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Filming of WINGS' family planning talk

Dear Friends,

A few months ago, WINGS had a unique opportunity to participate in the filming of a documentary highlighting the issue of maternal mortality around the world. The film, tentatively called *Creation Myths* and scheduled for a theatrical release in 2010, is a project conceived by supermodel Christy Turlington, who has taken on the cause of maternal mortality as an ambassador for CARE, a humanitarian organization that fights global poverty by working with poor women. The film will focus on issues of pregnancy, prenatal care, and maternal mortality in four countries – Guatemala, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and the United States.

When Christy and her team asked to film one of WINGS' educational talks during their trip to Guatemala in May, we were truly delighted to join them in their efforts to bring much needed attention to the issue of maternal mortality. And so, on a Saturday afternoon, Christy, the film producers, a camerawoman, a soundman, and a few photographers joined several of WINGS' staff members at a talk about family planning and reproductive risk led by WINGS' educator Evelyn Roquel at a small home in the town of San Lorenzo El Cubo. Thanks to Evelyn's dynamic presentation, the talk was enthusiastically received by the more than 30 local women in attendance and by the film crew.

The issue of maternal mortality is one that continues to be overlooked, despite the devastating toll being taken on women around the world. Every minute, a woman dies from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth; 500,000 women die each year despite the fact that the vast majority of these deaths could be prevented if women received basic healthcare from trained providers. Guatemala suffers from higher maternal mortality than any other country in Latin America and the Caribbean except Haiti. The lifetime risk a woman in Guatemala faces of dying from pregnancy or childbirth is 1 in 71.

WINGS' work is closely tied to the prevention of maternal mortality – access



Christy Turlington with WINGS' Educator Evelyn Roquel

to family planning reduces the risk of maternal death by giving women the opportunity to delay and space births and to stop childbearing after reaching their desired family size. Our education program aimed at youth not only helps to prevent risky teenage pregnancies, but also helps to give young people the information they need to make healthy choices about family planning and reproductive health throughout their lives. Thank you for supporting WINGS and for helping to make pregnancy and childbirth safer for Guatemalan women.

Sincerely,

Janeen Simon
Executive Director

WINGS IN THE PETÉN

Bringing family planning education to the Sierra del Lacandón National Park has not been easy. The nine small communities targeted by WINGS, each ranging in size from 250 to 800 people, are barely reachable by car or horse. During the rainy season it is even worse—some of the communities can be reached only by hiking several hours through muddy terrain. Add to the problem of physical accessibility a general wariness of strangers, the language barrier in communicating with populations that speak multiple Mayan languages, predominantly Q'eqchi', conservative religious beliefs, and the widespread lack of even the most basic reproductive health knowledge, and WINGS' plan to expand programming to the area seems even more daunting. Yet, we have seen some early successes, thanks in large part to WINGS' new family planning educator, Sandy Morales.

WINGS' new program in the Petén, Guatemala's northernmost region, is working with communities within environmentally fragile areas of the Sierra del Lacandón National Park. The park is a bio-diverse hot spot of approximately 500,000 acres that is home to hundreds of species, several of which – the jaguar, puma, anteater, and howler monkey, for example – are endangered. Within the nine targeted communities, where a total of 3,800 Guatemalans live, approximately 65% of the population are under 20 years of age and education is extremely limited—only 41% of youth between the ages of 6 and 15 attend school, with the vast majority dropping out by the age of 10 or 11. Reproductive health resources are also severely lacking. Local health promoters, all of whom are men, are able to offer few family planning methods, and are often forced to leave the park to find methods to sell or face having no supply at all. Midwives tend to have limited training and maternal mortality is very high – in the small community of Nueva Jerusalem alone, three women died in childbirth in the first five months of 2009.

