



# ALDEA™

STRENGTHENING MAYAN COMMUNITIES SINCE 1967

## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2015

*Formerly Behrhorst Partners for  
Development*

## Women Take the Lead in Creating Healthier Communities



**Marta Tepaz is leading her community to a better future through her teaching role as a promoter.**

**M**arta Tepaz had to overcome a few obstacles before she could attend a September 2014 women's empowerment workshop hosted by ALDEA's sister organization in Guatemala, Asociación BPD (ABPD). In the end, this determined twenty-nine-year old mother—who teaches people in her community about nutrition, hygiene, family planning, and other issues as a volunteer promoter—made it happen. At the training, she gained new skills and a deeper confidence, which are enabling her to build a better future for her community.

“I am from Chuachun, Santa Apolonia. I am one of the ABPD promoters in my community. For me, it has been a great experience to share with other women what I am learning.

“I was invited in September last year to a promoters' workshop in Chimaltenango. At first, my husband said I could not attend because I would leave our children at home. But then I reminded him that—as a woman—I have the right to make my own decisions. Attending a workshop where I can learn is part of the development I want for myself. He had to accept my participation.

“It was the first time I left [the municipal district of] Santa Apolonia, a very good opportunity to share my experience as a promoter with other women and also learn from them. The ABPD staff taught us about dif-

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Supporters,

**W**e are excited to share our first ALDEA newsletter with you! With your thoughtful feedback and support, in February, we formally changed our name from Behrhorst Partners for Development to ALDEA: Advancing Local Development through Empowerment and Action. Thank you for joining us on this journey!

Celebrating our new name gives us a wonderful opportunity to renew our energy and commitment to the legacy of our founder, Dr. Carroll Behrhorst. His philosophy continues to guide our work in partnering with Mayan communities as they develop locally driven solutions to address chronic childhood malnutrition. To share our successes and ensure active outreach to our supporters, we have created a new website, [www.aldeaguatemala.org](http://www.aldeaguatemala.org). This new site includes pages featuring our sister organization in Guatemala, Asociación BPD; profiles of our Mayan partner communities; and interactive graphics highlighting our integrated approach to grassroots development. If you have not already explored the site, we hope you will visit us there soon!

On April 20 and 21, we will commemorate 25 years since Dr. Behrhorst's passing with the completion of our \$25,000 Volcano Challenge. Staff



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members from the U.S. and Guatemala will climb two volcanoes in two days—one foot for every dollar raised to fight childhood malnutrition. As this newsletter goes to press, we are nearing the dates of the climb. If you receive this before April 20th, please consider supporting this effort, or contributing to our general fund. We need your support to continue improving health and well-being in our Mayan partner communities. Learn more at [www.aldeaguatemala.org](http://www.aldeaguatemala.org) under “Get Involved.”

In this newsletter we share our insights about what happens when we partner with women and youth to pursue their dreams of strengthening their own communities. Please read on to learn more about how the empowerment process ensures that the voices and insights of women and young people contribute to the design and ultimate success of the more visible aspects of our program like water systems, latrines, and home gardens. We hope you enjoy learning about the personal and community transformations that your contributions make possible.

Thank you for all you do to sustain this vital work.

Muchas gracias!

Patricia O'Connor

## LETTER FROM THE (ABPD) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of ALDEA and ABPD,

**W**e started 2015 with excellent news: our evaluation showed that rates of chronic childhood malnutrition among children under five have continued to decline in our partner communities. This shows that our programs are working—and more importantly, it means more children have a promising future.

ALDEA and ABPD address childhood malnutrition with an approach that includes **six integrated components: nutrition education, agriculture, family planning, water and sanitation, community empowerment, and disaster risk reduction.** It is easy to understand the value of adequate nutrition and hygiene in improving health, but people often underestimate the role of community empowerment. Yet this is perhaps the most vital component in our integrated approach, because it ensures the long-term sustainability of our programs. Empowerment transforms community members into agents of change who will continue to lead their own development processes, producing positive results long after ABPD's work is finished.

