

## AMERINDIAN WOMEN CREATE LOCAL BUSINESS WITH CTI GRINDERS

The Rupununi Savannah in southern Guyana is home to three different Amerindian tribes. Separated culturally and geographically from the more developed coastal region, the Rupununi Amerindians are mostly left to fend for themselves. Everyone practices subsistence farming, and the only jobs available are the scant government posts usually filled by coastal Guyanese.

In 2002, USAID awarded a Peanut Development Project to the Peanut Collaborative Research Support Program (CRSP) project headed by the Universities of Florida and Georgia, along with the Beacon Foundation, a Guyanese NGO. The purpose of the project is to teach the Amerindian in the Rupununi to grow peanuts using fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides while sparing the pristine rainforest around them. These peanuts are then purchased at a fair price (which is often above the local wholesale value) by Amerindian women cooperatives. These cooperatives make cassava bread and peanut butter snacks for the school children at the local elementary schools.

The new school snack program of cassava bread and peanut butter replaces the earlier snack of powdered milk biscuits. The peanut butter, in particular, has been so popular that school attendance is up. Children who aren't even registered for class are coming to school asking for the snack, and many teachers have asked to be included in the program as well.

The women's cooperative consists of 6-8 women who run a simple assembly line. First the women roast the peanuts in a large drum roaster. The peanuts are then de-shelled by a machine and winnowed by hand in the wind. The embryos are then placed in the Omega VI grinder with some salt and brown sugar, and peanut butter is made. Every morning, a head count is taken of the number of school children who came to school, and the requisite number of school snacks is made.



CTI's Omega grinders are used in 11 cottage industries throughout the Rupununi. In these areas, peanut farmers are offered a higher price for their peanuts, the women in the cooperative earn about \$75 a month which is spent locally, and the school children receive a more nutritious snack than they otherwise would. By using local goods to create a product that is consumed at the local schools, Peanut CRSP has created a sustainable project that improves the lives of the peanut farmers, women's cooperative employees, and school children.

