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WINTER 2007

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Guatemala has the highest maternal mortality rate in Central America. Many women give birth at home without medical supervision, which in turn impacts child mortality rates. Almost 5% of Guatemalan children die before the age of 5.

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When you ask someone from Guatemala how many children they have, time and again the answer is qualified by the word “living.” Child mortality rates are remarkably high here - 4.5 percent of children die before they reach the age of five. Many stillbirths and newborn deaths result from the same preventable causes: a lack of access to reproductive health services and severe malnutrition of the mother during pregnancy. Most advances in medical care do not reach rural parts of Guatemala, leaving thousands of women to endure the risks of numerous pregnancies and childbirth under conditions virtually unchanged over time. Fifty-nine percent of Guatemalan women give birth at home without a trained attendant, risking deadly hemorrhaging without any access to medical support.

Sadly, nearly one-third of pregnancies here are unintended. Although abortion is illegal, many women incapable of supporting unwanted children turn to untrained, underground abortion providers. Complications from abortion are a significant factor in Guatemala's tragically high maternal mortality rate. For those women who do give birth, many make the heartbreaking decision to put their child up for adoption in the hope of a better future. Guatemala is second only to China as the US's main provider of adopted infants.

With the highest maternal mortality rate in all of Central America, Guatemala's need to improve services, especially to rural, indigenous communities, is enormous. A strong, voluntary family planning program to prevent unwanted pregnancy to begin with and to enable women to reach their reproductive goals is internationally recognized as a key to decreasing maternal mortality rates. Successes are occurring – the government has seriously begun to address the child and maternal health agenda, passing the first comprehensive Family Planning Law in 2006. The Ministry of Health's motto reads: “Your health, your decision, our future,” reflecting the way these personal decisions impact the individual, the family and the country as a whole.

Inside this edition, you will read about WINGS' work providing outreach family planning education and services to thousands of women, men and teenagers, emphasizing the importance of birth spacing for mother and child health. There is much to be done, but with your support, reproductive health in Guatemala will continue to improve, and child and maternal mortality rates will significantly fall.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Sincerely,

Kathie Amble
WINGS Board President

A HAND UP – NOT A HAND OUT: WINGS’ MICRO-CREDIT PROJECT

WINGS began an exciting micro-credit pilot project in May, in partnership with the non-profit organization Friendship Bridge and APROFAM. Aimed at both lifting people out of poverty and increasing the availability of contraceptives in areas where demand outstrips supplies, the project currently provides small loans of Q500 (\$65) to trained promoters of short-term family planning methods.

In the first two months, 32 people (mostly women), from seven departments across Guatemala had received loans, enabling them to expand their supplies of temporary family planning methods such as birth control pills, Depo-Provera injections and condoms, and to sell more prenatal vitamins and antibiotics to their communities.

By providing small amounts of money to those who lack the collateral for regular bank loans, at interest rates significantly lower than those charged by money-lenders, micro-credit projects around the world are helping people to lift themselves out of poverty by growing their small businesses. With your support, WINGS hopes to expand

this project fourfold in 2008 and provide more training and loans to those who want to become family planning promoters but who lack the initial start-up funds to buy their basic inventory.



WINGS’ micro-credit project provides significant economic opportunities to small business women and men as well as boosting much needed family planning supplies in remote areas. Photo by Miguel Sampler.

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO – WINGS FOR MEN IS LAUNCHED

Guatemalan men hold the majority of power in decisions about sexual relations, family planning, their wives’ economic activities and the use of household resources to pay for doctors and school fees. Their decisions influence the well-being and prospects of the whole family; yet, men are frequently excluded from reproductive health information and services.

WINGS for Men, our newest program which launched in August, addresses the severe lack of sexual and



Through a series of outreach community workshops, WINGS for MEN provides groups of 8-10 men with information on a range of subjects such as family planning methods and myths, responsible fatherhood and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.

reproductive health knowledge among Guatemalan men. The program targets low-income, rural and indigenous men of reproductive age through a series of community-based workshops, covering topics such as responsible fatherhood, sexual anatomy, family planning, sexually transmitted infections and communication skills.

A second component provides training to health professionals in the development of more ‘men-friendly’ services. The final component of this multi-layered program will publicize male-targeted sexual health messages to the wider community through a range of media including local radio and posters. We look forward to reporting back on the impact of this program in 2008.



Haroldo Castillo Garcia has joined the WINGS team as the key educator of the new WINGS for Men program.

