil from the rig. Oil slicks and spills affect coastal ecosystems and are fatal to birds, marine life, and other wildlife, as we are witnessing in the BP accident in the Gulf where on one single day, 29 May 2010, the US Fish and Wildlife Service reported deaths of 476 birds, 224 sea turtles and 25 dolphins and manatee. Spills also destroy sea grass beds, reefs, and coastal wetlands, including mangroves. A model of what would happen if oil were spilled in Glover's Reef graphically demonstrates that we would have 15 minutes to respond to an oil spill before it reached the Belize Barrier Reef. Fifteen minutes!!!!

*Belize currently gets BZ\$72 million in oil revenues each year, while tourism brings in BZ\$392 million each year. Tourism and fisheries employ about 24,000 people while about only 3,000 people would get jobs if every single oil concession found oil (based on employment figures from Belize Natural Energy (BNE)).

*Cleanup is very difficult and even the best clean-up efforts cannot remove all the oil. Damage to the reproductive systems of marine life can last for many years after the discharge occurs. Also, the damage can be more serious over time because the toxic chemicals are bio-accumulated, meaning that they become concentrated when marine life consumes plants and fish that are contaminated. This could affect the quality of the fish and shellfish food sources in Belize and make people sick.

*Offshore oil rigs discharge tens of thousands of gallons of drilling muds and water that contain toxic metals and cancer producing chemicals. The PSAs entered into by GOB with the oil companies do not stipulate what kind of muds can be used – and many countries (but not Belize) now prohibit using oil-based muds. Also, the Belize PSAs don't require the oil companies to dispose of the mud in the drilled hole or transport it to shore. Instead, the oil companies can just dump this toxic material directly into the Caribbean.

*Hurricanes can result in significant releases from offshore oilrigs and pipelines. For example, Hurricanes Katrina in 2005 and Ike in 2008 each caused the release of more than a half-million gallons of oil from offshore rigs and pipelines.

*Studies done by U.S. Geological Survey and published in the October 2009 edition of GEOLOGY indicate that oil drillings can actually set off earthquakes by creating fractures and pressure in the hard rock inside the earth.

*Altering the terrestrial landscape—construction of roads, airstrips, pipelines, etc that may be necessary to accommodate the drilling and recovery of oil from offshore wells could adversely affect beaches and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Jamaicans in Trouble with DOE?

The explosion of a British Petroleum oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico is an environmental catastrophe of enormous proportions. It claimed eleven lives and injured seventeen persons and the devastation to the environment and its effects on livelihoods has yet to be evaluated. The inability of BP and the U.S to control the spill, however, certainly confirms that scientists know more about the surface of the moon than about the ecosystems of our seas and oceans.

Yet many countries around the world support and encourage offshore drilling. Belize is one of those countries.

While U.S. President Obama announced a six month ban on new offshore drilling and cancelled plans for exploratory drilling and new lease sales off the coast of Alaska and Virginia, Belize's Prime Minister Barrow continues to affirm offshore drilling by foreign countries by stating publicly: "One does not give up flying because the plane could crash." Mr. Barrow is talking rice when the subject is beans.

Prime Minister Barrow must take this tragedy in the Gulf as Belize's wake up call. Belize must ban off-shore drilling.

Only one accident could destroy our tourism industry and our fisheries -- and the risk of accidents is high in our country. The small foreign companies granted oil concessions certainly do not have the technical equipment that British Petroleum has, yet BP has yet to control the massive spill in the Gulf -- what would happen here?

Also, our government has very limited resources to deal with an oil spill. The Departments of Environment (DOE) and Petroleum and Geology are already challenged in monitoring existing projects being developed around the country. The list of violations currently unaddressed by both Departments is lengthy. If they cannot handle the projects they now have, how can they possibly deal with an offshore drilling accident??

Belize has already lost one life to an offshore accident. On July 16, 2007, an Island Oil Ltd (Guatemala) oil rig capsized, reportedly when one of the rig's pads snagged on the sea bottom. The existing safety measures could not protect human life even when the rig was simply being moved from the shore of Monkey River to Big Creek. What does that say about the company's ability to control a more serious accident?

