

Economic and Social Profile

Middle Caicos

Geography and History.

At 48 square miles, Middle Caicos is the largest land mass in the Turks and Caicos Islands. In the modern historical period of TCI settlement, Middle Caicos was settled 100 years ago. The earlier settlers grew sisal - the fiber from which rope is made - which was mainly done by the women; while the men engaged in fishing and vegetable farming. Since the mid-1950's with the rise of synthetic fibers, sisal farming has declined and fishing and farming are now the main private sector economic activity of persons.

Population

According to the 2001 Population and Housing Survey of the Turks and Caicos Islands, the population of Middle Caicos was 301 persons comprised of 145 males and 156 females living in 107 households scattered over three fairly far-flung settlements. Since the 2001 survey, the population has declined to about 257 persons, as some persons have moved to Providenciales and elsewhere in search of work. The present locational spread of the population is as follows:

- Conch Bar - 162 persons,
- Bambara - 60 “
- Lorimers - 25.residents.

From a planning standpoint the relevant age cohorts in 2001 and projected are as follows:

	2001	2014
Infants (1<4 years)	30	100
Primary School Age children (5<12)	42	140
High School Age children (<18)	32	110
Prospective skills trainees (20 – 24)	10	30
Working Age (25 – 69)	143	350
Retirees	47	160
Total	301	1000

The proportion of dependent persons, those for whom the State has ultimate moral responsibility of support in the event of misfortune, comprising infants, school age children, prospective skills trainees, and retirees currently stands at 52% of the population, and would increase to over 500 persons if the tripling of the population projected here were to occur. The projected tripling of population on Middle Caicos runs counter to the current trend of population decline, but could occur if economic opportunities increased. If a trebling of population were to occur, then the major demand on the Government would be to build a high school, since it may no longer be feasible to

ferry over 100 children to North Caicos daily to attend school. There would also be expanded requirements for health-care, and waste disposal, among other expenses.

The Economy and Employment

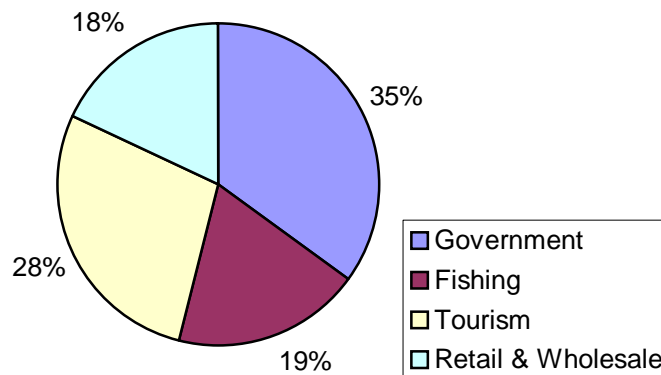
The economy of Middle Caicos is characterized by a high proportion of subsistence activity in farming and fishing with Government being the largest employer of labour in the formal sector. The 2001 Population Census lists the labour force, 15 years and over, as 105 persons. Of this number, 58 persons reported that they had a job during Survey Week, seven (7) that they wanted a job and could not find work, and 40 persons – possibly students and housewives, that were unavailable for work. Based on these figures the employed work force would be roughly 90% of the labour force and the rate of unemployment would be 10%. The allocation of the work force in the various sectors are shown in column 1 of Table 1 below:

Table I - Employment and Output in Middle Caicos

<i>Sector</i>	<i>No. of Workers</i>		<i>Sector Per Capita \$</i>	=	<i>Sector Product</i>
▪ Government	29	x	12,899	=	374,071
▪ Fishing	10	x	20,000	=	200,000
▪ Tourism, Bars, & restaurants	12	x	24,968	=	299,616
▪ Retail & Wholesale	7	x	27,432	=	192,024
Total	58				1,065,711

Multiplying the TCI sector per capita by the number of workers in each sector in Middle Caicos, it is possible to obtain an approximation of that community's gross domestic product. This was determined to be \$1,017, 537. Per capita income for the island would therefore be \$3,541, which is about one-third of the national per capita of \$10,100.

Sectoral GDP for Middle Caicos



Of course, average household income (GDP divided by the number of households) would be higher and works out at \$9,510. Further, when it is recalled that subsistence fishing and farming and informal vending are significant activities in Middle Caicos though their value are unlikely to be captured in the official statistics, it is possible to impute another \$1,000 to \$2,000 per annum (\$20 to \$40 per week) to household incomes. When this is done average household income would be about \$11,000.

Nonetheless, the largest island in the TCI remains largely undeveloped and sparsely populated with a shallow economy in which the Government has to be providing income in works projects for 21% of the work force.

Local Governance

The official affairs of the islands have traditionally being looked after by a District Administrator (DA) – a paid Government official. Since 2003/04 the office and role of these officials have being redefined in some degree. The DA's have being re-named district commissioners, and instead of functioning autonomously locally and reporting mainly to the higher authorities in Grand Turk, they are now advised by panel of citizens drawn from the community. Top-down direction/selection from Grand Turk continues to be dominant however; and while it may be impractical at this stage to permit fully democratic procedures in the selection of District Boards, every effort should be made to ensure that those selected reflect the widest range of community interests – including youth. Procedures should also be put in place for the District Commissioners and their advisory panels to report and have dialogue at least twice per year with the wider community.

