

## **Project Update: June 2012**

The project has made a lot of progress since our last update. Below are some of the highlights and challenges of our project and our partner native communities in the Ampiyacu region of the northern Peruvian Amazon.

1. CACE sold a lot of tree ornaments made by Bora and Huitoto artisans in the 2011 Christmas holiday season. Buyers showed a strong preference for the calabash fruit pods etched with rainforest animal figures made by a few men over the ones covered by woven chambira made by women weavers. The women artisans have been quickly learning, however, to carve beautiful toucans, anacondas, and river dolphins for this year's season.
2. The Amazon Guitar Strap made by Bora artisans from Brillo Nuevo got a boost when British rocker Dave Wakeling from the group English Beat bought five of the straps for himself and fellow musicians and recorded an interview with CACE to promote the sustainable project.
3. We have finished mapping at least one "purma" (secondary forest field) of the primary artisans in Brillo Nuevo. We will now begin to survey the chambira palm trees in these fields to estimate how many "cogollos" (leaf spears) are available to ensure that there will be an adequate supply of the palm fibers to meet the growing production of woven handicrafts. More artisans are starting to use a pole saw to harvest the "cogollos." This method reduces damage to the tree compared to harvesting the leaf spears with a machete.
4. Our copal survey teams have found that there are a good number of new resin lumps growing on the trees harvested in the past few years. This is giving us confidence that only collecting half the lumps during a harvest is a good method for systematic harvest.
5. Our distillation of resin samples from different species of copal in the Ampiyacu area has produced some mixed results. One fragrance specialist has told us that the essential oil from a few types of copal may be good ingredients in her perfume. The resin samples that had been aged for a full year before distilling had the best and most complex aromas. Unfortunately the aroma from the most common species in this area was not as attractive. We will need to figure out if the promising species is abundant enough to make this venture worthwhile.
6. We will soon collect and distil leaves from three types of aromatic trees (copal, cinnamon moena, and rosewood) and compare their yield and quality to the oil essential obtained from copal resin.
7. This year's rainy season was unusually heavy in the region that led to more extensive and longer flooding of many villages. These inundations damaged some food crops as well as some backyard garden plants the artisans use to dye their chambira fibers for handicrafts. The more intensive flooding also increased the mosquito population and number of people who accordingly got malaria.