



Maya Health nurses provide preventive women's health exams in a patient's home in a Maya Kaqchikel village.

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2024! We have lots to share!

Check out [this short video](#) for an update on Guatemala's new President Bernardo Arévalo and what his administration promises for health and indigenous rights. Plus, read on for the latest developments in our research and health programs and some heroic moments from recent months!

Wishing you a happy spring,

Anne Kraemer, Chief Executive Officer



Click the photo for a brief video update.

## "WE HAVE A LOT TO CONTRIBUTE IF OUR VOICES ARE HEARD."

Our Chief Medical Officer Waleska López Canú was among the featured panelists in an [OAS High-level Dialogue on Women's Leadership](#) in the Regional Agenda on Health and Resilience in Washington, DC on International Women's Day.

Dr. López Canú, who is Kaqchikel Maya, shared her personal experience studying medicine while in exile in Mexico during Guatemala's civil war. She was the only woman doctor in her indigenous community, where women were expected to take care of their families and discouraged from pursuing careers outside their homes. Today, more than 20 years later, she said, the path for indigenous women to become doctors remains strewn with educational, financial, and societal barriers.



Dr. López Canú speaks at the OAS event in Washington, DC on International Women's Day.

Photo: OAS Video

Dr. López Canú stressed the importance of recognizing existing local resources and the ancestral wisdom of indigenous people, and of supporting indigenous women medical professionals who understand the real health needs and contexts of indigenous girls and women.

She concluded: "We know the needs; we know the barriers that we have to overcome. So, we have a lot to contribute if our voices are heard."

The event was organized by the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership with the support of the

Government of Canada and coordinated by the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States (CIM/OAS).

[Watch the full conversation here.](#) Dr. López Canú first appears at around 2 hours, 24 minutes.

### CONGRATS!

Congratulations to Dr. Gabriela Montenegro Bethancourt, who was [sworn in March 7 as the Secretary of the SENACYT](#) (Secretaría Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología) in Guatemala. Dr. Montenegro, who has been a core part of our Research Team, will be a tremendous asset to the SENACYT, which leads science and technology activities for the nation and works directly with the Vice President. We are sad to see her leave but also so very excited for what she will bring to the new Administration and to Guatemala. We look forward to many fruitful collaborations in the future. What a great way to celebrate International Women's Day!

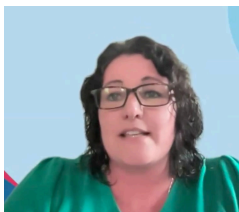


Dr. Montenegro takes office. Photo: SENACYT

In other news, Dr. Montenegro and Susy Tambriz, former manager of our Women's Health Program, were selected to be featured in Vol. 3 of SENACYT's Heroines in Science Magazine, which aims to inspire girls with stories to pursue STEAM careers. They were honored in a spectacular event in Guatemala City on February 9. See their magazine spreads below!



### CENTERING INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CHANGEMAKING



CEO Anne Kraemer was featured in the webinar Delivering Change for Women and Children Around the Globe (Now and Into the Future) organized by [RESULTS](#), a movement of volunteers advocating for policies that will bring an end to poverty. The conversation, which also included Dr. Deborah Ash of Global Nutrition Family Health International Solutions, was RESULTS' best attended event of the year! Anne underscored the importance of providing training and opportunities to allow indigenous women to create, lead, and implement solutions to health and economic inequities.

"While Guatemala is one of the wealthiest countries in Central America, it is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Women and girls – indigenous women and girls – shoulder the brunt of this poverty."

-Anne Kraemer

[View the webinar here.](#)

### RESEARCH UPDATES

Our [Center for Indigenous Health Research](#) is engaged in a range of ambitious projects, from scaling up diabetes treatment in public health facilities around the country; to using artificial intelligence to detect problems during pregnancy to reduce complications and infant deaths; to deploying a phone-based application to help parents track and nurture their children's development.