Global warming increases the likelihood of hurricanes. For that simple fact alone, Belize is looking at an offshore disaster just waiting to happen. Also, one year ago, southern Belize experienced a 7.4 earthquake. Yes, the ground under the sea shakes, again possibly endangering the safety of any offshore drilling.

Let's be honest here: The bottom line of the oil business is MONEY. Unprecedented profits to oil companies follow oil discoveries. However, oil producing countries often do not see the same profits. In fact, when oil is discovered in developing countries such as Belize, these countries often find their budgets still meager, poverty level high, and opportunities for development dismal.

For example, since the mid-1990's, the petroleum industry has produced massive revenues for Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, and Equatorial New Guinea in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, rather than using these funds to improve the living standards for their citizens and addressing economic development, the wealth has enriched the countries' political leaders.

In addition, oil companies have extremely strong incentives to protect their money interests by entwining themselves politically through campaign and other contributions to elected (and unelected) officials. In fact, many experts in the US believe that the "cozy" relationship between the BP oil company and the US government led directly to the BP oil disaster. Surely no one will deny that the Belize system of governance is susceptible to money influences. So, if cozy relationships can lead to environmental disasters in the US, how can we possibly conclude that the same disasters cannot happen here?

In addition, citizens have every right to know whether payments from an oil company reflect a fair deal for our country.

But, that is not how it is set up in Belize. A Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) is a legal document signed by GOB and an oil company. It details the who, what, when, where, why and how of oil exploration and drilling. It also addresses how much money Belize gets

Based on information from the Belize Department of Environment (DOE), PG Fisheries Company (Jamaica) is operating an illegal fish processing plant in Punta Gorda, Toledo District. An email from DOE dated 8 June 2010, states "no submission from Mr. Osbourne, re the Jamaican processing plant in Punta Gorda regarding the harvesting of sea cucumbers has been submitted to the Department of the Environment for review. As such the processing plant operation in Punta Gorda DOES NOT HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE FOR ANY PROCESSING ACTIVITY AT THIS TIME." (emphasis added)

In an interview with Channel 7 News on 12 May 2010, Derek Osbourne, head of PG Fisheries, spoke proudly of this processing plant:

So far we have invested over \$500,000 US dollars. And we have trained over 35 people in food safety. The plant has gotten BAHA certification and therefore the people are clamouring for jobs. Right

and how much the company gets. Unfortunately, the PSAs between GOB and the oil companies are confidential, not to be shared with the public. This confidentiality protects both GOB and the oil companies from having to answer to the Belize public about every aspect of an oil drilling operation -- from the money involved to who is liable if there is a spill.

Further, despite the serious risks to the environment posed by offshore drilling, since 2007, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required or mandated by law for oil companies investing in Belize. This means that oil companies do not have to provide any detailed analysis of the risks of drilling in specific locations before the oil operation even begins, nor do they any longer have to share this information with the public. This step of accountability is now totally bypassed. The oil company's vested interests have once again been protected by the Belize government.

Clearly, Belize lacks transparent systems that safeguard our environment and guarantee equitable and fair distribution of oil revenues.

The majority of the public and even some government Ministers do understand the negative consequences of offshore drilling and they are expressing their opposition loudly and clearly. They have not been fooled into thinking that oil is a rich financial bonanza for the country.

Thirty four organizations throughout our country have united and formed the Belize Coalition to Save Our Natural Heritage. The organization has called for a complete ban on offshore drilling to preserve our enormous economic base of tourism and fisheries (half a billion US dollars a year into the Belize economy) -- not to mention the protection of our lives and homes during floods, storms, and hurricanes.

Even the international community opposes offshore drilling in Belize. The Belize Barrier Reef is on UNESCO's list of endangered World Heritage Sites. Marc Patry, UNESCO programme specialist states that World Heritage Sites should be off limits to mining and hydrocarbon exploitation. He warns that Belize could be de-listed if offshore drilling is allowed to continue.

Could oil revenues benefit our country more than our tourism and fisheries? Not likely, based on past experience. More than two years ago, the UDP made an election promise to establish the Belize Petroleum Trust Fund to benefit all Belizeans with much needed social programs. After over two years in office, this Trust Fund has yet to be established. Instead, government uses all oil revenues for pay its day to day operations instead of providing us with more money for healthcare and education, as promised.

