



Arte Colibrí Artesanías (Arte Colibrí) produces and sells artisanal crafts, including accessories and decorative items sourced from the Inga and Kamëntsa Indigenous Communities in Sibundoy Valley, Colombia.

The company uses traditional techniques and materials such as wood carvings and *chaqira* beads that are carefully crafted into intricate designs. Arte Colibrí connects indigenous artisans to a wider market by showcasing their products in its physical store, online channels, and through trade fairs. This fosters economic empowerment among the artisans, allowing them to generate higher and more sustainable income while preserving their cultural heritage.

Arte Colibrí's main customers are domestic wholesalers, mostly shop owners actively retailing its products. The company also exports to international wholesalers, particularly in US and Canada.

Impact Background

The Inga and Kamëntsa indigenous communities are the original inhabitants of the Sibundoy Valley, nestled in Colombia's Putumayo department. Their roots in the region date back centuries, even before the arrival of Spanish colonizers in the 16th century. These communities are renowned for their profound spirituality, forged through a unique belief system and traditions deeply intertwined with nature. Their language, *Kamëntśá biya*, is a linguistic enigma with no known origin worldwide. Their respect for nature, whom they affectionately refer to as "*Bëngbe Tsbatsanamamá*" or "Our Mother Earth", is evident in their vibrant celebrations, music, and captivating dances. Their

IMPACT OVERVIEW

Improving the livelihood of artisans in the Inga and Kamëntsa indigenous communities while preserving their handicraft tradition

No. of beneficiaries	66 (regular and temporary artisans)
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% Women	60%
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COMMUNITY

	Country: Colombia
	Municipalities: Sibundoy
	Communities: Inga and Kamëntsa

spiritual rituals often revolve around offerings, ceremonies, and traditional medicine practices aimed at maintaining balance and harmony with the natural world. There are 6,029 Kamëntsa in Sibundoy, distributed in 1,476 families¹.

The Kamëntsa tradition extends to their remarkable craftsmanship. For them, the ability to be potters, weavers, and carvers is their way of interpreting the signs of nature, their dreams, and the cycle of life². Two of the most well-known craftsmanship of these communities are wood carving and their work with *chaquira* beads. Wood-carved pieces reflect their spiritual belief and usually depict animals, ancestral figures, and mythical creatures. Meanwhile, *chaquira* is a type of small, brightly-colored bead. The Kamëntsa people use these beads to embellish masks, necklaces, pieces of jewelry, and other accessories. The beads are carefully arranged to create an intricate woven pattern.

The Inga and Kamëntsa artisans deeply revere their handicraft as it manifests the sanctity of their tradition. However, their creations remain underappreciated. Like many indigenous artisans in Colombia, they lack proper product distribution channels. They also lack market knowledge, making them subject to unfair haggling by intermediaries. On top of these challenges, the artisans must deal with threats involving land rights. Historically, the home of the Inga and Kamëntsa communities extends beyond the Sibundoy area and even includes part of Ecuador based on the territory given to them during the Spanish colonization in 1700s³. However, the centuries-long conflict has diminished their ancestral territory. Today, the lack of legal recognition of ancestral lands continues to challenge these communities. They are also threatened by external entities such as mining and oil industries that attempt to interfere with their way of living⁴.

These multiple forms of discrimination left the artisans in a disadvantaged state, lacking access to opportunities, resources, and support systems that would have otherwise improved their livelihoods.

Impact Delivery



Figure 1 Sample products of Arte Colibri (Source: Arte Colibri Instagram Page)

Arte Colibri works closely with the artisans of the Sibundoy Valley to create unique and traditional crafts. The company provides a platform for these artisans to showcase their skills and sell their products to a wider market. Through this, the artisans have an opportunity to generate sustainable income using their sacred ancestral art.

¹ [Ayahuasca Retreats | Org Shanayoy | Putumayo](#)

² [pueblo_kamentsa_diagnostico_comunitario.pdf \(mininterior.gov.co\)](#)

³ [Buffalo / Kamentsa and Inga Indigenous Communities in the Sibundoy Valley | Colombia Support Network](#)

⁴ [How Colombia disenfranchised Indigenous Inga communities in favor of oil \(mongabay.com\)](#)

The company regularly works with 20 artisans, mostly women from the Inga and Kamëntsa ethnicity. These artisans participate in the production chain of handicrafts, such as weaving, applique, and painting. When the company’s production capacity becomes insufficient for the demand, it hires temporary artisans to work in the production chain.

Arte Colibri ensures that artisans receive fair compensation for their work. In 2022, the average monthly income of their artisan was \$239, significantly above the poverty income line in Colombia (\$84.7)⁵. Arte Colibri provides them with materials and equipment to produce handicrafts. To preserve the handicraft tradition, the company also conducts training to teach young people about wood carving, designing, and plating *chaquira* art.



Figure 2 Handicraft training for youth (Source: Arte Colibri Instagram Page)

Arte Colibri uses wood from willow trees as the main raw material for wood carving. The willow tree is common in the area that is usually utilized for domestic uses. The trees used are mostly fallen trees or those that need to be removed from private lots in Sibundoy or the nearby Resguardo⁶. On average, the company uses only 2 trees per year. After harvesting, the trees are cut according to the communities’ tradition, two to five days after the full moon. After cutting and transforming the trees into wood carvings, the waste from this process is used to make compost or fertilizer.

Outcome

<i>Improvement of livelihood</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides the artisans with access to a wider market to sell their handicraft ▪ Ensures that the artisans receive fair compensation for their products
<i>Culture preservation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourages the handicraft tradition by introducing it to the younger generation
<i>Environmental preservation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of fallen or sick trees for wood carving. ▪ Waste generated is turned into compost.

⁵ [Global_POVEQ_COL.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/colombia/POVEQ)

⁶ <https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2008/6512.pdf>