

Monthly Field Report

June 2004

ACT Suriname – Kwamalasamutu

Prepared for the Unit for Sustainable Development and
Environment of the Organization of American States



Airstrip Welcome - Kwamalasamutu

Photo by R. Mittermeier

Bruce Hoffman and Beverly deVries

1) General ACT and village activities

The first week and a half was spent in town preparing for our return to the field. While in town, further work was done on the ACT-Suriname SWOT analysis. Beverly returned to Kwamala on June 9th and Bruce returned on the 11th.

Neville Gunther was in Kwamala from the 10th to the 12th and during that time we had numerous meetings with Granman Asongo, the village government and ACT staff regarding the Moore Foundation visit, upcoming vigilante activities etc.). During that time we also met with representatives of *Sociale Zaken* (Ministry of Social Affairs) regarding our collaboration with them on the bridge building project they have undertaken. An agreement was reached that we will supply basic materials and a few ACT staff members to assist with the project.

We continued with the ACT-themed, weekly movie nights in the village community center. This is an opportunity for hundreds of people to gather and watch movies based on conservation, ethnobotany, or about other indigenous groups. We showed movies about the Ikpeng people in Brazil, a gathering of Shamans in Colombia and about ACT (featuring some of the people in the village).

From the 22nd to the 25th of June, Keeng, Amesina, Ihko and Awi went up the Sipaliwini River for an inspection of the surroundings and creeks. This inspection came about as a result of reports that garimpieros had entered the region. After returning, the inspection crew reported that the Kuini Creek (a tributary of the Sipaliwini River) was soiled and it appeared to them to be as a result of gold-mining activities. They were familiar with this creek and knew it to be clean in the past. Another inspection is planned for the near future to better determine if gold mining activity is actually underway. If so, action will be taken.



Inspection Crew Departing

The majority of our time in June was spent preparing for a visit from representatives of ACT, CI and the Moore Foundation. The group arrived on the 25th of June for a 3-day visit. During their time in the village they observed ACT

projects in action, met with Granman Asongo and other village leaders, partook in traditional festivities, traveled to see rock engravings at Werehpai, and participated in various facets of village life.

2) Shaman's Apprentice Program

The apprentices were still active in the clinic as usual. Regrettably there were no clinic workshops or forest walks with the Shamans in April or May. During those months Apprentices, older Novices and clinic staff all completed several quizzes about various common illnesses and the traditional medicines used to treat them. These tests were created, administered and graded by clinic staff as a means of tracking improvement.

2.2.) Novices Division

The Novices Program was not running as well as we had hoped when we returned to the field. The older Novices were still attending regularly but the number of students had dropped to 3 and there had been no forest trips during our two-month absence. The afternoon Novices class of younger students was no longer taking place. The teaching schedule rotated weekly between Korotai, Amesina and Jalouefa, our senior-level Apprentices. An ACT meeting was held in which we discussed the ways we could improve the program. Plans included: recruiting students, opening up the afternoon class to any students that want to attend, adding interesting elements to the curriculum such as walks and games and finding a head-teacher who is literate in Trio. During the rest of the month the attendance in the morning class rose to 5, and the afternoon class restarted with old and new students alike. Faari showed interest in the head teacher position and began at the end of the month. A more detailed report on the status of the Novices program will be forthcoming.

3) Katamiimë Clinic

The ACT foreman Noeta is currently not in the village as his wife is sick and needs medical attention. Wellem has taken over as foreman. The clinic is fully staffed mornings but due to some issues we're not completely aware of, female staff/apprentices no longer come in for the afternoon shift. This puts a lot of pressure on Okoi and Saiman as they are now the only two coming in. We've discussed this with clinic staff and encouraged them to find a solution that is fair and acceptable to all.



Cookhouse Construction

The Clinic underwent some welcome changes in June. A radio, powered by solar paneling, was installed allowing us to communicate with the ACT office in Paramaribo. Communication was drastically improved and this made our work and lives a lot easier.

Additionally, a new cookhouse was built next to the clinic. Previously the cooking area was under the same roof as the school and the classes were often inundated by smoke from the cooking fire.

4) Non-timber forest products

Bruce Hoffman completed a preliminary analysis of NTFPs used by the Trios to determine which products have current or potential market value. The information was presented to the Trios and to several members of the ACT staff. The basic conclusion was that the two most important products – in the short term, at least – are Brazil nuts and maramara necklaces (seeds of *Didymopanax morototoni*), which are already generating some revenue for the Indians. Equally clear was that these two products have even greater market potential (even when sustainably harvested) than is currently being realized.

Worth emphasizing is that the conclusions reached were the result of a series of workshops in which Bruce and Beverly met with the Indians to review status and potential of fibers, oils, edible plants, etc., with a deliberate effort to steer clear of medicinal species so that IPR issues do not hinder ongoing efforts and national sovereignty concerns. Bruce believes that there is a need to continue these workshops in order to build capacity, elicit local input on which products the Indians want to develop, and see whether there is a need/interest in bringing in other outside expertise (e.g., Amerindians from Guyana who can weave furniture from local vines) to more fully exploit extant but underutilized species. By the end of July, Bruce will have completed a set of eight. The workshop topics include softwood crafts, forest fruits, palm products, and other oils and resins.



Bruce's NTFP Presentation

Photo by R. Mittermeier