

# MAMA News

July -  
August 2012



*A little girl is excited to see the visiting team  
and receive medical attention and gifts.*

## MAMA Project

Mujeres Amigas-Miles Apart  
(Women Friends-Miles Apart)

Nutritional Rehabilitation  
Medical & Dental Brigades

Work Teams  
Preschools

Cross Cultural Training  
Deworming & Vitamin A  
Campaigns

Donating Medical & Dental  
Equipment & Supplies

Community Development  
Scholarships

Child Survival Training

*MAMA News* is a bimonthly newsletter that provides updates about MAMA Project, Inc.'s programs and service to communities in Honduras, Haiti, and Nigeria.

**The *MAMA News* is available for free to anyone who would like to receive it.**

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*In this issue of "MAMA News", we will continue our reflections of the past 25 years of work in Child Survival. For the first three articles, please see our MAMA News Archive available for download at [www.mamaproject.org/archive.html](http://www.mamaproject.org/archive.html)*

## Child Survival Training

*Written by Priscilla Benner, MD  
Director, MAMA Project, Inc.*

In every community and culture there are people who become healers. Is this an inborn trait? Is it learned? Or is it some of both? For those of us who have had the privilege to study medicine and spend our lives promoting health and healing, it sometimes feels like we were born to fill this role. It seems that we are drawn irresistibly to people who are sick. We want to help them to get well, and stay well. Our job is very satisfying. In this modern age, there are wonderful advances that have saved countless millions of lives that would have been lost. We who study medicine have the amazing honor of being able to learn and apply this knowledge for the benefit of our patients.

But is this body of scientific information our property, or is it the rightful heritage of all who live in this era of history? How is it that we at times feel like we "own" the privilege of knowing how to heal? **What about communities that don't receive the benefits of modern medical advances and still suffer from diseases that no longer pose a threat in wealthy countries?** When conditions are adverse, people who would have become physicians, nurses or other health care providers may need to give up those dreams, or maybe they never even began to dream. Perhaps their hopes were crushed and their desires squelched by lack of opportunity to study and the overwhelming daily struggle to survive. Many do not dare to hope that they could be spared unnecessary suffering. Some have a fatalistic resignation that striving for better health will be futile. They would not know where to begin.



*MAMA Project teaching mothers and families in the Nutrition Center in San Francisco de Yojoa, Honduras, in the early days.*

*Some of us were born into regions of the world where the economy was healthy and opportunities to succeed and follow our dreams were available. We may forget that the presence or absence of opportunity was shaped by events of the past that robbed some of their heritage, and bestowed unwarranted favor on others.*

The consequences are passed down many generations, spanning centuries. Destruction of cultures, conquest, plundering of resources and establishment of unjust social structures has had horrific consequences for our ancestors in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. For example, famine, genocide and enslavement caused many Europeans to migrate to the United States, where they found opportunities. A generation or two later, history is forgotten, and we encounter those still living in disenfranchised situations as if they were a different type of human.



The words of the Biblical prophets and Jesus take on new meaning when we listen to them from outside our “bubble”.

*As a mother, I could relate to the intense fear and anxiety that a young mother holding her dying child felt. As a follower of Jesus I firmly believed that the circumstances that robbed her of the ability to save her own child were not the will of God.*

As a physician, I knew that the information, resources and skills needed to prevent these senseless deaths could be brought to the communities, and that mothers who loved their children and felt empowered would use life-saving resources.

The people who would be healers may not always be doctors and nurses. But some may still find ways to help their community, because it's in their DNA, so to speak. It is always exciting to meet the community leaders who have been working to better the lives of their own neighbors long before MAMA came along. Those people have usually welcomed MAMA with open arms, and recognized the potential for good that can come out of our partnership.

*Dr. Priscilla Benner teaches the Child Survival Training to community leaders in San Francisco de Yojoa, Honduras at the MAMA Nutrition Center.*



*A MAMA Project Child Survival Training with other organizations held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.*

From the beginning of MAMA 25 years ago, we have always known that we wanted to do our best to share life-saving knowledge with people in the communities, and facilitate the role of the community leaders who are already dedicated to their own people. Over the years that commitment has grown and our efforts have become more focused and refined.

MAMA leaders and participants on all levels have spent a great deal of energy exploring the issues that cause children to suffer and die in poor communities. Our skills and abilities have always kept us working on a grass roots level, aspiring to empower the community to address the issues with the resources at their disposal. Sometimes this means adapting resources to be used at low cost and then raising awareness of issues, challenging people to believe that they can make a difference in their own home town, and training community members to implement strategies and participate in activities that can truly save lives.

When we first started, our trainings were more informal. We created our own materials like posters, flipcharts and we also used Ministry of Health materials. Every few years, we have upgraded our materials, and continuously added more information regarding strategies to improve health.