The catastrophe unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico must be our wakeup call and the voices of the people must prevail. Ban all off-shore drilling in Belize.

now, we are processing sea cucumber, storing sea cucumber for the Rio Grande Fishermen Co-op. Previously, they could not have done that without us because there was no form of facility in southern Belize that could assist in the processing of fishery products."

PG Fisheries arrived in Punta Gorda in November 2009, with four boats loaded with fish traps and their own workers. They came to Belize to exploit our fishing grounds because they have depleted their own by over-fishing using traps and other unsustainable fishing methods.

A public outcry by Belizeans throughout the country demanded that the Jamaicans go home. However, the Jamaicans never left. While the Government of Belize (GOB) refused to issue fishing licenses to the Jamaicans, they remained in PG, rehabbed an existing building and equipped it as a fish processing plant.

PG Fisheries and Rio Grande Co-op, PG also formed a partnership and signed a profit sharing agreement whereby the Jamaicans would buy fish from the co-op, process it, and the coop would export the seafood to Jamaica and beyond.

By their own admission, the Jamaicans have been processing sea cucumbers. Reports from Punta Gorda are that the Jamaicans are also processing mutton snappers and other marine life. -- all without environmental clearance by DOE.

The sea cucumber (called locally "sea slug") plays an important role in the ecology of the sea by filtering out sediments and recycling nutrients and food. They serve as marine vacuum cleaners, helping to keep the seas and reefs clean and healthy.

The sea cucumber is a delicacy and food staple, mostly in Asia, and fetches US\$50 -- US\$1,000 (or more) per pound on the international market, depending on how it is processed and what kind of sea slug it is. It is no wonder the Jamaicans are processing sea cucumbers for export in partnership with the Rio Grande Cooperative. They stand to make a great deal of money processing and exporting these creatures from our waters.

According to experts, some sea cucumber species are at risk of depletion. Here in Belize, Fisheries (the department that regulates sea cucumber harvesting) does not know how many sea cucumbers live in our sea.

When we asked a Fisheries official if there was a possibility of sea cucumber being fished out in Belizean waters, he answered, "That is the million dollar question. There is a good chance they will be fished out."

Members of the Placencia Fishermen's Cooperative agree, and have stated that they tried to keep Fisheries from issuing licenses for harvesting sea cucumbers -- and are still trying to have the licenses withdrawn.

If sea cucumbers are fished-out, our once vibrantly colored reef may not only grow gray and dull, the loss of our sea cucumbers could lead to its death, especially when combined with threats from climate change, ocean acidification, pollution and dredging.

Crimson Park Stalled? (cont. from front page)

Crimson Development has never given a public accounting to substantiate development costs for this public development.

Most local residents selected to purchase lots have been unable to pay for their lots in full because local wages are not high enough for banks to approve mortgages on the lots. In addition, the banks require a down payment of approximately BZ\$10,000, an amount that is out of reach of most residents.

Crimson Development is the second developer to attempt to develop this project, which Reagan International started in 2007 and abandoned in 2009. Only one house has been built in Crimson Park -- it is owned by a citizen of Great Britain who purchased a lot from one of the Placencia Village residents selected by the Placencia Lots Committee to purchase the lot.

Letter to the Editor

Just Say No to Cruise Ships

Dear Editor:

I see absolutely no benefit to having cruise ships stop anywhere on the Peninsula.

We have no infrastructure to support such masses of people. It would be destructive to our natural resources.

Carnival and Royal Caribbean cruise lines have received ratings of F- on garbage dumping. Carnival also received an F on Sewage treatment.

I know as a previous ship captain, that the fees for dumping garbage in the Caribbean run into the thousands of dollars, so they will try to dump at sea at night, risking the International laws. First offense \$50,000. second \$250,000, and third offense suspension.

Carnival has had ships suspended, all it takes is a passenger photo. and we are talking styrofoam, plastics, medical waste, etc. We blame Honduras or ourselves on the garbage coming into our beaches, but the cruise industry is the number one offender in the world.

I operate a little hotel, which we built ourselves in the early 90's. At that time I could clean the beach and it would stay that way for a month, Now it is an everyday event. In that short of time the Caribbean has gotten that much more polluted.