Pictured at right is a team collecting data on **potential factors contributing to the rise in cases of chronic kidney disease among field and factory workers**. Led by affiliate research scientist Dr. Meghan Webb, researchers joined cane workers for a stretch of long, hot days to conduct interviews and collect samples to examine the effects of variables like work hours, heat, water intake, sleep, health knowledge, and socio-economic status on workers' health.

The research, conducted in partnership with La Isla Network, is looking at thousands of field and factory workers in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras.



Safe & Healthy Workplaces research team.

At the end of 2023, we hosted researchers from India, Turkey, and the US who are **collaborating on a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the International Guide for Monitoring Child Development (GMCD)** in communities in India and Guatemala.

In addition to examining how the GMCD works in these contexts, the study is looking at barriers and supports for implementing and maintaining the program, which is used to assess children's progress in areas like language and motor skills.

It was a great experience to have members of the far-flung research team (seen in the photo at right) together in Guatemala!



GMCD Research Team

**JOIN OUR FLOWERS OF HOPE CAMPAIGN!**

Our spring campaign honors mothers and the critical role they play in supporting their families' health. Help us raise \$25,000 in donations so we can fully leverage our match for a total of \$50,000!

**Gifts received before midnight PT on Mother's Day (5/12) are eligible for a 1:1 match!**

DOUBLE YOUR GIFT!

Kotz'ij  
of Hope

MAYA HEALTH ALLIANCE  
WUQU' KAWOQ

## PROGRAM UPDATES



Cervical cancer screening education at a preventive care visit.

We are expanding our [Mobile Maternal & Infant Health Program](#) after being honored with major grants from the [Patchwork Collective](#) and [Google.org](#) to help advance this life-saving work. We are excited to welcome back Enma Coyote to manage the program! She helped launch the program seven years ago and took a two-year break after having a baby.

The Mobile Maternal & Infant Health Program works with midwives and care navigators to help identify complications early and ensure that women have the support they need to access hospital care when problems arise.

After bringing on and training new staff and midwives, we will have the capacity to support another 800-1,000 births a year. We also will dig deeper into the difficult situation of high rates of

Our Women's Health Program is making a critical transition from using Pap tests to more effective HPV screenings to enhance cervical cancer detection and prevention. Our new DNA microbiology lab staffed by two amazing biochemists is up and running, and we have already collected 60 samples!

Although cervical cancer is largely treatable when detected on time, it remains a leading cancer killer of women in Guatemala due to lack of access to effective testing and poor follow-up with results. With tests that allow earlier, more reliable detection and a goal of 100% follow-up for results and treatment, we aim to eliminate these preventable deaths with the support of [Eurofins Foundation](#) and other generous donors.

neonatal deaths. Our goal is to work closely with mothers, midwives and communities to gain a better understanding of the issue and how to address it.



A midwife uses a phone application to monitor progress.

## ENOUGH ABOUT US: TELL US ABOUT YOU!

We invite you to take our [supporter community survey](#) so we can learn more about what you want to know and how you'd like to hear from us.

It only takes two minutes!

Fill out the survey and provide your email address and you will be eligible for a drawing for one of our popular Tununem (Connection) shirts!



[Complete the survey here!](#)

## SIGN UP FOR OUR NEXT INSIGHT TRIP!



Last month, we had the pleasure of introducing some new friends to our community on our latest Insight Trip. In visits to patient homes and our Tecpán headquarters, participants got a chance to meet our team and see our work up close. They followed a nimble midwife up a steep incline to visit an expectant mom in her home, and witnessed how families with children with complicated health conditions are partnering with our team to get the care their children need to survive.

"The visits were interesting and extremely informative, sometimes heartbreaking, and most importantly, respectful." - Trip participant Russ Skiba

You are invited to join us on our next trip from **October 29-November 2, 2024**. [Click here to learn more!](#)



### BUILDING STRONG LEADERS

In January, 21 Maya Health leaders came together for conversation and learning in the third annual Leadership Retreat. The three-day session focused on offering clear and compassionate expectations, feedback, and support for team members.

*Thank you so much for your ongoing support!*



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