MAYA HEALTH ALLIANCE
WUQU' KAWOQ



A Maya Health community health worker pays a visit to a family and their newborn twins!

Dear Andrea,

Welcome to our fall newsletter!

First, the latest on the situation in Guatemala: It has been a challenging few months. We're currently experiencing a record-breaking drought that is contributing to devastating crop losses. Meanwhile, the price of fuel has climbed higher than in the US - more than $6 a gallon - and activists have taken to the streets to protest the rising cost of fuel, food, and public transportation, calling for government action to address these challenges. Combined, these developments are placing additional pressure on family resources, making it harder to find and get to work and to afford nutritious food.

On September 12, the national government declared a red alert, calling for measures to support vulnerable areas of the country, including establishing reference prices for food and preventing unjustified price increases, and streamlining the delivery of food to communities in need.

In the middle of this, Guatemala commemorated 205 years of independence on September 15. Independence celebrations in Guatemala are, of course, vibrant and colorful. Guatemalan families prepare traditional foods and groups of friends, neighbors, schools, and entire communities gather in town centers to light a torch with the *Fuego Patrio*, or "Patriotic Fire." They then run several kilometers back to their communities, carrying the *Fuego Patrio* with them.

At Maya Health Alliance, our team at the Antigua office shared their reflections over a traditional refacción (snack), including *tostadas*, *chuchitos*, and *mole*. *"The celebration of Independence is an occasion that invites us to reflect, particularly when we consider the historical and current realities of our country,"* shared Maya Health Alliance's Human Resources Manager, Mérida Coj.

Guatemala's history is marked by deep inequalities that continue to shape the lives of many people today, particularly Indigenous and rural communities. While Independence Day is an opportunity to celebrate the country's identity, culture, and traditions, it is also a moment to recognize the challenges that remain, including limited access to essential services and persistent social and economic inequalities. We're working every day to change these realities and ensure that people can access quality healthcare, regardless of where they were born or what language they speak.

Read on for updates on our recent work. Thank you for being part of our community!

With gratitude,

Anne Kraemer

Chief Executive Officer

Maya Health Alliance | Wuqu' Kawoq



New research and new solutions for newborn care

We are proud to share the latest from our research team, a look at how to best support newborns in the critical first days after birth, published in BMJ Paediatrics Open. To address deep-rooted mistrust of hospital care in the indigenous communities we serve, our technicians deliver home visits to track vital signs, provide breastfeeding support, and answer caregivers' questions. This approach is bringing timely, lifesaving care to families who need it most.

Read the article here

Principal Investigator and Pediatrician Dr. Anahí Venzor Strader and Dr. Esteban Castro visited Bella Aurora Paquip, a health center in Tecpán, Chimaltenango, to provide training to the center's medical staff on strengthening care for small and vulnerable newborns. By **sharing knowledge and practical tools with local healthcare providers, we are helping translate research into better care for newborns and their families in rural communities**.



We are honored and excited to partner with Global Newborn Solutions in the first home-based application of their creation Dream Warmer™, an electricity-free infant warming pad to prevent hypothermia, a common and potentially life-threatening condition among newborns. Guatemala is the first country in Latin America and among the first countries in the world to use Dream Warmers, which safely maintain a newborn's body temperature in settings where access to continuous electricity or incubators is limited. To mark this milestone, Global Newborn Solutions' Executive Director Cassy Cox traveled to Tecpán, Guatemala, and joined our team on field visits to patients' homes to see the Dream Warmer in action firsthand.

"What stood out to me most was the depth of connection and trust the teams had established with the community. This kind of work simply cannot succeed without that foundation, and it was unmistakably clear that families genuinely trusted Maya Health Alliance. That trust wasn't accidental; it was the result of years of presence, partnership, and respect." **— Global Newborn Solutions' Executive Director Cassy Cox**





Advancing cancer prevention and care

We're making steady progress creating unprecedented access to cancer screening and care for Indigenous women in rural communities.

We are excited to begin offering self-testing for cervical cancer. This is a promising solution for women who are uncomfortable undergoing pelvic exams, often because of pressure from their male partners to avoid the exams.

We're also very pleased to be participating in Guatemala's National Cancer Support Network convened by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance. The Network will bring together patients, family members, caregivers, therapists, and organizations working in cancer care to promote social accountability, contribute to improving cancer services, and help safeguard patients' rights as Guatemala implements its national comprehensive cancer care system. We're looking forward to sharing our experience helping rural, Indigenous patients make their way through national hospitals when they need advanced cancer care. Our care navigators, who work regularly in the hospitals, offer translation, advocacy, and support to patients who may be visiting the hospital, or even a major urban area, for the first time.



Maya Health community health worker Jeany Tzoc (L) catches up with María Pérez Cuin de Ordoñez, who successfully completed treatment for breast cancer at the national cancer hospital with the help of a care navigator.

Cultivating connection & collaboration for better care

Fostering a well-connected team has a direct impact on the quality of our work and, ultimately, on the health of the people we serve. **Our quarterly team meeting in Tecpán brought together our far-flung team for learning, connection, and a lot of fun, all with the goal of strengthening team work, belonging, and self-care**. Beyond the training sessions, the day was filled with recreational activities, including a mini soccer tournament fueled by World Cup excitement. Teams from across the organization jumped in and cheered each other on. We closed with an awards ceremony celebrating the winning teams and the spirit of teamwork that defined the day.



In August, the team enjoyed a birthday celebration for Chief Science and Innovation Officer Dr. Peter Rohloff with a Maya ceremony in Iximché, Tecpán. Iximché is an ancient Kaqchikel Maya archaeological site and former capital in the Guatemalan Highlands. True to form, Dr. Peter continued the celebration by leading the team on a hike!



We welcomed a new group of volunteers from the University of Cincinnati Division of Global and Underserved Health in August to provide care in our rural clinics. Their visit is part of an ongoing partnership that brings volunteer teams to Guatemala five times a year for two-week clinics. When they're back in the US, the volunteers care for the patients they saw in Guatemala through telehealth visits.

We are deeply grateful to the volunteers who dedicate their time, skills, and expertise to support the communities we serve. This collaboration goes beyond the care provided during each visit.



Catching up with friends and supporters in California

Over the summer, Maya Health Alliance Executive Director Anne Kraemer had the chance to visit Northern California to connect with old and new friends. From Palo Alto to Santa Cruz to San Francisco to San Rafael, she shared updates on Maya Health's work in rural Guatemala and explored exciting opportunities for expanded impact and collaboration.

A heartfelt thank you to our wonderful Bay Area board members for helping to bring these events to life, and to every person who took the time to join us.



Thank you for being part of our community!

All of this work is possible thanks to your support! There are many ways to stay involved with Maya Health Alliance. You can share this newsletter with your friends and community, follow us on social media (see links below), or make a donation.

Every action helps bring quality healthcare to the people who need it most!

Maya Health Alliance | Wuqu' Kawoq

PO Box 860943
Minneapolis, MN 05032

www.wuqukawoq.org

Follow us on social media

You are being sent this email because you are a subscriber.
If you wish to update your Email Preferences or Unsubscribe, click Unsubscribe | Manage email preferences