Through the empowerment component of our approach, we offer training to women and youth, creating space for them to find their voices through recognition of their rights and obligations to themselves, their families, and their communities. At the beginning of this process, program participants select their own leaders who then receive specific training from our staff over a one year period, gaining the necessary knowledge and abilities to make the transition to independent

leadership. During this period, ABPD is available to address specific concerns. Little by little, these leaders take the reins of the program and thus take charge of their communities, solving issues and motivating the people without the need for external support. We have used this approach since July 2014 in the villages of Saquiyá, Xepatán, Chuachun, and Chuacacay. As of July 2015, local leaders will be in charge of all activities in these communities, and we will evaluate their progress every six months.



Can the local promoters working on their own continue to realize the malnutrition rate reductions they achieved with ABPD? In December 2014, we found out that the answer to this key question is “yes.” **Our evaluation showed that in communities where local promoters are running the programs, the rate of chronic malnutrition fell by three percentage points in the six months since they took over leadership—a remarkable reduction for such a short period of time.**

We are proud of the women who are changing the futures of their communities, and we're happy to see that the integrated approach is creating spectacular results in the medium term.

Thank you for enabling us to do this truly transformative work, and we hope we can count on your support in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paco Enríquez".

Paco Enríquez

ferent aspects of agriculture, nutrition, family planning, and hygiene, and now after several months, I have shared all my new knowledge with women from Chuachun. I also learned new and better ways to teach other women.

“Thanks to this workshop, my horizon is wider now, and I want to help my community in different ways such as supporting our artisans to find new markets.”

“Thank you ABPD for supporting us and inviting us to be part of this process.”

## Empowerment: The Cornerstone of Our Work

Empowering communities to lead their own development has been a cornerstone of ALDEA’s work for almost fifty years. Our founder, Dr. Carroll Behrhorst, understood that supporting local leaders in making their own decisions would ensure they would continue maintaining community projects and improving their health and well-being for generations to come. Today, empowerment training is one of the six components that make up our integrated approach to development—and in recent months, we have been delighted to see new leaders successfully assume the leadership of the projects we helped them start.

We help women and youth find their voices and contribute actively to their communities using a capacity-building methodology designed to analyze local needs and define the activities and actors needed to solve the problem. Our staff use graphics to stimulate the thinking and engage the creative abilities of participants—especially those who are non-literate, allowing them to develop solutions they can apply to their everyday living, both in their individual families and collectively in their communities.

More than 10 percent of the women who participated in our empowerment trainings have assumed visible roles as community leaders by participating in leadership committees. Some of these women go on to become promoters in their communities. Over time, they become skilled facilitators capable of continuing the community development process after ABPD staff have moved on to work with new villages. Some youth have been inspired to organize their own projects.

In September 2014, ABPD took its women’s empowerment training to a new level, holding an intensive workshop for promoters from six of our partner communities at a training center in Chimaltenango. This first-ever women’s empowerment “summit” enabled these community leaders to come together and learn from each other, sharing their best-practices and experiences while gaining more specific knowledge to bring back to their rural villages.

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# Interview with Elsa Rosenda Xicay Buc, Community Leader

*After participating in empowerment trainings led by ALDEA's sister organization, Asociación BPD (ABPD), volunteer promoter Elsa Rosenda Xicay Buc, 28, now teaches other women in her village. By July of 2015, Elsa and her fellow community leaders in Chuacacay, Santa Apolonia, will have fully taken charge of the development projects ABPD and ALDEA helped them start two years ago. To learn more about Chuacacay and our other Guatemalan partner communities, visit [www.aldeaguatemala.org](http://www.aldeaguatemala.org) and click "Who We Are," "Our Work," and "Our Communities."*

**Q: How do you promote health in your community?**

**A:** "I work with women. I talk with them about family planning and also about nutrition and how they should feed their children."

**Q: How has this work been going since you have taken over the leadership of it from ABPD?**

**A:** "It was all a challenge at the beginning because I was not used to working with other people, especially changing the way they think, their attitudes and convincing them there are ways to improve the quality of life of their families. I am not an expert on the topics we see, but I have learned very much about them and I try to share this knowledge with the rest of women. Not all women make the same progress, some of them face very difficult situations or have a very complicated past, so making changes is difficult sometimes, but I am confident all the women in



the community will take advantage of this opportunity we have right now."

**Q: What would you like for the future?**

**A:** "I dream of having a good, paid job in the future. I know it is difficult because I only

could complete the third grade, but with all this new knowledge and experience, it could happen. I want to help my sisters to finish school because I do not have children yet, and I also would like to organize the community to support other families that need scholarships to keep their kids in school."

