



# Strengthening Mayan Language and Medicine

Volume 1, Issue 1

Fourth Quarter 2007

## From the Director

A great deal has happened in Guatemala since last we talked. The presidential election campaigns have wrapped up with a minimum of violence. The rains have stopped, and we are entering the high, dry, and dusty summer months. Farmers are harvesting the corn crop. We at Wuqu' Kawoq have also been busy.

October marked the beginning of our involvement in midwife training classes in Comalapa and Tecpán. This is part of our partnership with the midwifery cooperative ACOTCHI, the Asociación de Comadronas Tradicionales de Chimaltenango. We gave two well-received day-long intensives on integrating traditional and Western remedies in the treatment of women and children. As with nearly all our work, these classes were delivered entirely in Kaqchikel. We will be continuing these and other training sessions throughout the coming year.



**Making house calls in  
Santiago Sacatepequez**

Also in October, we began making substantial financial contributions to this outstanding indigenous organization, and we are now covering a large share of their basic operating costs. We also contributed a microscope and other basic laboratory equipment, and we are training staff in basic laboratory and diagnostic procedures. We provided copies of the Hesperian Foundation's lay midwife manual to 50 members of the cooperative, a first installment in our efforts to provide high-quality training materials to them.

Also in collaboration with ACOTCHI, in January we are sponsoring a team of United States physicians who will be visiting Comalapa to provide specialist pediatrics and gynecological services to members of this community. For many, this will be their first opportunity ever to speak with a pediatrician or to have a basic gynecological exam, as access to these services are severely limited in highland Guatemala. As with all of Wuqu' Kawoq's projects, consultations, basic diagnostic services such as urine, fecal, and blood analyses, and medications are provided free of charge. We plan this to be the first of many future similar trips. (Continues on pg. 4)

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# Wuqu' Kawoq

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We believe that health and cultural vitality are inseparable from each other. We are interested in supporting indigenous medical workers, developing first language health services, and disseminating knowledge about traditional health practices.

Wuqu' Kawoq is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

## Water in Socorro

For nearly one year, Wuqu' Kawoq staff have been making house calls and providing basic clinical services in a number of small villages along the highway running from the coastal plain toward the town of Chocóla. This region of the Guatemala is interesting because it falls on the border of two Mayan languages, Kaqchikel and K'iche, and also because it sits on top of one of the largest unexcavated Maya ruins in the country.

Inhabitants of this region are very impoverished, and there is a scarcity of family land holdings and year-round employment. There is little sanitation and no potable water. As a result, children and the elderly suffer from severe, debilitating diarrheal illnesses several times per year.

Recognizing that, in order to be effective, health care work in this environment must also address the pressing issue of water quality, Wuqu' Kawoq has recently struck a partnership with Engineers Without Borders and the community of Socorro, a village of approximately 450 people located just off the Chocóla highway. The purpose of this partnership will be to provide an integrated community health care solution that provides essential nutritional and medical care to children while at the same time developing the water and sanitation infrastructure of the community.



Picture near the "center" of town in Socorro, Chocóla.



Collecting water flow measurement

In January 2008, an Engineers Without Borders group from the University of Illinois will be visiting the community to perform an initial site assessment. Wuqu' Kawoq will continue to provide medical care and fundraising support for the water project, and members of the community have agreed to provide all necessary manual labor. We are performing careful documentation as the project proceeds, as we hope to demonstrate the success of the model and gradually expand services to other villages in the Chocóla region.

## Community Teaching Classes

This fall Wuqu' Kawoq staff had the opportunity to participate in the first of what will be many more community training classes.

In September, Peter Rohloff gave a training session to staff members of the ACOTCHI midwifery cooperative on parasitic worm infections and child malnutrition. As part of this training, all attendees had the opportunity to learn how to use a microscope to diagnose common parasitic infections in feces. Wuqu' Kawoq also donated a microscope to ACOTCHI, so they will be able to continue to perform these tests for their patients.

In October, Peter Rohloff and Magda Sotz Mux, our field manager from Comalapa, gave two training sessions in Comalapa and Tecpán to approximately 30 midwives in each location on the safe and proper use of herbal and traditional medicines. Peter and Magda are co-authors of Wuqu' Kawoq's forthcoming guide to herbal and home-based remedies, *Tiqaq'omaj qi'*, and these sessions were just the first of a series that are planned throughout the coming year.



ACOTCHI Staff

Peter and Magda also took the opportunity to present all participants with personal copies of the Hesperian Foundation's midwife training manual, *Libro para Parteras*. Wuqu' Kawoq has pledged to provide all members of the ACOTCHI cooperative with a copy of this important learning tool, and this represented the first installment.

The training material and books were enthusiastically received by all participants, who especially made note of the importance of the fact that the sessions were delivered in Kaqchikel. Plans were made to hold continuing sessions in the late fall and early spring.



The poster for a fundraiser from this summer.

## Benefit Concert Series

Emily Tummons, current Board chair, has been instrumental in the development of a concert fundraiser series based in Kansas City, MO. The concert series, known as "Just Off Troost," is held bi-monthly, and it features many of Kansas City's most exciting folk musicians, who generously donate their time and talent.