Next if cruise ship passengers want to eat, where would be able to handle crowds—Placencia Hotel, Bella Maya??? And, we don't have a sewage system. Plus, they aren't going to hire our local dive shops or fishing guides.

All of our repeat business will be in jeopardy. Cruise ship passengers won't be repeat business. They are just not our market.

Everyone I have talked to that has been on a cruise ship to Belize wouldn't come back. They are not our clientele.

We need the nature lovers, fisher people, divers. I questioned the BTB on possibly setting a moratorium on new hotel rooms until we can get our occupancy rates up, we are around 38% and the Caribbean average is more like 60%. But, BTB thinks we need big chains. To begin with, big chains need to see our occupancy rates up before they could be interested, they will see that our market is not the big chains or cruise ships.

We need to continue to support the existing local business. Cruise ships will hurt the local business big time. They will stop, maybe buy a tee shirt, need to use rest rooms, trample our reefs, and parks, leave their garbage. How can this possibly benefit and locals or the existing establishments?

Sincerely,
Anne Miller, Miller's Landing

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it for our children."
Native American proverb

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Contact PCSD to Join or Make a Donation.

Dora Williams and Corrine Ogaldez "Don't Say Try—Just Do!"



Miss Dora and Miss Corrine, Seine Bight Village

Dora Williams and Corrine Ogaldez have been closest friends for almost forty years.

Their friendship is born also in blood (they are both Palacios), but more importantly, is rooted in their profound love of their community.

"I know all my people, my community to a tee. I work along with my people. God loves me and I love my people," Dora Williams began this interview with these words and a loud thunderous laugh that resonated from deep inside her.

And Dora's life, and that of Corrine, bear out her words.

Miss Dora is Seine Bight's midwife, works at the SB water board, is a Justice of the Peace, and is founder of Igermie Dance Group (for boys and girls young and old) and the Women's Group.

Miss Corrine is a retired teacher and her son was a former Seine Bight Village chairman.

"The best part of every one of my jobs and activities is being with people," Miss Dora states.

Miss Dora was born in Seine Bight. Her father was a teacher, so she traveled and lived around Belize a lot as a youth, finally resettling in Seine Bight.

Dora knew early on that she wanted to deliver babies, so in 1976, she studied midwifery with Nurse Ireland in Seine Bight, then in 1980 took advanced midwifery studies at the Dangriga Hospital. In the first week of May 2010 alone, she delivered five babies. "I get a lot of blessings delivering babies," Miss Dora proudly claims.

Miss Corrine confirms their shared commitment: "First of all, I think about the people."

That thinking about the people translates into a deep understanding of and involvement in their Garifuna culture.

Both Miss Dora and Miss Corrine agree: "Barranco still has strong traditions. Here in Seine Bight, we are struggling to keep our culture alive. Our cultural

groups perform the punta, hughugu, gunjie, chumba. All these dances are very lively expressions of our past. However, our culture is also very contemporary. New songs are constantly being composed and connect our past with our present and our future."

Both friends share some of the serious and diverse concerns for their village.

"We would like to reinstate an eight o'clock curfew for the young ones from the ages of five to eighteen. Our students should be at home studying, not walking about the street. We need our parents to come together, our adults to lead Scout and Girl Guide groups.

"There are plenty of jobs on this Peninsula, but so few of them go to Seine Bight people. Our youth are graduating from school, and there are no jobs offered them. That is why so many of our students are joining the Police Force.

"The dredging of the Lagoon is wrong: the mangrove is the strength of our community.

"Documents issued by the Lands Department label us 'Placencia North.' We are NOT Placencia North! WE ARE SEINE BIGHT!

"Seine Bight is an older village than Placencia. We want documents to say Seine Bight.

"Our autonomy must be recognized and respected. No native person from SB is represented on the Placencia BTIA's board. And of course, there is a shortage of land. Our children and grandchildren need land for themselves and their own families."

These two very determined and focused ladies address these issues in constructive, positive ways.

Miss Dora and Miss Corrine are doers. Miss Dora sums it up very nicely when she says: "Everything I do is done out of love. I don't say 'I will.' I don't say 'I try.' I say 'I DO.'"

And we're all happy that they do.

Thank you Miss Dora and Miss Corrine!