

2.4 TOTONICAPAN

2.4.1 STATISTIC FACTS OF TOTONICAPAN

INDEX	FIGURE
TOTAL AREA OF TOTONICAPAN:	1,061 Km ²
MAIN TOWN:	TOTONICAPAN
LOCATION:	14°54'39" N – 91°21'38" W
ELEVATION:	2,495.3 m.o.s.l
ANNUAL TEMPERATURE RANGE:	5.3-18.4°C
AVERAGE ANNUAL PRECIPITATION:	1,095 mm

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY WITH RESPECT TO EAP (Economically Active Population)	
Private sector	37.3%
Self employed	47.3%
Government employee	1.8%
Employers	1.0%
Non remunerated family work	12.6%

NON ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION	
Household work	61.2%
Students	33.5%
Retired	1.3%
Other	4.0%

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH BASIC SERVICES	
Drinking water	71.8%
Electricity	56.8%
Drainage	10.6%
Drinking water, drainage and electricity	

HOUSEHOLD COOKING FUEL	
Firewood	92.5%
Propane gas	6.2%
Electricity	0.7%
Kerosene	0.2%
Charcoal	0.2%
Other	0.2%

2.4.2 GENERAL INFORMATION

Totonicapán is located in the central highlands of Guatemala, 206 kilometers West of Guatemala city. This department has a rich history which goes back several centuries. It borders North with Huehuetenango, South with Sololá; East with Quiché, and West with Quetzaltenango.

Although agricultural production is still the main source of income, the textile industry as well as agroindustry are sectors in continuous growth.

All other municipalities, except by Totonicapán, have the traditional organization scheme. The municipality of Totonicapán presents a unique organization pattern called *parcialidades*. There are 13 *parcialidades* in Totonicapán and they are communities who possess their own land, in most cases with property documents issued by the King of Spain in the 16th Century, which ironically are not valid before the current authorities.

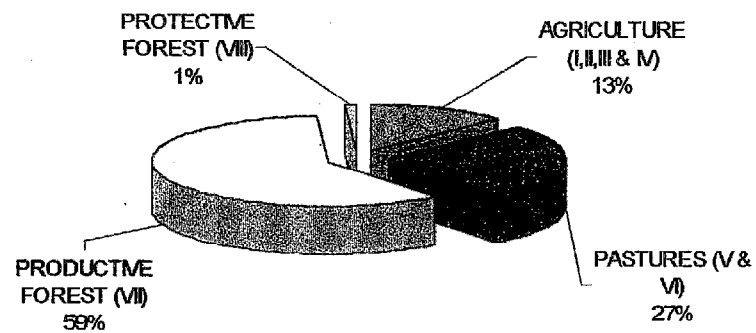
Parcialidades have been qualified by some anthropologists as independent states of reservations in which governmental laws and regulations are not obeyed. A valid example of the efficiency of their system is that although the National Forestry Service is not allowed to enter, the forests of Totonicapán's *parcialidades* are perhaps the best protected of Latin America.

Parcialidades are run by a Council of Elders whom decides on all matters related with the community and its resources.

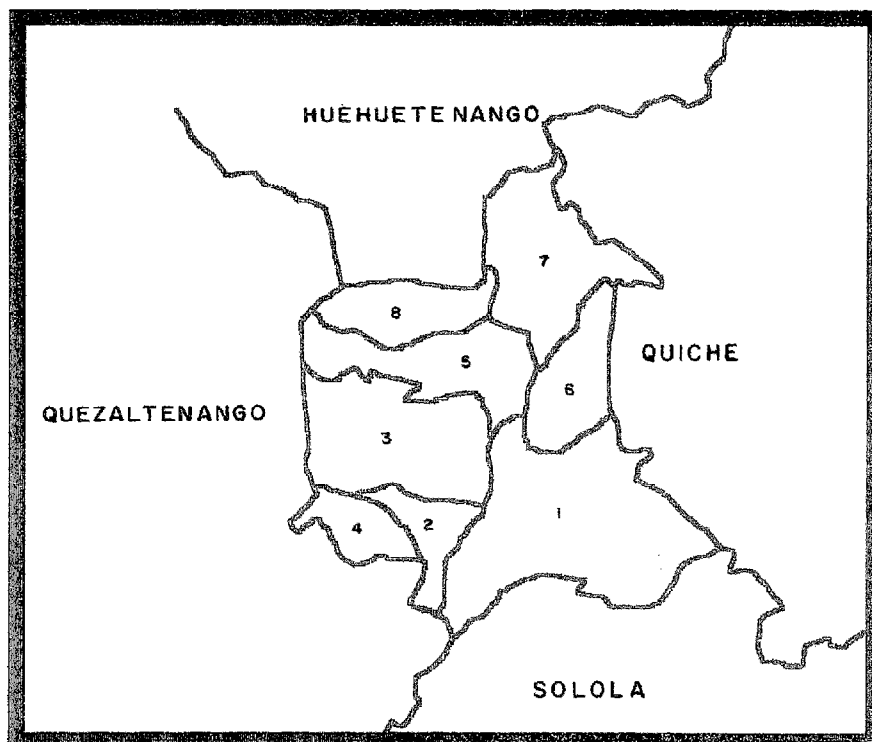
2.4.3 PHYSIOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The most important hydrographic basin in the department of Totonicapán is the one of Chixoy River, which covers an area of 12,150 Km², and has a level difference that goes from 2,940 to 13 meters over the sea level.

PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY OF THE SOILS OF TOTONICAPAN



2.4.4 POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION



No.	MUNICIPALITY	No.	MUNICIPALITY
1.	TOTONICAPAN	5.	MOMOSTENANGO
2.	SAN CRISTOBAL TOTONICAPAN	6.	SANTA MARIA CHIQUIMULA
3.	SAN FRANCISCO EL ALTO	7.	SANTA LUCIA LA REFORMA
4.	SAN ANDRES XECUL	8.	SAN BARTOLO

The department of Totonicapán is divided into 8 municipios and approximately 180 villages. As mentioned before, the municipality of Totonicapán is also divided into 13 parcialidades and 44 cantones (organized neighborhoods).

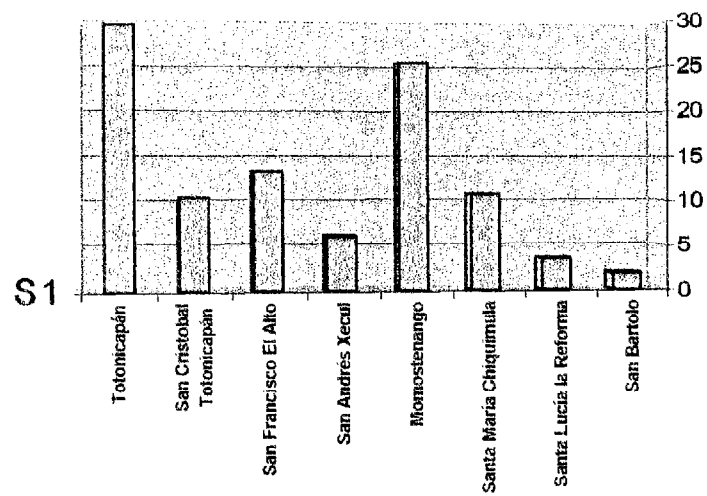
The organization of the civil society has been a priority for the people of Totonicapán since several centuries ago, as proof of that there are currently more than 1,900 development committees and nearly 40 development organizations (NGO). Based upon these facts, Totonicapán has received considerable amounts of international funds, regrettably there has not been a substantial benefit for the rural communities, mainly because the international donors have not identified reliable NGO's and funds have been missused.

As mentioned at the beginning, the degree of civil organization has in most cases a correlation with the percentage of indigenous populations, since they have had for centuries gregarious individuals.

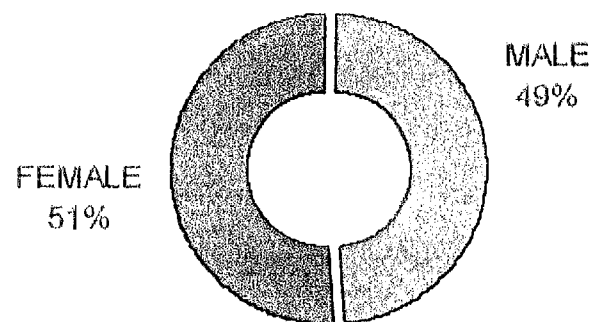
2.4.5 POPULATION

According to the 1994 census, the population of Totonicapán was of 272,094 inhabitants, however the estimates for 1999 is of 303,370, at a 2.2% annual growth rate.

