



# MAMA News

January -  
February  
2012

## 25th Anniversary

Throughout  
2012 we'll  
be taking a  
look at MAMA  
Project's work  
in the past 25  
years.



## 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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All photos were taken by MAMA Project Staff or Service Team Members.



## How did MAMA Project begin?

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

*Telling the story of the birth, growth and development of MAMA, and reflecting on the past 25+ years.*

For some, the 1980s are remembered by the influence that the media and celebrities had on popular culture. Thinking of hair and clothing styles, the songs that we now call the "oldies", or the TV shows we might think of the 1980s as a more safe and innocent time.

But for those living in Central America, the '80s were not a time of safety or innocence.

Even if you weren't among the hundreds of thousands of terrified villagers running away from slaughtering genocidal armies, or an intellectual fearing to be "disappeared", a young man being kidnapped to become a member of a non-volunteer brutal army, or a farmer risking his life to get land to grow food to feed his family, you might be a grief-stricken mother watching her child die of measles, go blind from vitamin A deficiency, or die of many other easily preventable or treatable diseases.

It was in those early 1980s that the ideas and vision that became MAMA Project started to emerge. Fueled by stories and photo documentation of the dire situation that families were living in, the passion to become involved started to catch fire. The situations witnessed by Ruth Cole during mission trips with Wheaton College were shared in eight Mennonite churches in the Franconia and Eastern District, and with the women's mission groups, (WMSC and WIM). We reached out to the Mennonite Women's Organization in the Honduran Mennonite Church, and found very enthusiastic partners. When an expanding group of people took a hard look at the suffering of children living in poverty, and committed themselves to study, strategize, organize, publicize, and mobilize, MAMA Project was born. The focus from the

beginning was on families with children living precariously at risk for early death from malnutrition. MAMA has always been mainly focused on Child Survival.

MAMA stands for Mujeres Amigas (Women Friends) Miles Apart. MAMA was officially launched at the stroke of midnight December 31, 1986. As 1987 was born, so was MAMA. "The Basics and the Paynes" were there to celebrate the birth with a concert at Salford Mennonite Church. We all prayed and committed ourselves to follow Jesus into this frightening new venture. We knew that Jesus loves the suffering children. He spoke against injustice that causes it and we would also need to.

MAMA's focus has always been primarily on finding ways to help children survive and thrive in their own homes and communities. This has grown to involve direct aid with food supplements, nutrition and childcare education, literacy, scholarships, and when crises such as floods occur, rescue, relief and reconstruction projects. We have had times of working with loans, home construction, latrine and water projects, but now most of our construction work is focused on cementing floors in poor homes.

MAMA has also had a significant role to play in the sphere of national health policy and has had influence in other countries by partnering with others and sharing our materials, systems and perspectives. We take teams to work and experience Honduras, and hope and pray that the fire of their own passion for service will be fueled by this experience.

## Developing MAMA Project's Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food



(Left)  
Volunteers in Honduras making the MAMA Superbar.



(Right) A girl eating a Superbar.

In the USA, we do not see micronutrient deficiency in children because of the amount of minerals and vitamins "hidden" in all of our foods. If you look on the box of any food, you'll see the vitamins and minerals that have been added to ensure that your children receive everything they need to grow healthy. However, in many other countries, it is not the same. A child in Honduras might not get their necessary vitamins and minerals unless they have a well-balanced diet, which is hard for a child that eats only a tortilla and sometimes beans each day.

In the beginning years of MAMA Project, much time was spent in the research and development of its own Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food. In 1987, MAMA was beginning work in four squatter villages outside of San Pedro Sula and saw the need of getting much-needed vitamins to the children that they saw. MAMA developed the Superbar or super cookie. This cookie was similar to a molasses cookie, made with soy flour and a small amount of vitamin powder. A malnourished child could eat three of these cookies a day and have the required amount of minerals and vitamins needed to grow healthy.



*MAMA Superbars being unpacked by Aurelia Salvador and Ruth Cole after arrival in Honduras.*



*MAMA's micronutrient powder and its mini-scoop.*

The Superbar/cookie involved many volunteers in Pennsylvania mixing and baking them, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) helped to ship them and volunteers in Honduras helped to distribute them.