YOUTH WINGS SUMMER TRAININGS

This summer more than 50 Youth WINGS peer-educators took part in pregnancy simulation courses. Both young women and young men were given a third-trimester suit to wear for 24 hours, in order to experience many of the typical symptoms of pregnancy. The initial jokes and laughter swiftly turned into first-hand understanding of the dramatic change in physical and personal self image that comes with being pregnant. After a sleepless night, suffering from back pain, shortness of breath and restricted mobility, many commented on their heightened

awareness of the sacrifices involved in having a child and the need to be more considerate towards pregnant women and the physical challenges they go through.

Youth WINGS continues to give innovative trainings to our core group of reproductive health peer-educators, deepening their knowledge base and keeping their motivation high to provide sexual health information to thousands of teenagers in their communities.



Youth WINGS educators were fitted with third trimester pregnancy simulation suits, weighing up to 25 lbs, for 24 hours. The intensive training effectively demonstrated the real physical demands and consequences of becoming pregnant to these teenagers.

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

LASVIA, 19, from Chimaltenango has two children whom she tries hard to look after on her husband's limited income. When her mother-in-law attended a WINGS family planning talk and learned of an upcoming mobile clinic in Lasvia's area, she encouraged her to go and discuss contraceptive methods with a WINGS staff member. For a week, Lasvia debated attending the mobile clinic, having heard that family planning was wrong and made you ill. However, knowing that WINGS would help her to afford the method she chose, encouraged Lasvia to find out more. Following a consultation where her concerns were addressed, Lasvia chose our newest reversible method, Jadelle, which provides up to five years protection from unwanted pregnancy. "WINGS' services have helped me give the best to my children – an education and a future. I have told others about WINGS' good services and how they have helped my family."

EVELYN, a 19-year-old from Yepocapa, trained and graduated as a WINGS Youth Educator in December 2005. Following the death of her father, she studied to become a school teacher and now teaches seven days a week to support herself. Evelyn's intense work schedule means she can no longer attend the group meetings of Youth WINGS; however, her commitment to the

program remains strong and she frequently invites other WINGS youth multipliers to talk to her teenage students about sexual and reproductive health. Evelyn exemplifies the high motivation and dedication we find among our Youth WINGS graduates to bring essential sexual health messages to more and more of their peers.

EMMA, 33, attended a WINGS cervical cancer detection clinic after her mother heard our mobile services advertised on the radio. The mother of nine children, Emma has never used contraceptive methods because people had told her they cause cancer. Sadly, Emma's cervical cancer test was positive and she required radiotherapy and medication. Shocked and frightened about her inability to afford medical services, our staff helped Emma process her health situation, explaining that WINGS would help pay for her treatment. Emma is currently receiving radiotherapy, hoping to win the fight against cancer and stay alive for her children. Realizing that without WINGS' detection clinic she would never have discovered the cancer in time, Emma now talks to women in her community about the importance of cervical cancer tests and challenges the myths that family planning methods cause ill health.

MAKE A GIFT

There are many ways you can make a real difference to WINGS, from making a financial donation by check, credit card or stock, to spreading the word to potential new supporters, joining a NEST or donating your skills. Your generosity goes far in Guatemala.

WHY I SUPPORT WINGS

“Guatemala and its people hold a special place in my heart since we adopted our son, Carlos, from Guatemala. While our little boy is the greatest gift we could hope for, I am sure that his entry into our lives came at a great cost to his birthmother. By donating a portion of my jewelry sales to WINGS, I bring a deeper meaning to my work, and hopefully help bring about a time when no more women will be forced to make the agonizing choice that Carlos’ birthmother made.”
—Tamara McFarland, McFarland Designs



WINGS supporter, Tamara McFarland, with her adopted son, Carlos.

NEST NEWS

The Minnesota NEST raised \$13,000 for the new WINGS for MEN program at its auction event at the Lilydale Yacht Club during Sue’s June US trip.

The Bay Area NEST held its first event this September at the Aftermodern Gallery. Over 60 people attended the informational evening, which also raised \$2,700 to support an exciting new youth advocacy project.



(L-R) Dr. Julia Getzelman and Pat and Plato Grivas helped make the Bay Area NESTS’ informational evening at Aftermodern Gallery such a success.

NESTS

NESTS are regionally-based groups of like-minded volunteers who share WINGS’ work with others, raise project funds and increase awareness of reproductive health care issues. Find out how you can participate or how to start a new NEST in your area by contacting: info@wingsguate.org

SUPPORT

WINGS’ programs could not exist without the generosity of dedicated supporters. We would especially like to thank:



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