



Press Release July 20, 2017

Government of Belize Providing **Safe Water** To over 1,000 villagers of Pueblo Viejo &, Conejo Creek, Toledo District

The Government of Belize, in its continued commitment to address the basic needs of Belizeans in the areas of water, sanitation and health is ensuring that the men, women and children of Pueblo Viejo and Conejo Creek have access to the supply of safe water to meet their daily needs such as **cooking, drinking, bathing and washing**.



Government funded both Pueblo Viejo and Conejo Creek Solar Energy Water Systems through a grant of approximately \$1.5 million BZ dollars from the Caribbean Development Bank under the Water and Sanitation System Enhancement Sector of the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF7) Programme.



The new solar energy water systems was officially inaugurated on July 20, by Minister of Economic Development, Petroleum, Investment, Trade and Commerce, Hon Erwin Contreras; and Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development, Mr Kerry Belisle who deputized for Minister of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development, Hon Hugo Patt.

Equally important, the solar energy water systems will also contribute significantly in the reduction in the vulnerability of men, women and children to incidences of water-borne, food borne, vector borne and communicable diseases; thus improving the quality of life of villagers in over 141 families.

Completion of the water systems also demonstrates government's unwavering commitment to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals, otherwise known as the Global Goals, building on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it relates to water; which is to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. The Government of Belize in this regard, is making critical achievements in improving the wellness, and quality of health of the villagers of Pueblo Viejo and Conejo, and by extension, the wider society of Belize.

The scope of works for Pueblo Viejo Solar Energy Water System included the rehabilitation of an **existing 13,500 gallon capacity tank** structure that became inoperable four years after it was built in 2004; construction of a new pump house, fence and installation of a solar power system and a diesel powered generator, which will serve as a backup to provide electricity to the pump house and controls.

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For Conejo Creek Solar Energy Water System, the scope of works included the construction of an elevated steel frame structure to support **four 2,640 gallons** rotoplas water tanks with all required piping and accessories, a 10' x 20' pump house with a fence encompassing the area, a submersible solar water pump and chlorinator, and a solar panel array to provide electricity to the pump house and controls. The water tank was constructed at the highest point in the village, thus water will be gravity fed to villagers.

The water projects were implemented by Belize Social Investment Fund, an implementing agency of the Government of Belize that addresses the basic needs of Belizeans as enshrined in Government's policy to alleviate poverty. SIF in recognition of effective maintenance and sustainability of the water systems for present and future generations, trained members of both Pueblo Viejo and Conejo Water Boards and Village Councils on how to manage and operate the solar energy water systems, water chlorination, and meters repairs coupled with basic accounting facilitated by the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development.

Other officials at the respective inaugurations included the Chairman of Pueblo Viejo, Mr Pedro Tush, Chairman of Conejo Creek, Mr. Estevan Coy, and Executive Director of Belize Social Investment Fund, Mr. William Lamb Jr, and his technical team as well as representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development among others.



Villagers filling buckets at pump

Prior to the rehabilitation of Pueblo Viejo and Conejo Solar Energy Water Systems; villagers from both villages experienced challenges to access safe potable water; and obtained water from wells that often dried up in the dry season, creeks, vats, and hand-pumps



inoperable Water Tank

About Pueblo Viejo

The Village existed since the 1850's or some 165 years ago, and is located 31 miles West of Punta Gorda Town. There are 141 households with **800** inhabitants. Most of the villagers do small scale subsistence farming (planting of corn, rice, beans and ground food) for their livelihood, but some are also involved in pig and poultry production.

About Conejo Creek Village

Conejo Creek Village was established in mid 1960s by two families, namely the Makin and Beb who are Ketchi Maya. The economic activities of the village, which is located approximately 23 miles South West of Punta Gorda Town include subsistence farming, planting corn and beans for consumption as well as for sale at the market in Punta Gorda Town by travelling through the Temash River.

“Belize Social Investment Fund...*Breaking the Cycle of poverty*”