Several Christian denominations have churches in Middle Caicos, and while they provide assistance for their membership, they are not involved in providing services to the broader community in an organized way. There are no active service clubs in Middle Caicos.

Social Conditions

Housing

Of the 107 households in Middle Caicos, according to the TCI 2001 Population and Housing Census, 91 homes or 85% were made of brick and concrete and the others of wood or stone. Seventy percent of homes utilize household cisterns and tanks to collect and store water, while 30% use drums. The Preliminary Census Report dose not state how many homes have flush toilets, or rely on pit latrines, but reports are that the latter are few.

Education

There is only one school – a primary school – in Middle Caicos for its 42 primary school age children. This school is staffed by three teachers which makes for a student teacher ratio of 1:14. This ratio is pretty close to the 1:15 where teacher preoccupation

with maintaining order and decorum in the classroom is felt to come at the price of student achievement. Furthermore, reports are that the school is in a serious state of physical deterioration. That the doors to the classroom are rotting; and that the school was not painted or renovated prior to the beginning of the school year. The toilet area for the children in particular, is said to be in very poor condition. Despite the poor physical condition of the school, residents seem generally satisfied with the quality of the educational programs offered at the school.

Health Care

There is a primary health care clinic in Conch Bar, the largest settlement, staffed by two nurses, one of whom is a midwife. The other two communities each have a nurse's aid to attend to the needs of residents. A doctor attends at the Conch Bar Clinic two times per month and a dentist once per month. The residents have a few complaints about the quality of the physical facilities (see next section), but not about the service.

Physical and Social Infrastructure

There is a small airport with a 1,000 feet runway, capable of facilitating smaller craft. There is a main road connecting the three settlements from Conch Bar to Bambara to Lorimers. There is also a Ferry Landing that permits the movement of people and goods, especially from North Caicos, which accounts for the bulk of the intra-country sea traffic to and from Middle Caicos.

Some residents complain with justification however, that the Government has not done much to upgrade the physical infrastructure of Middle Caicos for the past three years, and possibly longer. No projects were implemented for Middle Caicos under the Basic Needs Trust Funds, and prior to 2003/04, Government expenditures on community projects on the island was limited. Residents note that the main road linking the settlements was last repaired in the early 1990's and since then little maintenance has been done, with the result that the road is now so full of potholes it poses an ever-present risk of damage to vehicles that use the road. Residents also cite the lack of a community center, or a playing field or basketball court on the island (not even in the school for the children to play); and cite the need for a cabana with toilet facilities on the North Caicos side of the Ferry Landing to provide shelter against the elements. From observation the terminal facilities at the airport are rudimentary and unattractive.

The most frequent complaint of residents however, is the severe mosquito infestation they are subjected to during the rainy season. The Environmental Health Authority employs two vector control officers and they engage in fogging, oiling of ponds and the laying of slow release chemicals in the ponds, but these often prove inadequate to control the pests. It is felt by some that the mosquito scourge and the reputation of Middle Caicos for this pestilence might indeed be serving as a disincentive to persons and investors moving to the island. There clearly needs to be a more effective and sustainable means of managing the mosquito problem.

Plans and Prospects

To address some of these problems the Government has spent about \$400,000 over the previous three years and has earmarked approximately \$3.0 million to be spent on community development and infrastructural projects for Middle Caicos over the next three years.

Completed Projects include:

- \$300,000 for rehabilitation of Middle Caicos Airport/DC's Office and downtown main roads which was begun in 2002/03 and is to conclude this year.
- \$52, 000 under the District Project for Middle Caicos which was concluded in 2003/04.

Upcoming and Ongoing projects valued at \$1.355 million include:

- \$300,000 for Community Development Projects of which of which \$55,000 was spent last year, and \$245,000 carried over this year;
- Reconstruction of Pine Barrel Landing Road at a cost of \$1,000,000; and,
- \$300,000 for construction of Middle Caicos Office block to commence in 2004/05.

Proposed projects amounting to \$3.5 million include

- Rehabilitation of Middle Caicos roads at a cost of \$1.5 million to start in 2006/07;
- \$130,000 for a Sustainable Development Planning Initiative for North and Middle Caicos.
- Construction of a new Government Administrative office bloc in Middle Caicos.

Conclusion

With its extensive pristine beaches, lush greenery, many underground caves, Middle Caicos is easily one of the most beautiful unspoilt gems in the Turks and Caicos archipelago. The Island has good agricultural potential and even greater eco-tourism attractions for modern day Robinson Crusoes. In the short-term consideration is being given for a home-based supply of potable water to elderly residents; repairs of the primary school; and for a community center/ playing field to be constructed. In the longer term, Chief Minister Misick in his budget presentation announced his intentions to explore the possibilities of building two marinas and a housing complex in Middle Caicos and enunciated a vision of seeing the island develop a nature tourism industry. These would be welcome developments for beautiful Middle Caicos to move it from a seemingly 'forgotten frontier' to being the vibrant middle island in the Turks and Caicos Islands.