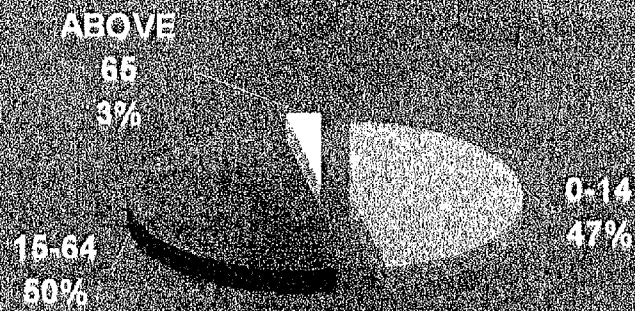
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION (%)



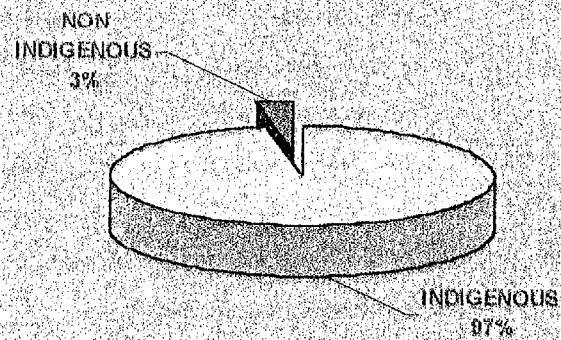
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY SEX



DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY AGE RANGE



DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY ETHNIC ORIGIN



3 THE EXISTING SITUATION

From the information provided above, as well as from the data gathered by the rest of the mission, it is quite easy to notice that the main problems of the rural population of the study area are the following (in order of importance):

1. *Lack of financial support for income generation activities.* Basically due to great deficiencies in terms of land titling, which make small farmers or small entrepreneurs ineligible to apply for loans. Although there are a few local NGO's working with micro-credit, the interest rates that they charge is considerably above the market rate (30%), besides, their coverage in terms of number of beneficiaries is very low.
2. *Inappropriate health care.* Due to two main causes: lack of enough health facilities and personnel, as well as a great deficiency in health education. The three main causes of children mortality in the area of study are: 1) Infectious diseases of the lower respiratory system, 2) Infectious Diarrhea, mainly due to amebas, *Giardia* sp. and *Shigella* sp. Contamination rate is tremendously high due to lack of hygiene measures, and 3) Malnutrition. These three major causes of death are preventable through health education, hygiene and preventable health care.
3. *Education.* The main constraint for children's attendance to school is the high degree of poverty. Based upon this fact, children must support their families by working in agriculture, handicrafts or small industries, losing the opportunity to acquire basic education and a better future. Secondary causes of school desertion are the belief that female children do not need an education, inadequate school curricula (theoretical knowledge without practical use), and learning problems due to malnutrition.
4. *Lack of public services.* Although most rural families do not see the need nor can afford their own telephone set, safe drinking water and electricity are the most important needs for them. Although there are serious attempts of the electric distribution companies in order to cover a higher percentage of rural

homes, it is expected to happen in the next five years. On the other hand safe drinking water is a greater problem, mainly due to the high deforestation rate (80,000 ha/year) and the lack of municipal control over community water systems. Although a high percentage of the rural population use septic tanks for fecal remains, water used in baths of other house cleaning activities is usually a source of mosquitoes, main cause of malaria and dengue.

4. GENERAL GUIDELINES

Based upon the problems identified in the study area, the following aspects must be taken into consideration in the survey, planning and implementation phases of the sustainable rural development program:

- Although the program should be oriented to attack the problem of poverty from different angles, it is quite important to implement in the first stage, a support project for income generation activities. The foremost objective should be to support the head of family to "fill the stomachs" of his family, in order to reestablish his confidence and dignity.

Such thing is possible through non traditional credit systems, using as distribution channels reliable non governmental organizations attaching when possible, mandatory technical assistance and training to the credit component.

At this stage is also important to offer rural families new opportunities in terms of new crops and new markets, favoring industrial transformation as a value added mechanism. All income generation activities, foremost those oriented to agricultural production must take in consideration three basic aspects:

- Mass production in order to guarantee a substantial socioeconomic impact,
- World class quality standards, and
- Secure markets

- The second stage should consider education issues, mainly formal education and health oriented training for parents and children in a separate fashion, considering that if they have satisfied their basic needs as a result of stage one, they will indeed have the time to attend training sessions.
- The third stage will involve the central government and local authorities, since it will be oriented to guarantee land titling (parallel to the implementation of the rural development program), and to supply social infrastructure, mainly water systems, drainage, schools and health posts.

There should be paid special attention to the NGO selection process (for rural micro credit), since a large number of them have no experience in credit management and collection, as there are some others whom have become profitable organizations.

The possibilities of working through farmer's organizations are quite high, since most of them are highly democratic groups, with sincere interest on finding solutions to the constraints of their people and do not have any interest on making profit.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that gender issues are not applicable to all communities, as a matter of fact, most rural communities would not accept any kind of cooperation if gender components are attached.