All proceeds from these shows go to Wuqu' Kawoq. Check our website frequently for updates on these and other fundraising events, and if you live in Kansas City or are passing through, make sure to attend!

## From the Director (Continued)

Our clinic work in Santiago continues to grow. We have had remarkable success helping community members with their chronic illnesses, especially diabetes, and we have recently decided to focus more of our efforts on addressing this disease. Diabetes is a genetic disease, and it is especially prevalent in Santiago and throughout indigenous communities in this area. We are providing nutritional counseling, as well as blood-sugar monitoring, treatment of foot ulcers and other common complications, and financial support for purchasing needed medications. We have a new employee, Wicha Ixtajop, previously one of our most tireless and energetic community volunteers. She visits each patient weekly to provide nutritional counseling, refill medicines, and check blood glucose. In Comalapa and Tecpán, we are initiating a large survey of pregnant women to assess needs and begin to coordinate care and resources in these towns. This study is being run by yet another of our former community volunteers, Magda Sotz Mux, now a new employee. Data from this study



House calls in Comalapa.

will be the first of its kind, and it will assess the experiences of indigenous, impoverished women as they attempt to navigate the Guatemalan health care system.

Our community health resource manual, *Tiq'aqomaj qi'*, is in the final typesetting stages, and we anticipate a January 2008 release. Stay tuned for details or to order your own copy!

Finally, our collaboration with the community of Socorro to develop an integrated solution for clean, potable water and child nutrition surveillance is well underway. We have formed a partnership Engineers without Borders, and some of their engineers will be making their first visit in January 2008 to perform a needs and site assessment.

As always, we appreciate your help, and we welcome contributions, ideas, and kind words.

## New and Improved Website

If you have not ever visited our website, please check us out at [www.wuqukawoq.org](http://www.wuqukawoq.org). The website is frequently updated, and it features a blog written by field staff and board members. Additionally, there is a new video page, where you can watch interviews and conversations with community workers and patients from Santiago and Comalapa. This is a great opportunity to hear Kaqchikel being spoken, as well as to gain an appreciation for the hopes, dreams, and day-to-day experiences of our friends from these towns.



The homepage to the new and improved website.

### Giving Opportunities

Wuqu' Kawoq has many projects in need of your support in amounts both large and small. Here are some specific examples. If you would like to donate towards a specific project, please indicate this when sending your contribution. For more information on how to becoming a sustaining contributor for one or more project activities, please send us at [wuqu.kawoq@gmail.com](mailto:wuqu.kawoq@gmail.com).

- For as little as \$10 per month, you can sponsor a diabetic patient in Santiago, ensuring that they have continued access to blood sugar-lowering medicines, adequate shoes to prevent ulcers, and blood sugar monitoring.
- Operating costs for the ACOTCHI midwife cooperative, which we are currently covering, run just over \$400 monthly. Your contribution in any amount ensures that this exciting project continues to grow.
- As part of our child nutrition project in Socorro, we are providing vitamins and deworming medicines to this community. Your contribution of \$2 monthly provides these resources to a child, and for \$10 you can provide for the needs of an entire family's children.
- Larger fundraising projects include the construction of a drinking water system in Socorro. Currently we are raising \$4000 in funds to purchase water rights in this town. Additionally, we are looking to purchase or rent a new clinic location in Santiago, and we are raising \$6000 in funds toward this goal. Contributions in any amount are appreciated.

### Send this in with your contribution.

Here's where we ask for your help. Listed here are ways that you can contribute to help us and listed below are the fuller explanations of how every penny you donate will help.

- \_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to contribute to Wuqu' Kawoq's work in Guatemala.
  - \_\_ Please accept my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_. I would like this money to go
    - \_\_ Wherever the need is greatest
    - \_\_ Water rights in Socorro
    - \_\_ Clinic facility in Santiago
    - \_\_ Midwives
  - \_\_ I would like to provide for care to diabetic patients (\$10 monthly). Enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_ to cover \_\_ months.
  - \_\_ I would like to provide for child nutrition in Socorro (\$2 monthly per child; \$10 per family). Enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_ to cover \_\_ months.
- \_\_\_\_ I would like to be added to your mailing list. My email is \_\_\_\_\_. My street address is \_\_\_\_\_.

Please make checks payable to Wuqu' Kawoq, PO Box 91, Bethel VT 05032. Alternatively you can pay online using in a credit card by going to [www.wuqukawoq.org](http://www.wuqukawoq.org) and clicking on 'donate.'

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*“K'o jun resultado qatz'eton chupan ri e qaq'oman, ri akuchi oj elenäq wi, y ya casi más o menos yek'achoj. Pero nqakutuj chi iwichin ri achik'u'x taq nya'on pe rija', que rija' xtya'on pe.”*

*“We have seen good results with the patients we have been seeing, that we are visiting in their homes. They are getting better. But we are asking you all, wherever you are, that you not forget us, and that you keep on giving to our work.”*

*—Wuqu' Kawoq community volunteer*

**STRENGTHENING MAYAN LANGUAGE AND MEDICINE**