



## Perspectives on the tree of life: Celebrating Abel Rodríguez and his paintings

**Botanical Gardens Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands  
11 December 2014**

Abel Rodríguez, an elder of the Nonuya people, an indigenous group from the middle Caquetá River in Colombia, will receive the 2014 Principal Prince Claus Award on 10 December from HRH Prince Constantijn for his knowledge as a plant expert, his outstanding artworks and his contribution to the understanding of the Amazonian ecosystem.

Abel has been part of the local research program of Tropenbos International Colombia for many years. He began in the 1980s as a guide for researchers, where he had the opportunity to explain and exchange his views on the multiple aspects of the local flora with the scientists. In the 1990s he moved to Bogotá, where he taught himself to draw and paint the plants of the Amazon and their relations with the ecosystem. Through his work he has produced detailed studies on the variety of reeds and lianas, palm trees, timber and non-timber trees and cultivated plants in the forest. He has also illustrated the various seasons in the forest: the annual cycle in flooded forests, mature forests, and in maloca plants. Last year he illustrated *The Tree of Life*, depicting the origin of food for the indigenous people of the middle Caquetá River area.

According to the Prince Claus Awards Jury Report: "Abel Rodríguez is honoured with this award for perpetuating and communicating the Nonuya's holistic knowledge of the Amazon basin environment; for transforming orally transmitted knowledge into poetic art that transcends the ethno-botanical genre; for countering dominant paradigms in the arts and sciences and demonstrating the relevance of indigenous knowledge in thinking about environmental sustainability; for revealing the indigenous worldview as a source of knowledge for the common good, drawing attention to the skills, talents, heritage and rights of indigenous communities; and for stimulating intercultural exchange in a context of violence and discrimination."



Prince Claus Fund for  
Culture and Development



On 11 December, the day after the Prince Claus Awards Ceremony, Tropenbos International together with the Prince Claus Fund and the ministry of Development Cooperation of the Netherlands will organize 'Perspectives on the Tree of Life: Celebrating Abel Rodríguez and his paintings' to enable the wider public to get acquainted with his work.

The seminar will place Abel's work within the context of his longstanding collaboration with Tropenbos International Colombia and will highlight its impact and importance from three main perspectives: the aesthetic and artistic, the scientific in relation to botany and ecology and the socio-cultural.

## Programme

Time	
13.30 – 14.00	Arrival and registration Coffee
14.00 – 14.10	<b>Welcome</b> Christa Meindersma, <i>Director Prince Claus Fund</i>
14.10 – 14.20	<b>The global importance of the amazon</b> Maurice van Beers, <i>Senior policy advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands</i>
14.20 – 14.30	<b>Tropenbos International: making knowledge work for people and forests</b> René Boot, <i>Director Tropenbos International</i>
14.30 – 14.40	<b>Film: Abel, Principal Laureate 2014 Prince Claus Fund.</b> Film directed by Fernando Arias
14.40 – 14.55	<b>Words with feelings have not value to them</b> Fernando Arias
14.55 – 15.10	<b>The relevance of the work of Abel Rodríguez in research of Amazonian ecosystems</b> Joost Duivenvoorden, <i>IBED Amsterdam University</i>
15.10 – 15.25	<b>The hidden knowledge behind the trees: retrospective of Abel Rodríguez work</b> Maria Clara van der Hammen and Carlos Rodríguez, <i>Tropenbos International</i>
15.25 – 16.00	<b>Interview with Abel Rodríguez</b> By: Carlos Rodríguez, with translation to English by Catalina Vargas
16.00 – 17.00	Cocktail

## Participation and Registration:

To participate please register by sending an e-mail to: [ellen.top@tropenbos.org](mailto:ellen.top@tropenbos.org) with your name and organisation. Registration is essential as there is limited space available. Attendance is free of charge.

**Date:** 11 December 2014 (14.00 – 17.00 hrs)

**Venue:** Botanical Gardens Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands