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the small world foundation

SOME PAINT FOR THE KINDERGARDEN

More than a year ago, Dries and Micheline sold “neuzekes” (chocolate noses) in Belgium to raise money for kindergarden Tuirupü in San Martin de Amacayacu (newsletter 63). We could buy the electricity wires, do some small maintenance and purchase paint. Then Michelle tried to finish the paint (newsletter 64) and she almost did so! Now, after a year, it was time for some maintenance in the kindergarden dining room. Backpackers Deborah and Romain were in the neighbourhood and were looking for some volunteer work. Together with some local kids they first cleaned the benches and tables in the dining room and then gave them a new layer of paint. This time also the

cupboard for the kitchen utensils was given a color: Apple green this time.

We can also proudly mention that the new kindergarden teacher has contributed a lot herself. Through the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF -Colombian Institute for Family Wellbeing)*, which manages all the kindergardens in the area, she was able to collect enough paint of the same color to paint the whole kindergarden again on the outside. A few parents helped her paint. Also, there is now a small sink in the toilet for the kids to wash their hands and two small fans in the big space for the hottest days. Super!



MONTH OF EVENTS

• IX National meeting ONIC

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The indigenous communities in Colombia are being represented nationally by the *Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia* (ONIC). On a regional level, the communities are members of one of the many associations (“*asociaciones*”). Anually, representatives of the ONIC, the associations, government other entities come together to exchange opinions, reach agreements, make decisions etc. Also, it is a space where indigenous laws are made, the so called “*mandatos*” which are nationally valid. During the IX National Meeting of the ONIC in Bogotá (Bosa, 8-14 October) thousands of representatives came together in a secondary school building. In all classrooms and corridors there were hundreds of tents and outside there were long rows of toilets to accommodate everyone. The big meetings were held in the school stadium and the smaller workshops outside and in other school spaces. The Small World Foundation paid the expenses of four leaders from San Martín de Amacayacu to attend this event. For two of them it was the first time they were in Bogotá. They could all sleep in a hotel!

The emphasis of the meetings this time was the peace agreement between the FARC guerrilla movement and the Colombian government. This agreement had just been rejected a few days before by the Colombian people and is currently subject of debate again. One of the ±300 pages in the agreement is about the indigenous people, who had to endure the violence for years (many indigenous people have been chased away from their ancestral lands). The agreement has been accepted in general by the indigenous people, but they would like to become a more active part of the negotiations and put more emphasis on the autonomy they should have in their indigenous reserves (*resguardos*). Too often there are dominant influences by illegal groups or by the Colombian army. Fortunately, this is not the case for San Martín, but still very important for the leaders to understand how reality is for many communities in the rest of the country.

Time was dedicated at the meeting to restructure the mentioned “*mandatos*”, so that these are clear and respected at all indigenous government levels in the country. And finally there was a peace march by the thousands of indigenous people and sympathisers to the government square *Plaza de Bolívar*. With a banner, made by the San Martín delegation!



• Mesa Regional Amazonica

One leader from San Martín, José Gregorio Vásquez, flew back to Bogotá again a few days later to take part as an invited delegation in the *Mesa Regional Amazónica* (Amazon Regional Table) on 24-26 October, in which the five departments of the so called Colombian Amazonía are represented: Amazonas, Vaupés, Guaviare, Caquetá and Guainía. The main topic was environmental management in those areas where indigenous reserves overlap with national nature parks (as is the case for San Martín). Especially it was about deciding who the most important environmental authority: The environmental corporations of the departments, the municipalities, the indigenous communities, the scientific organisations or national parks? What has each entity done and reached so far to ensure environmental management? For example, San Martín has an active environmental patrol, and how about the others? What steps does the Colombian government need to take in terms of environmental protection,



so that all stakeholders can follow a more efficient path? One of those paths can be an official agreement between indigenous communities and national parks, in which both parties have an equal say when it comes to taking decisions and the budget. San Martín has been lobbying for this for a while (nieuwsbrief 63), but with not much concrete success so far.

• Pilar Indígena Visión Amazonía 27 oktober

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On October 27th representatives of indigenous organisations and NGO's came together to discuss the program *Pilar Indígena Visión Amazonía* (hard to translate, something like Indigenous Pillar for Amazon Vision). This program of the Colombian Ministry of Indigenous Affairs is financed by the German International Development Collaboration. The aim of the program is to stop deforestation in the Amazon by supporting local organisations, nature conservation and political development, and by applying traditional indigenous mechanisms of nature conservation. This first meeting was to hear the thoughts on this by local indigenous associations and communities. Their first response was that the program must follow the “*mandatos*”. The technical team of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Pillar now have to check if this is the case so far. A small delegation got the task to discuss the program in the actual communities.



• INDIGENOUS LANDS

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A delegation of five members from San Martin was present in the community of Ronda (8-10 November) to take part in an inventory of all regional indigenous reserves, the applications for ancestral land recognition, potential purchase of private lands for communities, etc. The indigenous association ACITAM (*Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Trapecio Amazonico*), to which also San Martin belongs, considers that autonomy over

ancestral lands is the basis for the future of the indigenous communities and to reach true autonomy. The meetings also looked at the economic potential of the well conserved lands (environmentally speaking). This can be important for CO₂ capture in exchange for money from developed countries or for tourism. San Martin's land application was included in the inventory of course and marked as one of the most advanced.



Would you like to support the Tikuna indigenous community of San Martin together with the Small World Foundation, and stay in touch about the local developments in this remote corner of Colombia?

Please transfer 15 euro yearly (or more!) to the following bank account in the Netherlands:

Account name: Stichting SMALL WORLD FOUNDATION
SWIFT/BIC Code: RABONL2U
IBAN code: NL28 RABO 0132 7262 03

Or check out the online contribution module on: www.smallworldfoundation.org/?page_id=68

Please DON'T FORGET TO INFORM US ABOUT YOUR NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS!!
(heike_van_gils@hotmail.com)

The contributions will be spent exclusively on the development and realization of local initiatives in San Martin de Amacayacu in the Colombian Amazon. No wages are being paid to anyone. The expenses will be mentioned as much as possible in the newsletters. For alternative contributions, please contact Heike van Gils at: heike_van_gils@hotmail.com.

For more information about this initiative, please check the website:
www.smallworldfoundation.org.