Sandy, who joined the WINGS team earlier this year, has already begun to increase knowledge about reproductive health and family planning in the communities by conducting regular educational talks in both Spanish and Q'eqchi', and has initiated efforts to provide better, more reliable access to family planning methods. Over the coming years, WINGS will add men's and youth education components and possibly bring cervical cancer detection and treatment services to the area, with the eventual goal of developing sufficient local capacity in the area to eliminate the need for WINGS' direct involvement. In the meantime, Sandy and the entire WINGS team are excited to have this unique opportunity to offer family planning and reproductive health services to these underserved communities and to contribute to the preservation of the precious ecological diversity of the area.



Educator Sandy Morales giving a talk



Women attending a family planning talk in the Petén

WINGS Remembers CERVICAL CANCER VICTIM

We are sad to report that Emma Cifuentes, a 35-year-old mother of nine, passed away in May from cervical cancer. All of us at WINGS are saddened by Emma's premature death, and our thoughts and concern are with her family, especially her children, during this difficult time.

WINGS first met Emma in 2007 at a cervical cancer detection and treatment clinic held at the Behrhorst Clinic in Chimaltenango. Emma's mother had heard a radio announcement about WINGS' cervical cancer clinics and recommended her daughter go to be screened. Sadly, Emma's test revealed that she had cancer.

Feeling helpless at first because she couldn't afford any treatment, Emma found great

support from WINGS' staff members, who arranged for her to be seen by a doctor and to receive available treatment, including radiotherapy. Unfortunately, Emma's cancer was very advanced by the time she visited WINGS, and the treatment failed.

During her lifetime, Emma had never used any contraceptive method because she believed, like many women in Guatemala, that contraceptives cause cancer. After attending the cervical cancer clinic, she learned that this widespread belief was actually a dangerous myth. Until her death, Emma continued to spread the word to other women in her community that everyone is at risk for cervical cancer and that cancer is not caused by family

planning methods. She encouraged all the women she knew to be screened, telling them that the test could save their lives.

Cervical cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths for women in Guatemala, affecting 20% more women each year than breast cancer. Though WINGS strives to provide cervical cancer detection and treatment services to as many Guatemalan women as possible, the need is vast in a country where only 40% of women have ever been screened. In one positive development, WINGS was recently asked by the Guatemalan government to advise them on a national screening strategy. This request gives us hope that some day in the near future

all Guatemalan women will have access to detection and treatment services, that the hundreds of deaths that occur annually from cervical cancer in Guatemala will be prevented, and that Emma's tragic story won't be repeated.

To learn more about WINGS' cervical cancer detection and treatment program in Guatemala, visit www.wingsguate.org.



Emma Cifuentes

Stories

FROM THE FIELD

Byron is a 17-year-old Youth WINGS peer educator from a small town near Antigua. He is currently in his fourth year studying agricultural sciences at a local institute, where his fellow students are all young men. In one of his courses about the environment, Byron's teacher gave a lecture about the importance of family planning to reduce population growth and protect natural resources. He mentioned some of the family planning methods that are available, but said that he did not recommend vasectomies, because vasectomies take away manliness and prevent a man from feeling sexual pleasure. Byron raised his hand and corrected his teacher, pointing out that men who have had vasectomies can still have normal sexual relations. Taken aback, the teacher asked Byron to go home and do his research, and give a presentation to the other students the next day. The following

day, Byron used the educational materials provided to him by Youth WINGS to dispel some of the myths that the students had learned about family planning methods.



Byron

how they might be able to get involved in the Youth WINGS Program.

Doña Luduvina is 35 years old and lives in a small indigenous community in the Quiché region of Guatemala. She has nine children, and cleans houses to earn extra money to support her family. Still, she finds it difficult on her meager income to feed her children and make ends meet. Her husband is an