**Q: Why do you work as a promoter?**

**A:** "The other women chose me as a promoter. I feel I have a strong commitment to health for myself, my family and the community. I have changed deeply the way I see life and how I can improve it, and I want to share this with the others."

Thirty-seven-year-old health promoter Floridalma Xinicó appreciated the chance to learn from other women working on similar projects in villages near her own community of Saquiyá, Patzún.

“I could see they face the same challenges [but had] enthusiasm, which was very motivating to me.

“I have become a better promoter since the workshop because I learned more about the topics I teach to the other women in Saquiyá.”

Not only are the summit participants better prepared to



implement today’s development projects aimed at reducing childhood malnutrition; they are also beginning to define long-term strategies to improve health and well-being. We look forward

to following their progress as they take the lead in building a better future for their children.

To learn more about empowerment trainings and how they fit within our integrated approach to development, please visit [www.aldeaguatemala.org](http://www.aldeaguatemala.org) and click on “Who We Are,” “Our Work,” and “Our Integrated Approach.”

## Reducing Chronic Childhood Malnutrition: An Update

Reducing chronic childhood malnutrition requires an integrated approach that includes elements of empowerment, education, basic infrastructure, and food security; and *time*.

**When used together, these interventions are highly effective**, as evidenced (below) in Saquiyá and Chuachun, the two communities where our full approach has been implemented and where we have had a presence for two years. Chuacacay and Xepatán will soon follow as we expect their water systems to be built in this next six-month period.

Community	Date Partnership Began	Rate of Chronic Malnutrition in Children Under 5 (%)	
		Baseline	December 2014
Saquiyá	March 2013	52	28
Chuachun	July 2013	75	58
Chuacacay	July 2013	69	56
Xepatán	October 2013	67	63
Parajbey	July 2014	63	61
El Garabato	July 2014	64	62
Chipatá	October 2014	55	55

We will see decreasing rates in Parajbey, El Garabato, and Chipatá as our work continues. Please go to our [www.aldeaguatemala.org](http://www.aldeaguatemala.org) and click “Who We Are,” “Our Work,” and “Our Communities” to check for periodic updates.

*“The point of (our work) is to seek measures that create and activate a community, rather than leave it passive and waiting. Real change requires patience and commitment.”* —Dr. Carroll Behrhorst



The **Dr. Carroll Behrhorst Legacy Society** honors those who partner with us in our work with rural Mayan villages by including ALDEA in their estate plans.

As we head toward our fifty-year anniversary, honor “Doc” by ensuring his visionary programs are funded for another fifty years.

***Become a Legacy Society member today!***

- Name ALDEA as a beneficiary of your IRA or retirement account—specify a dollar amount or a percentage. This does not require a will or trust, and the benefits to ALDEA are tax-free!
- Make a bequest to ALDEA in your will or trust.

**Let us know your intent** by visiting our website at [www.aldeaguatemala.org/donate](http://www.aldeaguatemala.org/donate) and downloading the Declaration of Intent form; calling us at 313-205-4249; sending an e-mail to [ALDEA@aldeaguatemala.org](mailto:ALDEA@aldeaguatemala.org); or checking the box on one of our donation envelopes.

*“We are making a bequest to ALDEA for a number of reasons, not the least of which is our love of the people who benefit from ALDEA’s work. We know that our donations are used efficiently and effectively to create great benefit with excellent return on contributed funds.”*

—Dale and Yvonne Gatz,  
Legacy Society Members



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Newsletters are occasional publications of ALDEA, 1732 1st Avenue #26867, New York, NY 10128. ALDEA, together with our collaborators at the Asociación BPD (ABPD) in Guatemala, works in partnership with communities to improve their health and well-being. Our approach to partnership and community development is based on the principles espoused by Dr. Carroll Behrhorst in his work with the Mayan communities of Chimaltenango. Tax-deductible contributions to ALDEA are forwarded directly to projects, except for the minimal amount required for advocacy. ALDEA is non-sectarian and non-political.

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The staff of Asociación BPD (our sister organization in Guatemala) works on the ground in villages in the Department of Chimaltenango, implementing our vital programs in their capacities as Executive Director, Program Director, Accountant, Administrator, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Social Worker, Agronomist, Nutrition Educator, Sanitation Technician, Program Support Technician, and Housekeeping and Maintenance Personnel.