



BRAZIL

population: **176 million**

capital: **Brasilia**

total land area: **835,556,000 ha**

primary forest 1990: **460,513,000 ha**

primary forest 2005: **415,890,000 ha**

primary forest lost 1990-2005: **44,623,000 ha**

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Yawanawa Territory almost doubled to 194,000 hectares

by Hylton Murray-Philipson, Trustee of Rainforest Concern



Ceremonial dancing of the Yawanawa

Many initiatives supported in earlier years by Rainforest Concern bore fruit in 2006. The principal achievement was a near doubling of the officially recognised Yawanawa territory. The Yawanawa's claim over 50,000 hectares previously belonging to an investment group called Paranacre was finally recognised, and the State Government of Acre simultaneously donated 40,000 hectares of land to them. The revised Yawanawa territory now comprises 194,000 hectares.

This landmark event is the culmination of 5 years of struggle and Chief Tashka Yawanawa warmly acknowledged all of the help he and his people received from Rainforest Concern and its members. At one crucial moment, the Governor's office in Rio Branco was virtually paralysed by calls, letters and emails from around the world.

This success is derived from the renewed self confidence felt by the Yawanawa people as they feel their way forward into the 21st century. Their comeback, and the partnership between an indigenous population, the US Corporation Aveda and UK Charity Rainforest Concern was highlighted at a day dedicated to indigenous people at the United Nations in New York, on the 23rd of May 2006.

As we go to press, we are close to finalising plans for the installation of equipment in the Yawanawa community of Nova Esperanca (New Hope) to produce a clean burning alternative fuel, or 'Forest Fuel'. Not to be confused with Biodiesel, which has justifiably had some adverse press recently, Forest Fuel is far from being a panacea - indeed, unless we are careful, palm oil and soya grown for biodiesel could be the next industrial crop to put pressure on the rainforest. The

Yawanawa project is different. It will be small scale, fed by fruits of the forest (especially a common palm in the region called babacu), and powered by solar energy. If successful, this project will make the Yawanawa self sufficient in fuel for their motorised canoes, hitherto the largest expense for the community and on which sadly they have become dependent. We are co-operating with the company Aveda on this important initiative, which, if successful, could be extended to numerous other remote communities of the Amazon Basin.



To reach the Yawanawa you must travel by small plane and by canoe

We are working in a special part of the world that has so far been saved from destruction by its sheer remoteness. That is all about to change. The asphaltting of the BR 364 and the new Trans Oceanic Highway linking the western Amazon to the Pacific ports of Peru are proceeding apace. There are still uncontacted tribes in the area where Brazil, Peru and Bolivia meet, and Rainforest Concern has teamed up with the former head of FUNAI, Sydney Possuelo, in order to assist them while time permits. Sydney received the Gold Medal from the Royal Geographical Society in 2005 and it is a privilege to be associated with his work.

RSE Symposium 2006

In July last year, Patriarch Bartholemew, leader of the Orthodox Church, hosted a week-long Symposium on the Amazon, organised by the non-governmental organisation, "Religion, Science and the Environment (RSE)".



Patriarch Bartholemew closing the Symposium

The Director of Rainforest Concern, Peter Bennett and Trustee, Hylton Murray-Philipson, were pleased to be part of the sixth in a series of international symposia, bringing together representatives of many of the world's religions, Government Ministers, environmentalists and scientists who travelled up the Rio Negro in a flotilla of boats, in order to draw global attention to the degradation of the world's rivers and seas. At the "Meeting of the Waters" (where the Rio Negro meets the Rio Solimoes), they witnessed indigenous people (including the Yawanawa) give their blessing to Catholic Cardinals and Protestant Bishops - representatives of institutions that have inflicted untold suffering on the indigenous peoples of the Amazon for hundreds of years. RSE promotes the view that leaders in science and religion must work in harmony if the Earth's environment is to be protected. For further information please see www.rsesymposia.org



Hylton, Trustee of Rainforest Concern and Michael Naylor on a Symposium field trip.

FUNAI is the Fundacao Nacional do Indio or National Foundation for Indians - the Brazilian official agency in charge of protecting Indian interests and protecting their culture.