The teacher was impressed, and wanted information about where these services were available. Now the other students in Byron's class are eager to learn more from him, and to find out

agricultural laborer, but spends most of his earnings drinking with his friends. When Doña Luduvina heard on the radio that a WINGS-sponsored family planning clinic was visiting her town, she decided to get a tubal ligation so that she wouldn't have to care for any more children. Because Spanish is not her first language, Doña Luduvina did not understand from the radio message that patients were asked to contribute Q25 (\$3) toward the cost of the operation. When she arrived at the clinic with her baby strapped to her back, she had no money. However, because WINGS will reduce or even waive a fee in circumstances of hardship, the WINGS educator at the clinic, Dorcas Pol, waived the fee and Doña Luduvina was able to receive her operation free of cost. She is very grateful and now feels capable of better caring for her existing children. She only wishes that she had learned about family planning earlier, when she had just three children. **To read more Stories from the Field, please visit us online at www.wingsguate.org.**

WINGS Makes a Move

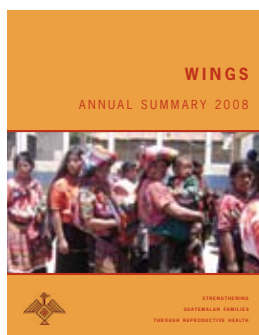
WINGS has relocated in Antigua! Visit us at our new office at: **9a Calle Poniente, Residenciales El Rosario Casa #3, La Antigua Guatemala**. Our new contact numbers in Guatemala are (502) 7832-5163 and (502) 7832-5130 or, if you are calling from the United States, try our new “local” number – (415) 230-0441, which forwards to our office in Antigua.

Make WINGS Your Birthday Wish!

Celebrate your birthday by supporting WINGS’ cause on www.facebook.com, “Strengthening Guatemalan Families Through Reproductive Health.” Facebook now allows users to create a birthday wish to benefit their favorite cause. Visit www.causes.com/WINGS/birthdays, set your birthday fundraising goal, and ask friends to give a few dollars to WINGS in your honor!

WINGS Publishes 2008 Annual Summary

WINGS announces the publication of its third Annual Summary. The report, covering the calendar year 2008, provides updates and statistics for each of our programs and gives a full accounting of our income and expenditures over the course of the year. Please visit www.wingsguate.org to download a copy and learn more about WINGS’ work in 2008.



Why I Support WINGS...



“I first visited Guatemala as part of a tour of Central America in 2006, and have been back 7 times. Guatemala is special, both in physical beauty and in the warmth of its people, but the degree of poverty and the limited resources of so many who live there are striking. As a strong believer that education and healthcare are important keys to improved living conditions, I have chosen to put my continued support behind WINGS. Families with fewer pregnancies and healthier mothers can provide better nutrition, better healthcare and better education for their children. A well-fed and healthy child can succeed better in the classroom. Better educated children will help eventually lead this incredibly beautiful nation out of poverty.”

—Maryann Bullett, Elmira, NY

Donate Now

Your continued support of WINGS is vital to ensuring that women, men and young people in Guatemala receive the reproductive health and family planning services that are so desperately needed. Donate online at www.wingsguate.org or send a check to our San Francisco office at: 793 Ashbury Street, San Francisco, California, 94117.

Stay Informed

Sign up for our e-newsletter and stay up-to-date on recent efforts at WINGS. We will share stories about WINGS’ programs and the impact your support is having on Guatemalan families. These periodic e-blasts reduce paper consumption and also let you know when our latest newsletter has been uploaded to our website for easy viewing. Go to www.wingsguate.org and sign up.

Build a NEST to Support WINGS

NESTs are WINGS’ volunteer groups that raise project funds and increase awareness about reproductive health issues in Guatemala. It’s easier than ever to start your own NEST – the WINGS website has plenty of NEST building materials and our dedicated staff member can help you by designing an invitation for your kick-off event, putting you in contact with WINGS’ supporters in your area, and sending you materials about WINGS to distribute. And, while some NESTs are extremely busy, others stick to holding one or two events per year such as tag sales, potluck dinners, or wine tastings. If you are interested in starting a NEST or holding an event to benefit WINGS, please write to us at: info@wingsguate.org.

Or, join one of our current NESTs in:

Bay Area, CALIFORNIA

St. Paul, MINNESOTA

San Diego, CALIFORNIA

Manhattan Beach, CALIFORNIA

New York Metro Area (COMING SOON!)

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