When MAMA's Nutritional Rehabilitation Center began in San Francisco de Yojoa, MAMA Staff would teach mothers how to make the super cookies.

The Superbar was effective but costly and Dr. Benner knew there

had to be a better way to get the much needed vitamins and minerals to the children in need.

In order to reach the greatest number of children, we adapted our strategy to empower the mother to fortify food in her own home. This way of targeting the most important cause of childhood death - "micronutrient malnutrition" - by adding the life-saving nutrients to the child's food in the home is becoming an internationally recognized Child Survival strategy by many other organizations as well.

For the past 3 years, MAMA volunteers have been handing out small packets of vitamin mix with instructions on how to mix it with the child's first meal of the day. Children are weighed and, once determined



*A mother mixes the vitamins with her daughter's food.*

their nutrition levels, are told how many mini-spoonfuls they need to add to their food daily. The powder does not alter the taste or color of the food but provides all the vitamins and nutrients necessary for healthy growth.

MAMA's micronutrient is not only distributed in its powder form throughout Honduras, but also with missionaries that are working in Haiti, Africa, and Mexico.

***Would you like to join MAMA Project in improving the health of many children throughout Honduras and other countries?***

*A donation of \$5 would help to provide a supply of micronutrients for a child for 6 months.*

*A donation of \$5,000 would help MAMA teams go to 7 communities bringing medical and dental care, micronutrients, deworming medicines, training, and assessments of the nutrition of women and children.*

***Join us in helping the children of Honduras get their necessary nutrients so they can have a healthy childhood and a chance at a better adulthood!***



An excerpt from Robin Dean's (Christopher Dock Mennonite High School Senior) experience in Honduras, January 2012:

[During the week's brigades], a group would head out into the village equipped with cementing supplies. Each day multiple homes got cement floors for the first time, dramatically altering their lifestyle for the better. To us, a cement floor seems like nothing, but to someone who has been living on a dirt floor their entire life, it means the world. Now they can sweep the dirt away and have a clean floor. They are protected from worms or diseases that might be carried through the dirt. They have a flat, even ground on which to sleep, saving them from back pain. The few long, hot, exhausting hours put in each day to cementing have impacted these families' lives forever.

As the end of this incredible week approached, we were all faced with the question: How did you see or experience God? Of course, everyone knows that a mission's trip is one of the best ways to connect with our Creator. As a group we discussed this question on our last night, and I observed that there were no real "firework" moments when anyone felt smacked in the face by God. Instead, I realized He had been present all along. From the moment we stepped onto our plane back in Newark, our God had been connecting with us. We saw His face in many ways; in the hazy sunrise each morning as we sat on rocking chairs, drinking coffee (the best coffee ever, I was told. I'm not a coffee drinker myself); in the old woman who got her sight back after years of blindness; in little Guarte and Chi Chi's smiles as they followed our vans when we returned to the town each evening; in the 17-year old girl's eyes as she lay in the maternity hospital just hours after giving birth; and in the way the MAMA staff took care of us.

To read more, visit [www.mamaproject.org/archive.html](http://www.mamaproject.org/archive.html)



*Robin Dean (left) assisting Honduran dentist, Shelly, with a tooth extraction.*

## MAMA's Calendar of Events

Mark your calendar and join us in our mission of helping the children of Honduras, Haiti, and Africa!

**February 24 & 25:** Child Survival Training

**March 24:** Team Orientation

**June 8th:** 5th Annual Golf Outing at Butter Valley Golf Port, Bally, PA

**November 10:** Annual Banquet & Silent Auction

**November 17:** Team Orientation

*If you would like to join a mission team, we have the following dates that teams are forming but still need more volunteers:*

May 5-12, 2012

June 16-23, 2012

August 2012 - exact dates TBD

September 1-8, 2012



*Christopher Dock Seniors hand out micronutrients in a village they visit.*

Contact Herman at the MAMA Office 215-679-4338 or [mamaproject@enter.net](mailto:mamaproject@enter.net) for more details about any of the above events.

# 25TH ANNIVERSARY

In celebration of MAMA's 25 years of service in Child Survival Programs, consider making a **\$25/month donation** (or any donation size) and help families like this one!