In the late 1990's, we embraced the *World Health Organization's* newly available “Integrated Management of Childhood Diseases” course. This is a coordinated way of approaching the most common illnesses afflicting poor communities, and killing children. It is designed to train health workers on all levels, including community volunteers, to evaluate and treat killer childhood diseases like pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, and malnutrition, using logical flow charts and basic medicines.



*Wilson teaches a community leader about how to clean her water.*

We are continuously adapting this material to meet the needs of the communities that we serve. We have expanded the course to include information on health care for adolescents and adults. We also have a greater focus on oral health, including a special focus on Noma, the dreadful facial gangrene disease that **kills thousands of children in poor countries**. The MAMA version greatly expands on malnutrition, detecting anemia, community-wide intestinal parasite treatments, and the importance of micronutrients. We also introduce people to the materials that we have designed and adapted for keeping records in the

villages, and we share our strategies and systems for running medical and dental brigades that include community-wide deworming, vitamin A distribution, and micronutrient powder distribution for home food fortification. We have created some appropriate technology tools, like a water purification system using 5 gallon buckets, a means of delivering asthma treatments with a bicycle pump, a visual scale for detecting anemia, a portable apparatus for measuring children, tables for field assessment of nutritional status, MAMA's dental powder, MAMA's compounded skin cream to treat common skin ailments, and MAMA's micronutrient powder to fortify food.

Since the beginning, MAMA Project has learned a lot from the experiences of others with similar vision, and we have shared our ideas with them. In recent years, this has become more formalized as we have offered our materials in the form of a Child Survival Training Course, which has been available online as well as in scheduled trainings. Not only do we train our own service teams, but we adapt the same material for village health volunteers, and for other government and non-profit agencies and ministries that are interested in using some of MAMA Project's systems and materials.

*It was wonderful to hear one of our village volunteers declare that since working with MAMA they no longer see children dying in their community, whereas in the past it was a common occurrence.*

It has been gratifying to see people who we work with discover new vision, organize, take advantage of training, and then contribute their own insights and experiences to help us to improve our work...

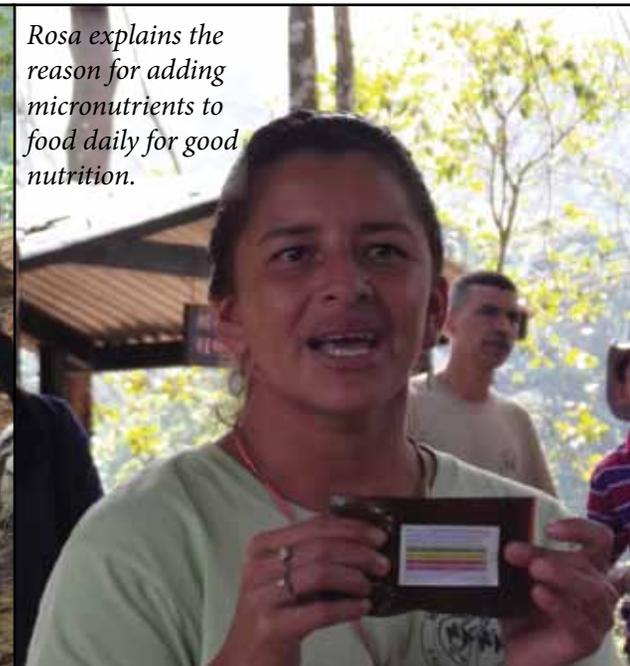
It is a treasure to be able to remember mothers and fathers who were awed when their children recovered from the brink of death because of interventions like oral rehydration, practiced in the community.

I have deep respect for parents and grandparents who make great sacrifices for their children, working hard from morning to night to provide their daily food, keep them clothed, sheltered, and when possible, provide for their education. Many of us who were born into opportunity, don't have to go back too many generations to find forefathers and foremothers who sacrificed similarly to assure the survival of their children, from whom we are descended.

*Let's pause, thank God and our heritage and the opportunities that we have enjoyed, and re-commit ourselves to share the resources that we control, for the good of all of the children of the world that are equally loved by God.*



*A dentist explains the importance of brushing teeth and how to brush correctly.*



*Rosa explains the reason for adding micronutrients to food daily for good nutrition.*

# Celebrate!

Happy 25th Anniversary, MAMA Project!

*As you've been reading through the issues of MAMA News this year, you have been able to see how much MAMA has grown over the past 25 years. We have had many years of success and look forward to many more years of being an advocate for the children of poor countries. Please consider an additional donation to MAMA this year in celebration of the anniversary.*

*Cut out this page, fill in the bottom, and send it back to MAMA with your donation.*

*Look in the upcoming issues of MAMA News to see comments about what MAMA Project means to others.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I/We give MAMA Project, Inc. permission to use my name as written above and any comments written in upcoming publications or website.

My anniversary gift is enclosed:

\_\_\_ \$25    \_\_\_ \$250    \_\_\_ \$2,500    \_\_\_ Other

Please feel free to share below how MAMA Project has affected your life and/or the reason for continuing to support MAMA's programs of Child Survival.

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