

KAYAPO BRAZIL NUT OIL PROJECT

Our project has been one of the major success stories of 1991. The village of A-Ukre had projected to produce about 1500 kilos of oil and total production ended within a whisker of that at 1450 kilos. We had a very few quality control problems in the beginning but these have been resolved and later batches have come through with flying colours. The oil is being used at 1.1/2% in our Brazil Nut Oil Hair Conditioner and the product is selling extremely well.

I flew to A-Ukre in late November and had a few days there working in the newly constructed A-Ukre factory with a palm leaf roof and concrete floor. The whole place has been kept meticulously clean and the working procedures changed to improve output.

The organisation is very strong. The workforce is a nucleus of very dedicated Indians who are tough on procedures, hygiene and quality control. The accounts and disbursements of the earnings are well recorded. Every invoice is numbered, entered in a ledger and every payment for expenditure or for work done is being properly recorded. The account books are being used in the new school recently built by Paiakan, to instruct the Kayapo children in arithmetic and also demonstrate how the business of the oil nut project works.

The morale of the village is very strong and Paiakan decided that we could go to two more villages about one hour's flight from A-Ukre to discuss oil production and the extension of the bead wristband project.

The first village we flew to was Pukanuv on the Xingu river, a small village only about six years old, containing about ninety people. Pukanuv has plenty of Brazil nuts and the chiefs, Bekwyi-i, Bekwyi-ti and Pukatire (who features on the front of our "Trade Not Aid" folder) are interested in developing the oil nut project and Paiakan invited them to A-Ukre to see for themselves how the system might work. They have since agreed that they would like to proceed with the project.

I had a wonderful evening there lying in a hammock listening to Paiakan relating tales of his travels abroad to the whole village. They were laughing hilariously at his tales of customs, immigration, the food, how it feels to be cold, and some of the absurdities of our western culture. It was difficult not to lie there wondering why I would ever go back again to the U.K.!

We bought forty-one bead wristbands from Pukanuv and they will carry on making more bracelets at the rate at which they can cope. It must be realised that each village has a limited labour pool that must match in with their daily life of cooking, collecting firewood, hunting, fishing, looking after the kids. Sometimes with the oil production in full flow, it is very difficult for wristband production to carry on with the same momentum. Our relationship with the Kayapo will continue to be driven by their ability to produce rather than by our demand.

I had a lot of time on this trip to talk with Paiakan and was very impressed with his relationship with the Chiefs and people of both the villages we went to and with his obvious determination to help his people as a whole. As with any large group, relationships are sensitive and Paiakan has to handle these relationships with care, sensitivity and diplomacy. (Our own company would be no exception to that rule!)

We travelled the next day to the further village of Kubenkokre which has a population of about four hundred and eighty people. The three Chiefs, Bepkum, Nikaiti and Kokoreti welcomed us and again we explained the oil nut project and purchased about three hundred and fifty bracelets that they had produced in less than ten days. The atmosphere in this larger village was warm and

friendly and all were eager to co-operate with Paiakan and again there was a lot of laughter in between a lot of speeches.

I swam in the river Iriri in the evening having been assured by Saulo, our knowledgeable consultant, that there were no crocodiles or piranha. I lay basking on a rock one hundred metres off shore when Paiakan came past in a canoe with three other Indians. They had been fishing and yelled out to me, holding up some extremely large piranha that they had just caught. They announced that they had just seen a large crocodile on the other side of the creek. Saulo's credibility sank to a new low. My swimming speed took a miraculous turn for the better with a Walt Disney return to shore.

That evening was again incredible. We were able to watch the young women of the village walking round in pairs singing, practising for a festival that was due to take place in about two days. Kubenkokre has no Brazil nuts so it is hoped that they will be able to send some help to Pukanuv to bolster the workforce there. There is a river connection between the two villages that makes this feasible.

With the success of this year's oil project, the Kayapo are very enthusiastic about producing more oil with next year's harvest.

Preparations are already underway and we will begin the harvest about one month early. The Kayapo are confident they will produce enough oil to fulfill the overseas needs for Brazil Nut Oil Conditioner, this means an increase in production to about 4000 kilos.

I will be returning to A-Ukre in February for a visit to see how the harvesting is going and to see what progress has been made with Pukanuv.

I must thank all those, including Guy Reinaud of I.C.I. and Ricardo Semler of Semco who have helped and supported this project and ensured its success.

Gordon Roddick

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