



Team building at the 2023 Leadership Retreat.

Dear Friends,

Happy Summer! I know that many of you have been experiencing difficult climate conditions in recent weeks. Wishing you temperate days and clear skies! In Guatemala, we're in the thick of the rainy season, with some flooding and road washouts. We're also in the midst of Presidential elections, with some worrying developments but also a few signs of hope. [More on that here in my video update.](#)

I'm excited to share our news over this past quarter, including the great honor of being selected as one of five finalists in the international, \$9M Maternal Infant Health Award, our work on

important research projects on kidney disease and child development, and several wonderful team-building activities.

None of this would be possible without you. Thank you so much for being part of our community!

Warm wishes,



Anne Kraemer, Chief Executive Officer



Click on the photo to view video message.



A midwife uses her checklist-based cell phone application to help assess a patient's health status during a Mobile Maternal Health visit in the community of Xenimajuyu.

CELEBRATING OUR MOBILE MATERNAL HEALTH TEAM!

In case you missed the news last month, we are beyond thrilled to share that we were named one of five finalists in the [Maternal & Infant Health Award](#) for our Mobile Maternal Health (MHealth) Program! The \$9 million Award supports solutions that are improving maternal and infant health outcomes across the globe, with a special focus on locally-led, community-based programs and projects. The Award is managed by Lever for Change, a nonprofit affiliate of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, for The Patchwork Collective and ICONIQ Impact. Some 220 organizations from 49 countries applied for the Award; the other amazing finalists are based in Kenya, Colombia, and Uganda.

Most maternal and neonatal deaths in low-resource settings like rural Guatemala can be avoided with timely access to advanced medical care. Our MHealth Program, which we launched in 2017, prevents deaths and complications by helping mothers access quality obstetric care when and where they need it. The Program, co-designed by the communities it serves, provides Maya midwives with a smartphone application and tools to detect problems early and deploys Kaqchikel Maya care navigators to accompany mothers who need hospital care.

The Award funders have offered a rich array of learning and mentoring opportunities to support our final application. These opportunities allowed us to dive deep into key questions, such as sustainability, and to see areas in which we excel, including our community partnerships and robust evaluation and research capacity. We are enormously grateful for this opportunity. The recipient of the final Award will be announced later this year.

CURBING FATAL KIDNEY DISEASE

Wuqu' Kawoq is part of an international collaboration working to understand and blunt an epidemic of fatal kidney disease that's taking the lives of young agricultural workers. [La Isla Network](#), a group of investigators, communicators, and researchers (pictured here at a recent workshop), is developing approaches to prevent kidney issues affecting sugarcane workers laboring in an increasingly warm climate. CKDnt, or fatal chronic kidney disease of non-traditional origin (i.e., unrelated to diabetes, hypertension, or other known causes) has been on the rise in Central America among young men working in agriculture as global warming has created increasingly inhospitable working conditions. We are contributing to research to discover the origins of the disease. At the same time, La Isla, which includes researchers and members of the sugarcane industry, is developing and implementing occupational safety protocols to ensure that field workers have adequate rest, shade, and water as well as access to quality healthcare.



Collaborators in the fight against fatal kidney disease among agricultural workers.



WELCOME, SARAH!

We are very happy to welcome our newest board member, Sarah Kho! Sarah has focused her career in the intersection of healthcare and innovation. She currently works on the clinical health team at Apple and is based in San Francisco. Her background is in management consulting at Boston Consulting Group, focused on healthcare, strategy, and operations. Sarah has also worked at the UN World Food Programme on the innovation and change management team, where she was headquartered in Rome. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, The Wharton School, with a B.S. in Economics.

Show your support!

SHARING STRATEGIES TO FIGHT MALNUTRITION

Our first Acciones Que Nutren (Actions that Nurture) master class designed to promote effective strategies for fighting malnutrition wrapped up in May. About 100 students from 11 Departments enrolled and 75 remained actively engaged throughout the two-month class. Roughly half of the participants were university students and the other half were frontline healthcare workers; 70% were indigenous Maya and 87% were women. The hybrid online/in-person class focused on data-informed, community-based approaches for working with families to find practical ways to provide children with more diverse, healthy diets and to nurture children's growth and development. Graduates have the opportunity to participate in a job fair to find opportunities to leverage their new skills. We are excited to be scaling up resources and knowledge to tackle the critical problem of malnutrition in Guatemala.



Celebrating graduation with one of the Acciones Que Nutren cohorts.



Working with mom to measure developmental milestones.

EMPOWERING FAMILIES TO SUPPORT CHILD DEVELOPMENT

We have been working with families in rural communities as they learn how to support their young children's development through play as part of our research on promoting nurturing care. Caregivers' diligence and delight in encouraging their children to meet milestones has been truly inspiring. In this trial of the International Guide For Monitoring Child Development, we are training other non-profit partners how to implement the Guide using validated developmental milestones; nurturing care guidelines; and personalized, culturally relevant communication. We are measuring the effectiveness of this approach to inform future efforts to promote child development.



Heading to the Leadership Retreat on Lake Atitlán.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

It's hard to believe that our team has grown to 90! This is a reflection of our hard work and progress achieving health equity in rural Guatemala and a promise of greater impact to come. As the team grows, we're finding new ways to keep everyone connected.

Now that the team is spread across nine Departments, it's no longer practical to hold our monthly team meetings in person. But we still gather in person every quarter. This spring, we had a very spirited gathering at a ranch outside Tecpán. The nutrition team led us in a fabulous series of dances and other activities to keep everyone moving! These team-building opportunities are more important than ever as a growing number of our team members spend much of their time working solo visiting patients in the field.



The Nutrition Team gets everyone moving at the quarterly staff meeting in Tecpán.

In April, we had our second annual Leadership Retreat. For three days, our managers gathered on the shores of Lake Atitlán for a series of workshops and activities to foster personal and professional growth, from skill-building sessions, to meditation, to karaoke! Managers learned approaches for creating safe spaces and encouraging team members to share and offered their own personal experiences and ideas.

Throughout the year, Executive Director Anne Kraemer is making visits to field offices to reconnect post-Covid and to get to know new team members. These meetings are always energizing and inspiring for all involved. Pictured below are visits with the teams in Sololá, Quetzaltenango, and the Bocacosta.



MEETING OLD FRIENDS

In April, we had the pleasure of a visit from Rachel Mergens of the Mergens Foundation, a long time supporter of our work with children with chronic conditions. Rachel was joined by

her husband, who is from Guatemala, and their two young sons, who accompanied us on visits to families with young children facing complicated medical challenges.

We met seven-year-old Mishel, who was unable to walk when we first began working with her due to a bone condition and is now running and riding her bike. We also visited one-year-old Daniel, who we have helped keep alive and nourished with special formula and care until he is old enough to have surgery to repair problems with his esophagus.

It was lovely for our team and for the patients to have a supporter visit with her family to witness the impacts of our work.



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