



the **small world** foundation

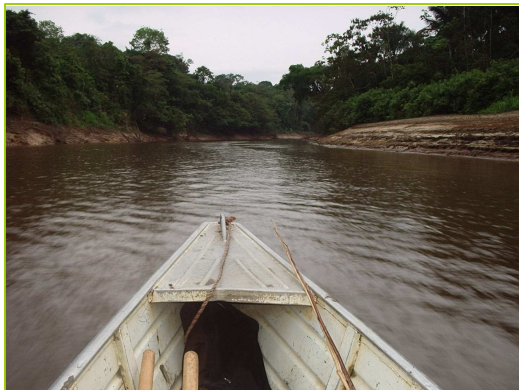
21 - October 2008

BACK HOME!

After a month-and-a-half stay in the Netherlands, it is very good to be back in the Amazon. It is clearly visible that the dry season has already done its job in the meantime. Six months ago it was still possible to navigate the Amacayacu river (picture above left), which is a small arm of the mighty Amazon river and on the banks of which San Martin de Amacayacu is located, now you need to be careful of tree trunks and treacherous stones and sandbanks just under the water surface. These can mean the end of any outboard motor..



In the dry season, enormous beaches appear (pictures below left and above right), and during a few months the light yellow sand is slowly covered with a layer of fallen leaves. In the rainy season afterwards, when the water surface easily



rises to about 10 meters higher than in the dry season, it again the task of the river to cover the leaves with sand. By the force of the water at the beginning of the rainy season, sometimes a part of the beach is taken with the current and this is an opportunity for some fish, which lay their eggs between the leaves that are sticking out. On the picture below, you can see these layers of leaves (see arrows) in a hole dug out by people (still illegally).





The dry season is also the indicated time to make the agricultural fields. The sun takes care of drying the cut down trees and bushes (see picture above left), which facilitates the burning process. The burning also takes care of a slower return of weeds and insects. The charcoal locally adds some fertility to the poor soil. These sites are good for planting tomatoes for example (picture middle left). A few weeks after burning, the soil has cooled down again and then cassava (*Manihot esculenta*) can be planted. From the trunk of an adult plant (picture below left) small sticks of about 20 cm. are cut (picture





above right on previous page) cut. These sticks are planted per two in small holes of loose soil. The dryness of this season prevents fungus growth on the sticks. Cassava planted in the rainy season easily suffers from whitefly and fungus. Aside from cassava, different banana species also planted. The young banana plants grow on the base of the mother plant, and are carefully cut loose with a machete. On the new agricultural plot, holes are dug which are first filled with a bottom of black soil from decayed trees. Then the banana plant is introduced and the hole is filled with normal loamy soil (picture middle right on previous page). Additionally, in hand-woven baskets, up to hundreds of young pineapple plants are collected from the adult plants on an old agricultural plot, and transported to the new plot, where they are planted in small holes of about 10 cm. deep (picture above left). Pineapple is resistant and does not really have any trouble growing. Only when the fruit is ripening after about nine months, birds of mice can cause some damages. The cassava root is ready for harvest after about six to nine months and the banana species after about nine months. Depending on the owner of the agricultural plot, many other varieties of plants are being planted or sown. Many people have cotton bushes. The fluffy cotton (picture below right on the previous page) are currently used to clean wounds or skin. In the past, cotton used to be spun manually into thread to make fabrics. Also, different

root crops are cultivated, like “camote” (*Ipomoea batatas*) for example, which is used to facilitate the fermentation process of the cassava drink called “masato”. Many cultivated plants also serve for the creation of paints for the decoration of handicrafts. Altogether, at least 25 different plant species can be found on each agricultural plot, which can be used in one way or the other in daily life!

FAMILIAR STUFF!

Many times I have tried to explain where the small, round, light brown, white or painted “açai” seeds come from that are used in the beautiful bracelets and necklaces. Usually, my answer is: “from a palm tree species”. Now, there is a more familiar product maybe. is This CoolBest PowerFruit supermix is taken from the shelves of a supermarket in Wageningen. On the pack you can see the black berry-



like fruits, in which you can find those amazing seeds. The thin dark-purple skin around the seed is, also according to CoolBest, enormously rich in vitamins. Of course this is nothing new ☺. Only 5% of this supermix is "açai" juice. Just too little to taste its excellent flavour! But I think that it will be possible soon to buy this juice in a purer form, as this stuff is already sold on Dutch music festivals. Cheers on this delicious Amazon product!



HOW CAN YOU HELP SAN MARTIN EVEN MORE?

Besides all the very welcome donations of all readers, there are many other ways to help San Martin. For example, you can recommend or create occasions where the known jewellery can be sold. You can think of markets (like the Mid-Summer-Night Fair in Baarle in August, see picture above left), or business Open Days. The Small World Foundation is also looking for locations to put a small glass vitrine where

interested people can always see and buy a beautiful piece of jewellery. Maybe you know a shop, waiting room or other occasion willing provide this space? Furthermore, do you work at a school, or are you actively involved in a sportsclub, social club or other? Then maybe you could contemplate the possibility to organise a special event. A day of tennis, walking, yoga or cycling for the good cause, with friends, acquaintances or colleagues can be very inspiring! You are not very sporty? How about a welfare dinner, lunch or high-tea? Or a night of poker, bridge or dancing? For every occasion, you can ask the Small World Foundation for information, promotion materials or other support. The foundation



is also looking for useful materials for the younger people in San Martin to learn to work with for all kinds of activities. Think about your old camera or laptop! They can serve the community another while!

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

Please transfer 15 euro yearly (or more!) to:

Bank name: Rabobank
Bank Address: Singel 4, 5111CD, Baarle-Nassau, The Netherlands
BIC: RABONL2U
Account number 13 27 26 203.
Account name: Stichting SMALL WORLD FOUNDATION
IBAN code: NL28 RABO 0132 7262 03.

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 realisation of local initiatives in San Martin de Amacayacu in the Colombian Amazon, and under my personal guidance. The expenses will be mentioned as much as possible in the new letters. 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**.

In advance: thank you very much on behalf of San Martin de Amacayacu!
Greetings, Heike van Gils