

Project Update: October 2011

We are now working with three new products and native communities in the Ampiyacu region. Bora artisans in Brillo Nuevo have made new designs for trivets and prototypes of chambira dog collars and leashes that are now being test marketed in a progressive pet store. Ocaina artisans from Nueva Esperanza have woven stripe-pattern coin purses for young girls. Huitoto and Bora artisans from Puca Urquillo have made Christmas tree ornaments from egg-size calabash tree fruits – some etched with piranhas and butterflies; others covered with colourful woven chambira. Working with Yagua artisans from San José de Piri is starting more slowly due to their impoverished forest and less developed weaving techniques.

Project manager Yully Rojas has been working with woodsmen from Brillo Nuevo to begin monitoring the recovering of copal resin lumps on trees harvested 1-2 years ago and visiting artisans' secondary forest plots to assess the abundance of chambira palm trees used in making most crafts.

This past month we invited Robin van Loon, director of the NGO Camino Verde (CV) to meet with project colleagues in Brillo Nuevo and other native villages in the Ampiyacu area. The purpose of the visit was to explore combining CV's experience in reforestation with CACE's experience with sustainable harvest and marketing non-timber products. We will now consider developing marketable essential oils from the leaves of several Lauraceae trees including "canela moena" and "palo rosa" (rosewood).

After completing several intensive surveys of chambira palm trees in the secondary forests of several artisans, we decided to shift gears and first map the areas where the artisans harvest the palm stems used in craft making. We will resume the inventories when we better understand the scope and size of these collecting areas.

Bora and Huitoto artisans from Puca Urquillo have made a great second batch of Christmas tree ornaments, and Ocaina artisans are rapidly joining their Bora colleagues in making beautiful chambira trivets and learning to make belts with traditional designs. Some craft-making has been hampered by floods that inundated both wild trees and backyard sources of natural dye plants. Until their replanted stock recuperates, they are compensating by acquiring some plants from people in other villages and using a few packets of artificial dye.





