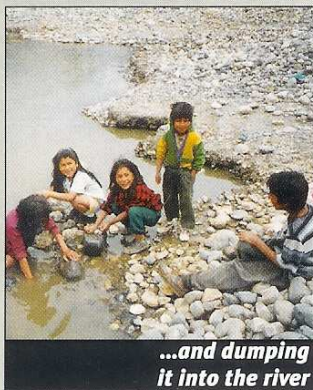


# Backpacker Turned Business Angel

It was by backpacking that Vincent Chapuis discovered Peru, a country and culture that would eventually become his passion. Eleven years later, this Swiss economist manages several business dealings from abroad, regularly transforming himself into a business angel in order to assist in the setting-up of small Peruvian businesses.

**“In our country, women are generally thought to be more serious”**



**...and dumping it into the river**

It is not Vincent Chapuis' ambition to change the world. He finds little of interest in long discussions on North-South relations. He prefers to act in his own way, at his own pace. Helping to set-up a hairstylist's salon, developing a local tourism agency, and creating a commercial venture are all projects that were effected not only with a total investment of less than \$40,000, but also with a great deal of tenacity and common sense. "I merely tried to provide the know-how and business ethics that we find in many of our SMEs, in Switzerland, and particularly in Jura where I was born. Business ethics encourage the emergence of responsible citizens."

## **“LIKE JURA, WHERE I WAS BORN”**

Angel Carlino, who, for the last 5 years, has been providing Capital - White Cordillera excursions for tourists across the nation thanks to Vincent Chapuis, is not one to disagree with the latter's above claim. "Vincent offers fresh ideas and sound advice that help us to start our own small businesses. In actuality, he is very much like a coach, and that's precisely what we need the most."

Last year, after a few conclusive experiences, Chapuis de-



**Collecting garbage in Huaraz (Peru)...**

ceded to explore new territory by creating CHAPUIS SUIS SAC, his own Peruvian project development company.

## **GRINDING THEM IN A MILL**

"To transform ideas into feasible business ventures in Peru's economic climate, one must first 'grind' them in a 'mill' - a process in which local business experts play a part," said Vincent. He therefore collaborated with Edgar Vasquez, a chartered account who knows exactly how to maneuver amongst numerous local regulations that are at times contradictory, and almost always difficult for a novice to understand. According to Vasquez, "the complexity of these regulations often puts the breaks on the development of SMEs. We are trying to make things easier for them so that they may devote their undivided attention to their business dealings". To complete his team, Chapuis thought it only natural to recruit the aid of a woman: "I have noticed that in Peru, as in other South American countries, women are highly

pragmatic and realistic in outlook, thus making them more consistently efficient than men" observed our native of Jura. A trained attorney and mother of three, Zuly Duran supports Chapuis' observations: "In our country, women are generally thought to be more serious, precise, and especially persevering than men. They must often assume responsibility for the family without any help or assistance from anyone." Zuly is responsible for legal and public relations issues.

## **SUIS DOES NOT MEAN SWISS**

In the name Chapuis Suis Sac, SUIS means "Small and Useful Investment Solutions" - an entire philosophy that the young partners summarize in three criteria that must be present in order to gain their support: adequate training, trustworthiness, and a commitment to quality. For Chapuis Suis Sac, an internship in Switzerland is sometimes a wise investment. Angel Duran spent three months there before returning to start his own business. "As

a young Peruvian, I wanted to take full advantage of my stay in order to learn and adopt what I call the Swiss model: start small but well! I returned with a notebook full of feasible ideas, and especially with a perspective that I could never have acquired in my country. I discovered that importance of really focusing on the job, and attending the quality control that one finds

granted credit terms for projects between U\$5,000 and U\$20,000. "People ask us for business plans or market research that, in the end, will cost most of the money they hope to earn," states the team's accountant. "Our project development venture still has not proven profitable, returns on investment don't always appear overnight...so we ac-

## **"A perspective that I could never have acquired in my own country"**

in most Swiss companies. "It's also an introduction to the world itself," explains Vincent Chapuis. "They are often surprised that, even here, the entrepreneur must struggle to keep his or her business alive."

For the three partners, the building of trust is fundamental. "When we are offered a potential project, we first establish a direct relationship with the person who wishes to create his or her own business. Above all, we value his or her real intentions, and his or her ability to do the project," explains Zuly Duran, who considers projects proposed by women to be of particular importance.

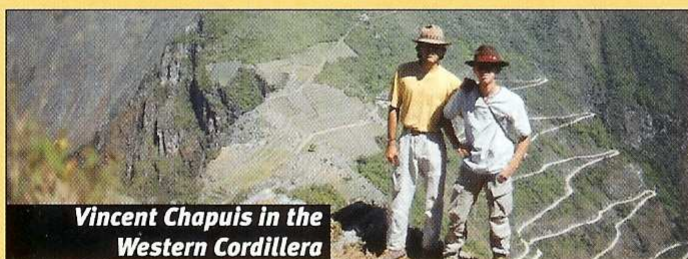
The "human" factor is even more important when the projects are smaller in size, and thus financed by the company itself. It is impossible to be

cept more reliable requests, such as trust companies and local cooperatives, to bring home the bacon."

### **AN INTERNATIONAL ENDEAVOR**

Beyond management and small-scale project financing, Chapuis Suis Sac plans to use its dual nationality and intercultural background to its advantage. While participating in EMA 2000, they met a major European company, Vivendi Environment, which offered them a market-research project. "We must gain other contracts, like this one, that will be lucrative for our small organization. We must show ourselves, as it's never easy to stop thinking that you're too small to cope," smiled Zuly Duran.

*Michel Cordona*



**Vincent Chapuis in the Western Cordillera**

● "It is said that you Europeans think things before you feel them, and that we, from the Andes, feel things before we think them". It was upon hearing this comment in Cuzco

in 1990 that Vincent Chapuis decided to trust his intuition and bind his life and future to Peru, where he had been traveling for several months as a backpacker.