MEETING PERU AND COLOMBIA IN IQUITOS (PERU)

Between April 24 and 28 there was a meeting in the Peruvian Amazon city of Iquitos titled: "*Sistemas de conservación de áreas protegidas y conocimiento local indígena en la cuenca Putumayo Perú-Colombia*". Freely translated, this is "Conservation systems of protected areas and indigenous local knowledge in the Putumayo river system, located in Peru and Colombia".

The meeting was organized and financed by USAID, The Chicago Field Museum, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Instituto del Bien Común, Fundación para la Conservación y el Desarrollo Sostenible, National Parks Colombia and others. Those invited were representatives of these organizations, indigenous organizations, the Peruvian and Colombian government and also of travel agencies.

The Putumayo river system in Colombia covers the Amacayacu National Park and the ancestral lands of San Martin de Amacayacu and other indigenous communities, mostly Tikuna. The river system is enormous and has a rich cultural and biological diversity. As you can see on the map, there is a mosaic of indigenous lands (as reserves or without official status) and areas that are protected otherwise (National Parks, sustainable forestry areas, private nature reserves etc.). In each of these lands, indigenous groups, governments, NGO´s and individuals try to protect the cultural and biological diversity, create wellbeing for the indigenous people and guarantee their rights to use the lands and its natural resources.

Over previous years, each of these parties had their own experiences. With this meeting in Iquitos there was an opportunity to exchange these experiences and to identify the challenges that cannot be solved per country and have to be faced together.

Despite the protected status of many areas the most important challenges remain (legal and illegal) mining, logging, oil drilling and the construction of roads and canals straight through the rainforest to make transport through South America more efficient (Newsletter 60). Another important theme is the growing tourist business in and between cities like Leticia and Iquitos. Most tourist destinations are located in National Parks and indigenous reserves. These are of course so interesting for tourists because of their cultural and biological diversity. In short, five days in Iquitos was really not enough!

This map shows the Putumayo river system, which is limited in the south by the Amazon River. Very clearly visible is the mosaic of indigenous lands (diagonally striped or orange) and areas protected otherwise (green).
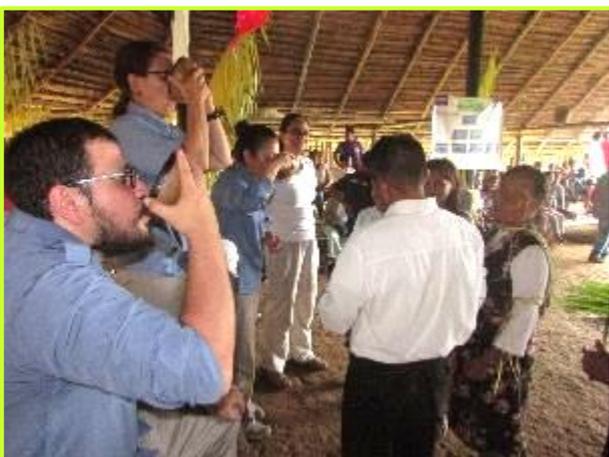
MAY 4TH: FIRST BIG MEETING AGREEMENT PNN-COLOMBIA AND SAN MARTIN DE AMACAYACU

Since the foundation of the Environmental Guard of San Martin de Amacayacu with the funds of the "*Darrell Posey Fellowship for Ethnoecology and Traditional Resource Rights*" (Newsletter 54, awarded by the International Society of Ethnobiology - www.ethnobiology.net), the community has pursued a serious agreement with the Amacayacu National Nature park. The project "*Control of the use of natural resources in the ancestral lands of San Martin de Amacayacu"* was not only to monitor and control natural resource use but also for meetings to reach an agreement about nature management in the ancestral lands of the community (Newsletter 63). To create nature management together, it is necessary to clarify who does what, where and when. And mostly: With what funds? Especially that last aspect is sensitive as an entity like National Parks of Colombia does not want to compromise too much power and money and wants to keep a dominant position in the area.

Since 2014 it has been step by step for San Martin and still there are parts in the agreement between the community and the Amacayacu National Park (to be signed somewhere in June or July) that need attention. At such moments, the community lacks an experienced lawyer with experience in this field who can review the text professionally. Unfortunately, San Martin´s attempts to have one present have not had any result.

On May 4th about 15 representatives of National Parks Colombia from Bogotá and Leticia came to San Martin for a first approach: A first draft of the agreement good enough to discuss seriously. The occasion was blessed with speeches from both sides, indigenous song and dance and the gift of handmade products and traditional culinary delicacies. There were even a few tears.. The speech by the coordinator of the Environmental Guard was a lot more outspoken. He just came back from Iquitos where so many threats to indigenous lands were discussed. Conclusion: The agreement has to be taken very seriously and money has to be spent to reach the final goal of it all, which is the protection of San Martin´s ancestral lands. Or just don´t bother.

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.